

Frank Russell - Influences



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Chicago native Frank Russell has been playing bass since age 14. Throughout his illustrious career, Frank has performed or recorded with Ken Chaney, Wallace Roney, Robert Irving III, Freddie Hubbard, Ramsey Lewis, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Peter Erskine, Alphonse Mouzon and many others. He has also recorded five CDs with Chicago guitarist Henry Johnson and is a past recipient of the Hennessy Best of Chicago Jazz Search with the Ken Chaney Xperience. Frank's debut CD, *Covering All Basses*, was released in 2005 with his sophomore follow-up *Circle Without End* released in 2011.

Frank grew up in a home where his fondest memories as a child were hearing music and seeing photos of Miles Davis and John Coltrane on the wall. His Dad, who played acoustic bass as a teenager, was a big influence as well as his Mom, who sang around the house.

After seeing the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan show Frank received a guitar for Christmas and started guitar lessons soon thereafter. He also received a drum set, which he played until high school. His Mom brought home a copy of Sly and the Family Stone's *There's a Riot Going On*, which featured Larry Graham and his slap style of bass playing. Soon thereafter, at the age of fourteen Frank Russell began his career as a bass guitarist. He studied all the bass players of the day, starting with Verdine White, Larry Graham and Stanley Clarke, and immersed himself in their various styles and techniques. Frank also credits his time spent behind a drum kit contributing to his slapping technique.

Later, Frank was introduced to the guys from the Miles Davis band by a drummer friend and met Randy Hall, Robert Irving III (Music Director and keyboardist with Miles Davis) and Vince Wilburn. They had just completed Miles Davis' comeback album, *The Man With The Horn*, and they were big heroes of his. Frank reflects, "I'm very proud to say these are all friendships' which have endured both personally and professionally throughout the years." Through these friendships, Frank wrote and recorded the song, *Quick Pix* from his "Circle Without End" CD, featuring himself and Miles Davis bassists, Darryl Jones and Richard Patterson.

Frank started doing some theatre work and played the show *Beehive* for two years straight. This eventually got him some work at the prestigious Steppenwolf Theatre, where he did a show with the South African singing group "Ladysmith Black Mambazo" for six years. The ensemble traveled all over the country playing numerous venues, including a three-month stint at the Kennedy Center.

Outside of his bass heroes, guitarist Henry Johnson is his best friend and biggest influence and has been instrumental in recommending Frank for a number of gigs. Frank met Ramsey and Freddie through Henry because he played with them both. Ramsey needed a bass player and Henry recommended him for the job. Ramsey's bassist during the 60s, the late, great Eldee Young, always encouraged and supported Frank as a bassist.

At present, Frank Russell is in the studio recording a tribute to some of his favorite and most influential bassists in jazz including: Jaco Pastorius, Stanley Clarke, Marcus Miller, Darryl Jones and others. The album will feature some of their most iconic recordings, re-arranged and revitalized with a fresh new sonic treatment. Participants in the recording project include Frank's band with Tim McNamara (sax and flute), Charles Heath (drums), Vijay Tellis-Nayak (keys) and Marco Villarreal (guitar) also, world renown musicians, Robert Irving III (keys), Wallace Roney (trumpet), Henry Johnson (guitar), Dee Alexander (vocals), Khari Parker (drums), Greg Spero (keys) and more.

Frank is a clinician for Lakland Basses and endorses Lakland GHS Strings and Gallien Krueger amps.

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