

Isildurs Bane Newsletter January 2004

- Gicken at IB's headquarters
- DVD planned for 2004
- New outlet for IB records in Germany
- Your questions
- If you like IB, you should listen to...

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Isildurs Bane's bass player, Fredrik "Gicken" Johansson, will be working at IB's Headquarters during three months. He will be shipping and handling your orders, deal with bookings, answer e-mails and generally keeping our office in good shape. He is currently working hard with one eye on a screen, the other in a logbook logging all activities from more than 30 hours of footage from America and Europe. (If you want proof, see the attached picture.) Why? Read on and you will find an answer... In the meantime, find out more about "Gicken", the all-round IB-expert at games, something he proved time and again during the latest European tour.



Name:

– Fredrik Johansson

Why the nickname "Gicken"?:

– I started calling myself Gicken when I was a baby, before I started talking. My parents have told me that I pointed at a photo of myself and repeated saying “Gicken, Gicken” repeatedly. Since then, it has become my nickname and it is still being used.

When did you start playing bass?

– I started when I was 15. There was an annual Christmas show at ÖRJANSKOLAN in Halmstad, and shortly before that show, there was talk of starting a band. There were two guitarists and one drummer and all three of them could play, but there was neither a bass player nor a singer. Even though I was a cocky teenager I was surprised when I heard myself say “I’ll play bass. And I’ll sing! I have always been interested in music, but I had not played an instrument until then. That’s how my first band, Krokodilen kräks (The Crocodile Vomits), was formed in 1987. Our first gig was at the Christmas show, and after that we did two more. The setlist consisted of:

“I Walked with a Zombie” by The Vietnam Veterans

“Another Brick in the Wall Pt. 2” by Pink Floyd

“Tush” by ZZ Top

Between Krokodilen Kräks and Isildurs Bane, I have played with loads of bands in and around Halmstad within many different musical fields such as reggae, rhythm ‘n’ blues, jazz, fusion, rock and pop. Currently, I am playing in the band Neighbours, where Fredrik Davidsson – the trumpet player IB frequently uses – is a member. This band plays groove-based, instrumental, funky jazz. We released an album last year called *Live at Gosta’s* on the Imogena label (IGCD 106). [Editor’s note: This CD can be ordered from office@isildursbane.se]

How did you become a member of Isildurs Bane?

– I knew Kjell and Jonas a bit, and both of them had heard me play live. As I recall, Kjell phoned me and invited me for coffee at the studio to meet the band and have a chat. We all got along famously, and the next time we met, I added bass to “Celestial Vessel”, the music to the inauguration of the “Himmelsbår”-sculpture at the turn of the millennium.

Which IB-track is your favourite performance?

– Difficult question. The recorded material tends not to develop in step with yourself. As soon as something is released you notice things that you think you could have done better or differently, but personally I like the experimental spirit which often occurs in the studio. Like on *MIND Vol. 4: Pass*, where I have overdubbed several basses – fretted, fretless, processed, double basses and harmonics with glissando – on many songs.

What equipment do you use?

– My main instruments are a Fender Jazz Bass and a fretless Peavey Cirrus. The effects are limited to a Zoom 506 multi-effect and a Cry Baby bass wah-wah made by Dunlop. My amplifier is a Trace Elliot AH300 with a matching Trace Elliot 1048 speaker cabinet.

Finally, could you name five of your favourite bassists?

– This is not easy, there are so many that I appreciate, but here’s an attempt in alphabetical order.

Aston “Familyman” Barrett, Bob Marley’s fantastic bass player. Along with his drumming brother Carlton, he made up the enormously groovy rhythm section of The Wailers.

“Familyman” carved out ingenious bass lines which he played with a thoroughly natural groove. He left a lot of space in the music very efficiently.

Recommended listening: *Exodus* and *Survival* by Bob Marley & The Wailers

Ron Carter was a member of Miles Davis’ second classic quartet. He is a phenomenal double basist who, along with Tony Williams on drums, pushed the envelope regarding rhythm section playing in jazz. I like his dynamic melodic playing and the way he and Williams created tension and moods in the music.

Recommended listening: *E. S. P.* and *Sorcerer* by Miles Davis

Paul Chambers, Mr. Steady. A double basist with a remarkable drive. One of the greatest jazz bass players ever. He can be heard on many classic recordings and he is always convincing wheather he is playing walking bass in a furious tempo or a romantic ballad. Chambers was always a steady anchor in any group.

Recommended listening: *Kind of Blue* by Miles Davis and *Giant Steps* by John Coltrane

Tony Levin. An incredibly good basist, very multi-faceted and a wicked feeling for how to fit in, or enhance, a song. I discovered him in 1987, on Pink Floyd’s *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, where Levin plays bass and stick. He is solid as rock within any context, wheather it be Peter Gabriel or King Crimson, or anyone else.

Recommended listening: *Us* and *Up* by Peter Gabriel

Jaco Pastorius. What can I say? The godfather of fretless electric bass playing. With his unique sound, he played self-assuredly no matter what he did. He was integrated with and lived and breathed with his bass, which he played with technical brilliance. A driving force in any rhythm section and an inventive soloist in the same package.

Recommended listening: *8:30* by Weather Report and *Invitation* by Jaco Pastorius

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So, what about that logbook? The time-consuming task of logging all analog and digital films in the IB archives is currently being undertaken by “Gicken” who has left no stone unturned in search of every moving picture of IB. The reason for this is that IB will release a DVD towards the end of this year. The plans are to mix a live concert (to be filmed this spring) with documentary footage and new animations courtesy of director Fredrik Timour. We intend it to follow the MIND-concept if possible. More news on the DVD next month!

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We are happy to inform you that we have a new outlet for our music in Germany. Just for Kicks have recently started to sell the whole back catalogue from Isildurs Bane. This is of course a splendid opportunity for our German friends to buy our music. Go to www.justforkicks.de and have a look!

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Over to you for this months questions. First a question from Ralf:

Are Jan Severinsson and Kjell Severinsson brothers? What about “Lingon” Johansson, “Gicken” Johansson and Mats Johansson?

The answer is that Jan and Kjell are brothers, but the Johanssons are not related in any way that they know of.

The other question has been asked by several people other the last few months, but since we haven't decided to go ahead with the DVD until recently, I have put your questions regarding IB on DVD on hold until now. To answer most of your questions on this subject I can say this:

Isildurs Bane will release a live DVD, most likely in the MIND-series. The information we can confirm on this so far is in paragraph two in this newsletter. The "Six Shots from Budapest"-video will probably be released as a DVD, but in a more substantial version. It is too early to speculate what these releases will ultimately look and sound like, but you can count on us to hear it in this newsletter first.

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If you like Isildurs Bane, particularly "The Asylum", chances are you will enjoy the original version of it, that is Viking Dahl's *Maison de fous*. The piece was composed for the Les Ballets Suédois (The Swedish Ballet) and received its first performance in November 1920 in Paris. The Swedish Musicologist Anders Edling wrote the following about the ballet company:

Posterity remembers this ballet enterprise above all for its commitment to the very latest stylistic developments of the age, which made it a forum of innovation. [...] *Maison de fous* provided the first example of the company's pursuit of modernism. The subject of this dance drama was a sombre one, leaning towards the expressionistic, as reflected, not least, by Nils von Dardel's backcloth. Surviving photographs show that the choreography for the ballet did not fight shy of the bizarre but flouted every convention of ballet. The ballet describes a mental hospital and its various patients, grotesquely distorted [...] The whole thing, in Dahl's own words, is "a symbolic depiction of human follies, self-love, eroticism, envy, vanity etc. – that is, an allegory of the chaotic life of the world at present.

To me, this work still has a very current feel to it, and Viking Dahl's words about the work being an allegory of today's tumultuous world fit even better than they did when he expressed them. As far as I am aware, there is only one recording currently available on CD, but on the other hand, it is quite good. It is on a CD called *Svenska baletter* on the Phono Suecia-label (PSCD 704), recorded in 1997 by the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ole Kristian Ruud. On the CD you will also find *Krelantems och Eldeling*, a ballet composed by one of Viking Dahl's peers, Moses Pergament.

Isildurs Bane's take on Dahl's work can be found on MIND Vol. 2: Live

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Best wishes from Isildurs Bane!

Thomas Olsson
Newsletter editor

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