



Bass * Motivation* GLENN HUGHES

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*For a guy 40 years into his career, Glenn Hughes makes startlingly modern-sounding music. His solo albums—including last year’s *Music for the Divine*—feature fiery funk rock that would delight Red Hot Chili Peppers fans. It certainly delights the Red Hot Chili Peppers—their drummer, Chad Smith, and guitarist, John Frusciante, are regular Hughes collaborators.*

But the British-born bassist/guitarist/vocalist is far from a funk-rock retread. He’s been fusing groove and power since he played with the band Trapeze in the late ’60s. He did the same as a member of mid-’70s Deep Purple and the ’80s incarnation of Black Sabbath. He’s also worked with Gary Moore, Whitesnake, Mötley Crüe, George Lynch, Asia, the KLF, and Quiet Riot.

We spoke to Glenn at his home studio, where he’s working on a still-untitled solo album.

What motivates you as a musician?

I do what I do to make my soul sing. I’ve decided that I cannot and will not make any records for corporate reasons. For the rest of my life, I have to make records that are soulful and meaningful to me as a human being. And this record I’m working on is like that. My best friend, Chad Smith, is producing and arranging, as he’s done with all my work for the past five years.

You’re a prolific writer.

I’m just channeling what has to be channeled. I have no say about it. I get out of bed every day and go straight to the studio, 365 days a year. I couldn’t survive if I couldn’t write. I don’t mean financially, I mean soulfully. I just wouldn’t have a purpose!

You’ve played in some of the heaviest bands ever, but you never lost your deep, earthy groove.

I think it has something to do with the fact that I’m a singer/bassist. There are only a handful of us: Sting, Paul McCartney, Geddy Lee, Jack Bruce. I love singing and playing. It’s great for making your parts breathe. The notes I don’t play are more important than the ones I do. A lot of music today has so many notes, so many paradiddles, so many triplets. But think of “Breathe” from

Pink Floyd’s *Dark Side of the Moon*: There’s so much space and air. That big space speaks volumes to me. It’s sexy and sassy, and it’s what I love.

You’ve been playing a custom Yamaha BB bass lately.

Yes, and it’s awesome. They made some modifications for me, including a thinner neck and black binding. We’ve also sized down the body, because the regular ones are a little too big for me. I love playing it, and I have to love an instrument to play it. For the rest of my playing career, be it 10, 20, 30 years, I want to play exactly the instrument of my choice. Yamaha has gone above and beyond to make that instrument for me, and I really respect them for that.

You know, in 1975 I was playing in Japan with Deep Purple, and Yamaha came down to present me with a bass. I remember the bass fondly, though it was lost in a fire. Thirty years later I’m back with the company that was so kind to me back then. Yamaha is committed to making quality instruments, and I’ll stick with them, because they’re winners. They’re going all out for me, and that shows a great deal of respect.

You play guitar as well.

I started out as a guitar player, and I write a lot on guitar. I’ve really honed my craft lately. I’ve hung out with John Frusciante a lot and watched how he plays—and he plays about 20 hours a day! On this album I’m playing a custom cherry-sunburst L Series Yamaha acoustic. When I first played it, I was absolutely blown away. The neck, the action, the sound, the feel, the look—it’s classic! I am completely gobsmacked by this instrument. I also have a Yamaha CGX171, an awesome nylon-string guitar.

It sounds like you view music as a spiritual pursuit.

It’s important to me as a human being. It’s a spiritual progression for me: The more I play my instrument, the more in tune with myself I am. Playing an instrument makes my life better. Not just my music—it literally makes me a better, more caring individual. I’m in love with the process of making music. If you take away a baby’s bottle, it will scream. If you take away my instruments, well, it isn’t going to be funny!