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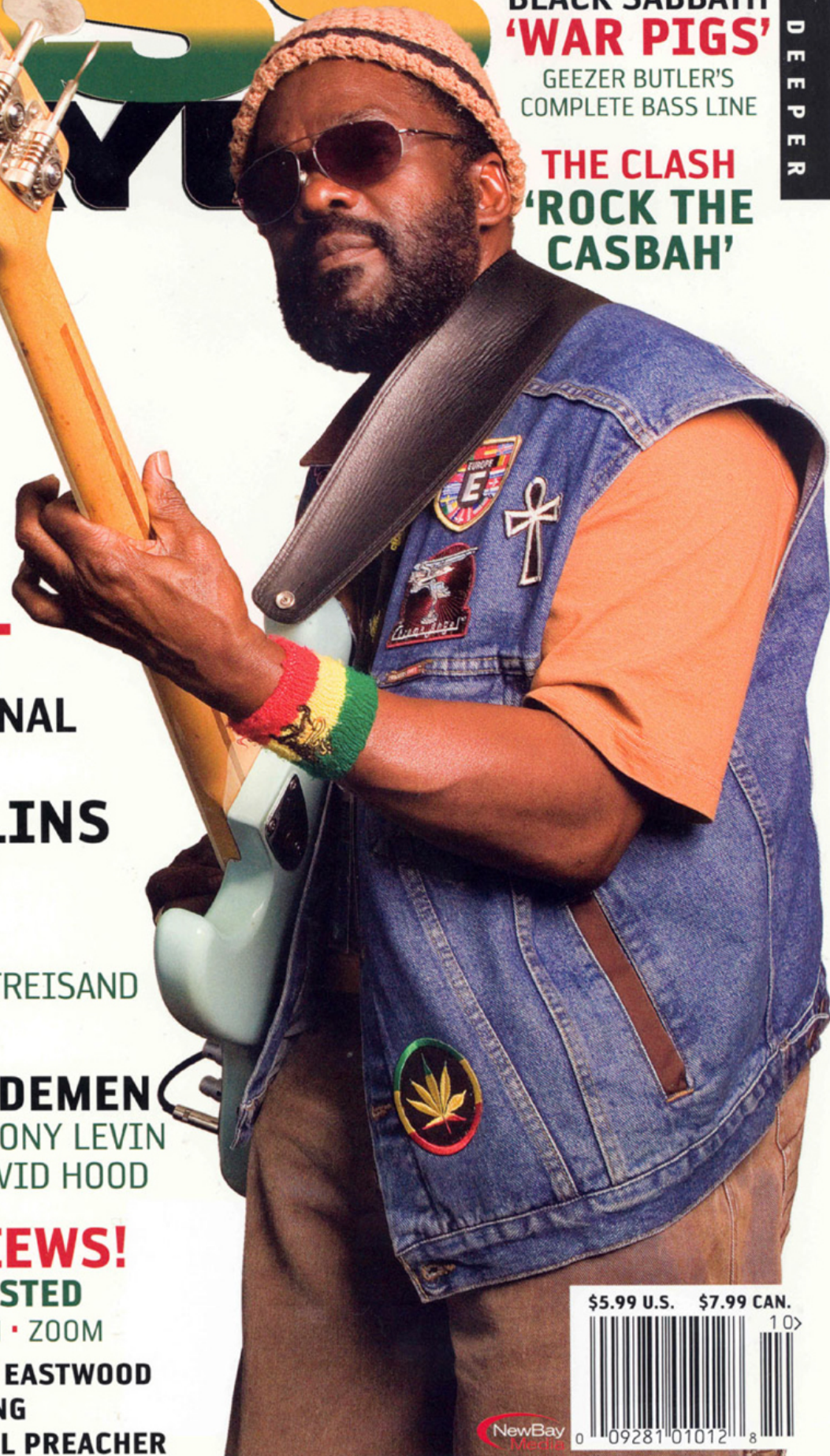
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FUNNY GUYS

**Neil Stubenhaus & Jeff Carney
Double Up For Diva Duty
With Barbra Streisand**

By Chris Jisi

Neil Stubenhaus and Jeff Carney are just two of the 60 world-class musicians in Barbra Streisand's consummate touring orchestra. But on a meal break during Manhattan rehearsals for Streisand's recent European tour, the pair sounded more like a well-oiled comedy team. "When we first came in for last year's U.S. tour," laughs Stubenhaus, "there was a chart that said walking bass here, but it didn't specify which one of us should take it. So we both started playing." Cracks Carney, "The tune was 'You'll Never Walk Alone'!"

Humor aside, the two bring serious cred to their diva double-duty. For nearly 30 years Stubenhaus has been a first-call veteran of the L.A. studio scene, with hundreds of albums and film soundtracks to his credit. He has appeared on a dozen Streisand albums (dating back to 1979) and has been on every Babs tour since her 1994 return to the road. For the last 20 years, Carney has effortlessly crossed among New York's classical, jazz, studio, and Broadway scenes, most notably as the Principal Bassist with the New York Pops Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, and as jazz vocal magician Bobby McFerrin's longtime bassman. After playing in Streisand's string section in 1994, Carney was invited onto the 2006 U.S. tour in a larger role. The discerning down-low duo can be heard on Streisand's double-CD released last spring, *Streisand: Live in Concert 2006* [Columbia]. We were determined to get the details of dually anchoring such an expansive ensemble, and an even bigger star.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE YOUR ROLES?

NEIL STUBENHAUS The original concept, in 1994, was to have one of the three string-section bassists double on electric—but because some of the tunes run into each other, I was added as the electric bassist. I basically go from playing grooves, to more-orchestral notated passages, to not playing at all on some tunes. In 2006, they decided to have someone who could play principal bass and also step out and pluck some jazz with the

rhythm section—and that's Jeff. He's a great, underrated player with a warm sound, tasty as you please, chops, you name it.

JEFF CARNEY How many days' per diem is that going to cost me? [Laughs.] My role is mainly orchestral, aside from "Down With Love," which starts with a 32-bar walking-bass-and-voice feature with Barbra. As principal to the other two section bassists, Bill Ellison and Dave Romano, I call the bowings and the cues. We all have a lot of fun because Neil is one of the few electric bassists around who understand how to play inside an orchestra; he knows the savvy that's involved—the dynamics, the touch, when not to play, where to play on the fingerboard.

NS Okay, we're even! [Laughs.] I play only eight bars in "Unusual Way," and Jeff even cues me for that, from 30 feet away.

Neil, how much freedom do you have from your written groove parts?

NS If there's anything that has a groove, [drummer] J.R. Robinson and I change it up from what's written, with the wholesale approval of Barbra and our conductor, Bill Ross. And that speaks to Barbra's musicianship; if she didn't dig it, we wouldn't be doing it. She has big ears and gives us the freedom. I'll listen to what Barbra is singing and what range she's in, and then I'll try to make musical judgments and alterations that make the part better. So in that sense, it's different every night. The whole show is basically scripted and the tunes aren't stretched in any way, but within that structure Barbra changes it up all the time. Probably the most fun groove

Continued



Neil Stubenhaus (far right) looks on as Jeff Carney (far left) leads section bassists Bill Ellison and Dave Romano.

BABS' SHOW STATS

- Barbra Streisand never performs on consecutive nights.
- Show consists of two one-hour sets.
- Traveling staff copyists can change parts on the spot.
- There are about 50 songs in the book, with 25 rehearsed and ready.
- The rest of the rhythm section features pianist Randy Waldman, drummer J.R. Robinson, and guitarist Brian Koonin.

tune in the show is "Come Rain or Come Shine," which has a funky 16th-note feel that was originally recorded in 1979, with David Hungate on bass and [drummer] Ed Greene.

Jeff, what's unique about your section role in this setting?

JC It's commercial orchestral playing—certainly different from performing Mozart in an acoustically perfect Carnegie Hall. We're in 15,000-seat arenas, cranked in the subwoofers, playing with an electric bassist who has a low *B*, who also gives a certain point to the notes when we're in unison. In response, I have an approach I jokingly call "arena bass." We all have *C* or *B* extensions on our uprights, which we use to provide a lush bottom and fill out the lower range that pop music has. So there are register judgments to be made. For example, "Somewhere" starts with a string bass and cello soli in the key of *B*. Dave Romano has the low *B* extension, so at my suggestion, he plays the soli an octave lower than Bill and I, giving us three different octaves when you add in the cellos: arena bass!

How about the issue of time when you're dealing with a conductor and a drummer?

NS Bill Ross sets the time, and once everyone knows where it is, we may take it more from J.R.—and Bill is cool with that.

JC We initially take the pulse from Bill and then listen to J.R. Sometimes you have to split the difference between the rhythm section and the strings, and just figure out where the time is at that point. I use a one-sided headphone so I can hear the string section, while getting Barbra and the rhythm section in my right ear.

What's the main challenge of the gig?

JC I would say it's simply making Barbra and Bill happy—giving them what they want musically.

NS Exactly; it's about making it all work, on and off stage. We have a credo in the bass section: Leave your egos at will-call. **BP**

GEAR

Stubenhaus Early James Tyler 5-string with passive PJ pickups and Rotosound Swing Bass 665LD strings; fretless Rick Turner Renaissance 5-string (on "People" and "Smile"); SWR Workingman's 12 (using built-in DI); Aviom A-16 II mixer; Shure E500 in-ear monitors

Carney Circa-1811 Jacques François Barbe (Barbe Père of Avignon) upright bass; German-style bow by Robert Reichel Strings; Thomastik Dominant *A*, *D*, and *G* strings, and Thomastik Spirocore extended *E*; Schertler Dyna-B pickup (for rhythm section); DPA 4021 mike (for bass section); Sony one-sided studio headphone

CAN BE HEARD ON

Stubenhaus Quincy Jones/Herbie Hancock, *We All Love Ennio Morricone* [Sony]; Wayne Bergeron, *Plays Well With Others* [Concord]; upcoming Michael Bolton big band project
Carney Korn, *MTV Unplugged* [Virgin]; Kelly Clarkson, *My December* [RCA]; Jorge Sylvester Quintet, *Following the Line* [Fwd Music]

CURRENTLY SPINNING

Stubenhaus "XM Radio Channel 72 Beyond Jazz has changed my car-driving experience—everything from the greats of jazz-fusion to modern jazz artists. Last night I heard Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* [CBS] and the new Michael Brecker CD, *Pilgrimage* [Heads Up]."

Carney Quartetto Italiano, *Music for String Quartet* by Anton Webern [import]; Freddie Hubbard, *Red Clay* [CBS]; The Wonder Stuff, *The Singles* [Polydor]

"The Wonder Stuff is a great U.K. pop band with my buddy Mark McCarthy on bass"

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