



SPREADING THE DISEASE

From left, Scott Ian, Charlie Benante, Frank Bello, Joey Belladonna, and Rob Caggiano



ON

ANTHRAX'S

WORSHIP MUSIC,

FRANK

BELLO'S

FIRED-UP

BASS PLAYING IS MORE

INFECTIOUS

THAN EVER

BY FREDDY VILLANO

LATE AT NIGHT, AFTER HIS FIVE-YEAR-OLD SON goes to bed, Anthrax bassist Frank Bello does something that belies the maniacal headbanger persona most people see when he hits the stage. "My little amp comes out and I spend some time working on old James Jamerson and

FRANK BELLO

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

With Anthrax
(all Megaforce/Island,
unless noted)



Armed and Dangerous
[1985]



Spreading the Disease
[1985]



Among the Living
[1987]



State of Euphoria
[1988]



Persistence of Time
[1990]



Sound of White Noise
[1993]



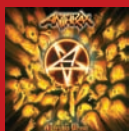
Stomp 442
[Nuclear Blast, 1995]



Volume 8: The Threat Is Real [Ignition, 1998]



We've Come for You All
[Sanctuary, 2003]



Worship Music
[2011]



JUSTIN BORUCKI

Stevie Wonder bass parts,” he says somewhat sheepishly. “I just want to get rounded out a little bit.” Not content to rest on his band’s laurels, which include three Grammy nominations, record sales in excess of ten million, and a hallowed place among the Big 4 of thrash metal (alongside Metallica, Megadeth, and Slayer), Bello wants to take his playing to another level. Whether it’s his quest for the perfect tone on *Worship Music*, the band’s first album of new material in eight years, or imparting wisdom to

“IT WAS EITHER HANG OUT WITH THE GUYS WHO WERE DOING DRUGS AND PARTYING, OR LEARN RUSH AND BLACK SABBATH SONGS.”

FRANK BELLO

the next generation of bass players at his clinics, or trying to cop Motown bass lines, Bello is fired up and taking his craft more seriously than ever.

It's common knowledge that Bello was first recruited to be a roadie for Anthrax by his uncle, drummer Charlie Benante, before assuming bass duties in 1984. Twenty-seven years later, Bello is at the top of his game in terms of both technique and tone. No

matter what he does—muscular bass riffs, simple root/octave flourishes, complex triplet patterns across the neck—Bello's bass sounds thick yet gritty, his playing, fierce and audible. He cuts through the double bass drum and rhythm guitar barrage that has come to define Anthrax's sound while simultaneously supporting his bandmates—Benante, guitarists Scott Ian and Rob Caggiano, and vocalist Joey

Belladonna—with rich, creamy low end. And as much as it might seem like a bastardized union between Dug Pinnick's sound and Steve Harris's style, Bello's approach is entirely his own. *Worship Music* represents the best bass performance ever captured on an Anthrax record.

The tunes on *Worship Music* are well crafted and catchy as hell. It sounds like you guys put a lot of time into it.

We got to live with the songs for a while—four years, actually—and really listen to what worked and what didn't. Our producer, Jay Rustin, worked amazingly with Joey and helped us get the sounds on the record. He separated everything so well. We're really proud of it.

Was Rob Caggiano involved in production, too?

Actually, he was the one who recorded my bass parts in New York. I kept pushing him to get the tone I wanted. Once we got that dialed in, I played along to Charlie's drums, without any rhythm guitar in the mix. I found that to be a good challenge. That's my whole thing—locking in with the drums.

What's your relationship with the rest of the rhythm section?

At this point, Charlie, Scott, and I know each other so well that we naturally leave room for each other—as long as it adds to the song and works with the riff.

How do you write bass lines?

When I'm writing a bass line for a song, I try to play a tasty little story within the song that adds to the music. I never want to get in the way of the song. I just want to keep it interesting and challenging for me as a bass player while adding another flavor to the music.

If there's a solid chord progression, I'll stay with that until I hear something the bass can add—maybe it's just a simple octave bass riff or scale that can add a certain flavor. Sometimes not doing anything but the progression is best, instead of trying to force something just to do it.

Your playing really stands out on *Worship Music*.

I've been fortunate to be in a band that is open to letting the bass breathe; there's so much room to have fun. After we wrote the songs, certain ones, like "Earth on Hell" and "Judas Priest," I found that they had specific breaks written into them that I filled with bass riffs.

My intent is to be the kind of sideman who the band-leader feels is essential to the band.

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**“YOU SEARCH FOR
A SOUND THAT YOU
THINK IS OUT THERE,
AND INSTEAD, YOU
DEVELOP YOUR
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Where do you get ideas for your fills?

They're just ideas I hear in my head that I feel will take the songs to another level. When I listen to my favorite bass players, I try to figure out whether their fills are from initial ideas or chord progressions, and how the players came up with the ideas. Then I try to incorporate that into my playing.

What role has practice played in your life?

It's been a positive influence. For me, it was either hang out with the guys on the weekend who were doing drugs and partying, or go to my room and learn Rush and Black Sabbath songs. It made more sense to do the latter. It made me feel good.

Do you play with three fingers on your right hand?

For the most part. I was convinced that Steve Harris played with three fingers, so that's what I did growing up. When I met him, I tried to show him his songs and he went, “No, this is how I'm doing it. It looks like my third finger is moving but it's not. I'm not playing with that finger.” It was great for him to show me how it was actually done.

Cheap Trick's Tom Petersson is another one of your big influences.

I'm listening to *In Color* [Epic/Legacy, 1977] all the time right now. Petersson's got that piano-like sound that cuts through, and it's really heavy. When I meet my heroes, I ask a thousand questions, and he told me that a lot of what I thought were 8- and 12-string basses were actually 4-strings. On “He's a Whore,” for example, you'd think that's an 8-string, but it's a straight 4-string. I never really get it right, but we all do it. You search for a sound that you think is out there somewhere, and instead, you develop your own sound somehow. That's how it works.

Did you ever have any formal training?

I did play some upright bass in high school jazz class, which was great for stretching my fingers. But before jazz class started, I would get on the electric bass, and [future

White Zombie drummer] John Tempesta would get on the drums, and we'd play Iron Maiden and Black Sabbath tunes. We'd get in trouble just about every day because it was so loud, but there'd always be a group around us, circling and headbanging to “Killers” by Maiden or whatever song we were playing. It was that time of metal in the early '80s—such a great time to learn how to play.

You were with Helmet briefly in 2004. Did you play with a pick?

I learned 38 songs for the audition, and when I got the gig, I had to play with a pick all the time, which was a great challenge. It was all downstrokes.

You haven't always been happy with your tone in Anthrax.

I've had to get more high end than I would like; otherwise the bass is buried. I

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FRANKIE'S FAB FIVE



Rush, *Exit Stage Left*

[Island/Mercury, 1981].

"It's a live record, but it gives you an idea of what a brilliant bass player **Geddy Lee** is. He's easily one of my favorites. This album has so many songs that are great to play on bass, from 'Free-will' and 'YYZ' to 'La Villa Strangiato.' I still have fun playing along to this record."



Iron Maiden, *Killers*

[Sony, 1981].

"I wore this record out trying to learn each **Steve Harris** bass line. He writes on bass, so songs like 'Wrathchild,' 'Innocent Exile,' and 'Killers' have great bass riffs to start the songs. And then there's the amazing instrumental 'Genghis Khan.'"



Black Sabbath, *Heaven and Hell*

[Warner Bros., 1980].

"This record starts with 'Neon Knights,' where **Geezer Butler** plays one of my favorite tasty bass lines, and then goes to more amazing stuff in songs like 'Children of the Sea' and 'Heaven and Hell.' There are lots of great, tasty bass parts throughout the record. God bless Ronnie James Dio!"



Led Zeppelin, *Led Zepelin II*

[Atlantic, 1969].

"This is a great record with great bass playing. I love how **John Paul Jones** goes off in the breakdown in 'The Lemon Song.' There's also great bass all throughout 'Ramble On,' 'What Is and What Should Never Be'—the list keeps going."



The Beatles, *1962-1966*

[Capitol, 1973].

"**Paul McCartney** is such a great songwriter that sometimes, his amazing bass playing gets overlooked. This record has a good mix of his songwriting and his great bass playing, from 'She Loves You' to 'A Hard Day's Night' to 'Eight Days a Week.' He always plays the right notes."



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ANDY BUCHANAN

accepted it, even if I don't always like that top-end click, but that's all changed with *Worship Music*. This is my favorite bass sound since *Among the Living* [1987]. I just wanted what I heard in my head, and as soon as I got this bass tone, I got in a groove, and just kept doing song after song. I heard this thing in my head and I actually got it on tape.

What is it about the Hartke LH1000 that appeals to you?

When I plug into the LH1000, I get my tone straight off. It's not easy to cut

FRANK BELLO



through Scott and Charlie, but now I can cut through and still have the bottom I want. I don't want to go crazy getting my sound; if you look at the head, you'll see I run it pretty straight up. I get a little gravel in my ear with the SansAmp, and that's all I want—I'm good to go. The combination of both of those things is the sound you hear on the record.

Are you still using your signature Fender basses?

Yes, but I just put in passive EMG pickups, and I'm getting a lot more punch. I had to back off my SansAmp a little, though, because the output from these pickups is a lot hotter. I'm psyched about that.

You recently started doing clinics. What's that like?

Most kids want to learn bass parts or fills from songs like "Caught in a Mosh," so I'll play the song right in front of them along with the track. If they want to know something after that, I'll say, "Dude, just come up here, I'll show it to you." Some kids are intimidated about picking up the

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instrument, so I tell them not to be afraid, and to develop their ears. When I was growing up in the Bronx, the first guy I took lessons from wasn't teaching me anything, and he was charging me 35 bucks a week. I tell kids that if they feel like they're getting ripped off, do what I did: Listen to your favorite songs and learn how to play like your heroes. You can hear Geddy Lee, Geezer Butler, and Steve Harris in my playing. If I can do it, you can certainly do it.

I think too many kids are playing video games and getting distracted instead of picking up instruments, creating music, and feeling good about something in their lives. If I can use the bass lines I wrote to inspire someone to do their own thing, that's what it's about for me. I'm very blessed to be able to make a living playing the instrument that I love. I am addicted to it now more than I have ever been in my life. I just want to learn more about it more every day. **BP**

MORE ONLINE



- For all things Anthrax, go to anthrax.com.
- See Frank tearing it up at a Hartke clinic on YouTube.
- Check out "Antisocial" live from Sofia, Bulgaria, on the Big 4 tour.

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