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GEAR

Basses | Steinback 5, Mike Lull DAB, Elrick Evolution 5, Atelier Z M265, Serek Sacramento 4, Dunlop Super Bright Nickel 45/125 and Dunlop flatwound 45/105 strings

Effects | MXR M87 bass comp, M288 bass octave DLX, M82 bass envelope, M81 bass preamp, MXR IsoBrick

Amps | Jule Monique preamp/M2500, Trickfish 1K and TF112 cabs, Aguilar DB751 and GS112 cabs

SOULFUL CONVERSATIONS

Veteran bassist Darryl Anders and his band AgapéSoul return with a long-awaited second album, *Conversations* — and we talk the low-end talk...

Interview: Rod C. Taylor

Few people in the bass world have as many areas of influence as Bay Area bassist Darryl Anders. His gigging history includes work with an impressive list of artists: Tower Of Power, Charlie Peacock, Booker T. Jones, Zigaboo Modeliste, Ledisi, Martin Luther and Bonnie Hayes, to name just a few. That alone sets him apart from many other players, but that's hardly the extent of his contribution. The mid-2000s found Anders working with a group of guys who sought to bring music to a new generation via a video game that would become a worldwide sensation. That's right, Anders laid down many of the bass tracks to the

Guitar Hero and Rock Band games. On top of that, for many years he's been the bass product manager of Dunlop Manufacturing, putting his vast experience to work in researching and developing a host of amazing bass pedals as well as Dunlop's immensely popular Super Bright bass strings. As such, he's widely known and appreciated by players around the world. Most players would consider that enough success, but Darryl Anders is not most people. Back in 2012, he produced his first neo-soul record, *AgapéSoul: Believe in Love*, which demonstrated his prowess not just as a player, but as a writer and producer. The album did well here and in Europe, and the AgapéSoul band played numerous shows in and around its home base in the Oakland area. Given the

success of *Believe in Love*, it's not surprising that Anders followed up with a sophomore project. Six years have passed between the two albums, but once you listen to *Conversations*, you'll see it's been well worth the wait. It's already reached number one on the UK Soul charts and continues to accumulate accolades around the globe. Recently, we got Darryl on the phone to chat about the record, his plans for AgapéSoul, and what he's learned through the process of writing and producing his own music.

How did your band AgapéSoul come about, Darryl?
For a while my friends here in the Bay Area were trying to get me to record some of my own music, and because I was working on the

video games, I kind of lived in the studio for five years, and that gave me the bug to record more. I thought it would be more fun to do my own music. I had a bunch of songs I had written a long time ago, so I put together a band of some of my favourite musicians to play them. The first record actually started out as a demo for us to get gigs, but once I started it, I thought that with a little more effort I could put together a complete record, so the demo became a record.

Six years has passed since *Believe In Love*. How did that affect how you approached your second album?

I think the biggest thing that I learned from the first record is not to be afraid. With the first record, I didn't have a lot of confidence in myself, so I was always getting other people's opinions on things. With this record, I had a

“IT'S ONE THING TO BE A GREAT PLAYER, BUT IT'S ANOTHER THING TO WRITE GREAT SONGS.”

clearer vision of what I wanted to do. I wanted this one to be more muscular, to be more of a conversation with different musicians. Also, with this record, I didn't just use my own songs. The first song we recorded was by the singer in my band, Zoe Ellis. I've always liked her songwriting, and that kind of shaped the direction of the sound of the project.

You have a distinct, funky, deep tone, which you catch right away on the opening track, 'Kite', and it's also on full display in 'Fruitvale



Darryl with his bandmates in AgapéSoul

Gumbo'. How did you go about getting that growl, punch, and deepness all in one tone? I think tone is partially in the hands and partially in the gear you choose. With this record, I wanted more of a midrange punch, so I used passive basses and pushed everything through the Jules Amp Monique all-tube preamp. I was very concerned that the bass operate as a support instrument on the record, supporting the song first, so I was after a tone that did that first and foremost. My secret weapons were the Monique pre-amp, my passive Stenback five-string, and my signature Mike Lull DA5 in passive mode.

Tommy Sims appears on two tracks, providing a cool vocal intro to the title track and laying down a smooth lead vocal on 'Home'. What's his connection to your music and this album? I'm a huge fan of Tommy's work as a songwriter and producer. His *Peace And Love* album (2000) is the blueprint for what I've done as a songwriter

and producer, especially as it concerns this record. I originally just asked him to provide the intro for 'Conversations', but as I was talking to him about that on the phone, I just felt I should ask him to sing 'Home', which I was thinking about not including on the album. He said, 'Send me the song and I'll see what I can do'. He called back and said he really loved it and wanted to take his time delivering on the vocal, and you can see that in the result. I can't tell you how important it is to me to have him on my album.

You also brought in bassist Oskar Cartaya for the string arrangement and performance on the same track. What was it like working with a fellow bassist in that way?

Oskar and I have been friends for a long time. He was in Oakland for a show, and I played him a rough mix of the tune while we were hanging out. He said, 'D, you should let me put strings on this'. I told him, 'Man, I'm tired and out of money', but he insisted that I send it to him, so I did. He sat with it for a couple of days then emailed it back to me and that's what you hear.

What advice would you give other bassists looking to engage in the process of writing and producing?

Pay attention to everything around you - songs you like, styles you like. Pay attention to tone and to arrangements, and try to find your musical voice through that. Also, I have a lot of musical influences, and not all of them are bass players. In fact, most of my favourite bass players are also great composers. It's one thing to be a great player, but it's another thing to write great songs. That's a big deal to me. So, look for those kinds of players. In the end, like we always say, it's all about the songs. ■

Conversations is out now.
Info: www.agapesoul.com.



The organic tone of the passive Stenback bass was the secret sauce on 'Conversations'