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LAPD Band

by Michael Ellington

In this month's issue of the *Thin Blue Line*, the Los Angeles Police Concert Band profiles one of its professional volunteer members. Missouri-born John Hatton holds forth on bass playing in the swing band component of the Band.

He didn't start out playing bass, though. He remembers watching his father play a different instrument. "I wanted desperately to play the violin," Hatton said. "My dad was a violinist. He finally got me a half-size one when I was 6." Some years later, his father was the orchestra conductor at St. Louis area Affton High School. When a vacancy in the big band came up, John joined the group on upright bass. The son of the conductor got to take the bass home and figure it out. High school also gave him an opportunity to develop proficiency on French horn, tuba, violin and string

bass. Before he graduated, he played electric bass with a teen rock band called "The Marauders" and a Christy Minstrels-like folk group that called themselves "The North Door."

Hatton has been a member of the American Federation of Musicians for some time. That came about as a result of his time with yet another band. "The Coachmen" got a gig playing on a huge riverboat on the Mississippi in St. Louis," Hatton said. "We had to join the union. The union was strong in those days. There was a ballroom amidships, with a big band playing all the swing hits. The leader was one of the union execs, Johnny Polsen. So, I've been a member of the A.F. of M. since 1962. I'm glad I joined because I'm getting my pension now." His college years included a stint with a rock group, "The Fabulous Morticians."

Hatton grew up in a musical family. His mother played piano very well and cello. As mentioned before, his violinist father was principal viola in the St. Louis Philharmonic. Hatton played second violin in that orchestra for two years.

Like most musicians, Hatton held down the obligatory day job or two. He remembered working in a Kansas City Sears warehouse: "It was a summer job picking repair parts for Sears appliances. My feet were killing me!" When school started

again, he got a much less taxing job teaching guitar at a local Kansas City music store.

Great musicians who preceded Hatton served as his inspirations. From early on, while appreciating his father's musicianship on violin, he also found admiration for Russian-born prodigy Jascha Heifitz and string bass giant Ray Brown. "Weather Report" bass icon Jaco Pastorius is one of his idols. And he remembers Motown "Funk Brothers" bass marvel James Jamerson. The talented and troubled player not only sat in with him at a session but played one of John's basses.

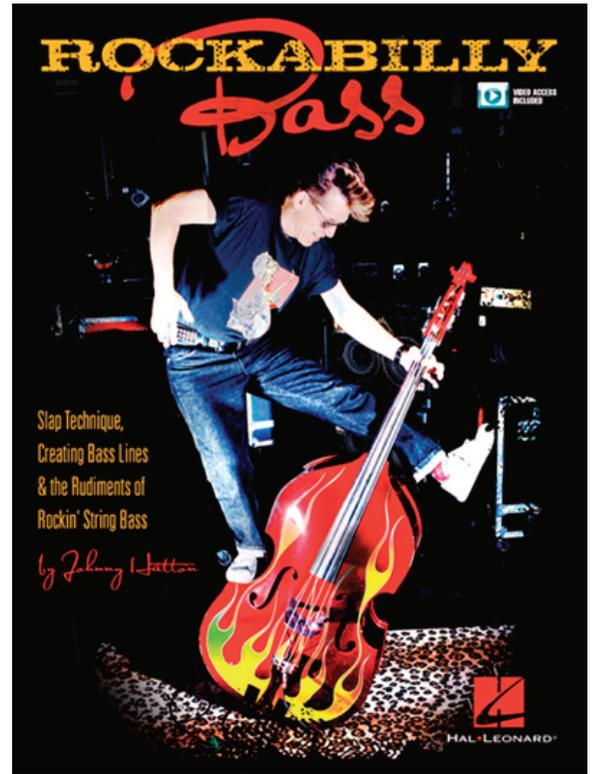
Hatton cites one of his dream gigs as the over 20 years he's played and recorded with "The Brian Setzer Orchestra." He's lent his artistry to the rhythm sections of artists including Dolly Parton, Liza Minelli, José Feliciano and "The Righteous Brothers." He and his wife traveled with "Gene Harris and the Three Sounds" for two years before moving out to the Los Angeles area.

Hear Hatton on Juice Newton's "Angel of the Morning" and "Queen

of Hearts." www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAugL8X-MI0.

To learn more about slap bass, get Hatton's book, *Rockabilly Bass*, at johnnyhatton.com.

For more information about the Band, see our website at www.lasown.com and contact Jim Starr, executive director, at sngcop@aol.com. For greatly appreciated donations, please go to www.lapolice-foundation.org, and in the "Comments" box, put "For the Band." ❖



The cover of John Hatton's book.



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