



Chris Squire

There are a handful of bassists who successfully sidestep the traditional, supportive and functional role of their instrument and push it into uncharted territories of inventiveness. In The Who's case, John Entwistle supplies the creative, flowing undercurrents of an otherwise straightforward brand of rock—though much of his work tends to be overshadowed by the more visual pyrotechnics of his three companions. With Yes, the overall scope of the music is highly exploratory and often complex, and surprisingly enough, the bass contributes just as much to the melodic content as the traditional lead instruments. It often emerges as the most prominent and easily recognizable aspect of Yes' music. It's made a good many people sit up and take notice.

Chris Squire is the man behind that bass. As one of Yes' founding members, he implanted his unique, highly defined playing style into the band's sound right from the outset. His approach frequently seems contradictory—majestic yet ominous, flashy yet subtle. He treats the electric bass as an expressive instrument but never forgets its all-important role as a strong, bedrock foundation for the band's musical statements.

Although Squire is firmly grounded in the rock world of the Seventies, his earliest introduction to music came not by the way of Bill Haley or Elvis Presley, but through the school and church choirs he sang in as a boy. "I just sort of fell into it," he reminisces. "There were some guys living around the corner whose father was a professional musician. He played clarinet, and his sons played recorders and were in the choir. I was only about eight years old, but it was really through them that I got

into the choir and, from there, into music. Some people might feel that it was irrelevant to what I'm doing now, but I really enjoyed it. I'm sure that's where my whole thing for melody came from. We had a pretty good choir, too!"

In secondary school, Chris' fascination with the power of choral music grew even stronger and combined with a new admiration for the soaring strength of the church organ. Although most of his contemporaries had discovered the glories of rock and roll by that time, he remained strangely unmoved by it all until well into the Sixties. Says Chris, "I didn't really care for rock music. I mean, I'd hear it on the radio, or go and see Cliff Richard and Elvis Presley films, but it didn't mean very much to me. Everybody else seemed to be into it, so I just went along with them. I thought Elvis was quite good for what he did but, then again, I wasn't into it enough to really have much of an opinion. British rock was a load of rubbish back then with those Cliff Richard things—and we know where *he's* at! It wasn't until the whole Liverpool thing that I began to realize that there was something worthwhile in that type of music."

Influenced by a schoolmate who played classical guitar ("though he was into rock"), Chris made a headlong dive into the rock world by purchasing his very first bass, a Futurama, costing around \$70. "Everybody else was playing, or trying to play, the guitar, and my initial reason for taking up the bass was that it looked easier. It had four strings instead of six," he muses. "I was tall, and it was a big instrument. It just seemed to be more the type of thing I should've been playing. I've got pretty big hands, and though I can play

6-string guitar now, I don't think I ever would've become a great guitarist, simply because of the size of my hands. I suppose the bass was the natural choice."

The newly equipped Squire moved into his first rock and roll band, churning out Beatles and Stones numbers at the local church hall on Friday nights, occasionally spicing things up with a genuine three-chord R&B workout, while continually battling to hear himself through his custom-built amplifier. As Chris describes it, "Oh, it was a terrible amp. The guy down the road had made it. You know, he was the type who got A-levels in physics at school and used to build all kinds of useless things in his spare time. He put some 15" speakers in a couple of cabinets, and hooked them up to an amplifier of his own design. You can imagine what that sounded like! It was all distortion, and I never seemed to be able to get heard when the rest of the band was playing. That might have had something to do with my using a more trebly sound, thinking that it was a way of being heard."

Squire soon found himself in the middle of the flourishing, mid-Sixties North London rock and roll scene, where hopeful musicians (most, barely beyond garage-band status) joined, quit, and reformed dozens of groups, all hoping to find the magic combination. Chris fared better than most, forming his first professional group, the Syn.

Although their Icelandic drummer ("he was a bit like John Bonham") provided an exotic conversation piece, the Syn also included two people who were to play heavily in Chris' musical future—Andrew Pryce Jackman, who did the orchestral arrangements for the Squire solo album, *Fish Out Of Water*, and Peter Banks, who was destined to become the first lead guitarist for Yes. This period also saw the appearance of one of the most crucial elements of Squire's sound, the Rickenbacker bass.

"I'd been working in a music shop for about nine months, and I ended up buying myself a Rickenbacker." Chris points out, "It was the fourth one to come into this country, I think. It's got a very low serial number. I believe they started shipping them over here before they were marketed in the States. Entwistle had one, the guy in the Kinks [Pete Quaife] had one, Donovan had one, and I had one. I still use that same instrument by the way."

The Syn embarked on a somewhat less-than-grand tour of England, traveling up and down the motorways, and eventually becoming semi-regulars at the Marquee Club—then the undisputed center of London's rock community. Though their early style was basically an anglicized version of Tamla-Motown, their first ("and instantly forgettable") single, "Created By Clive," was pure, undiluted pop. It sank without a trace. By 1967, the Syn had decked themselves out in gangster suits, and were presenting full-blown, strobe-lit "rock operas" on the Marquee stage ("this was long before Townshend did his thing"), which usually ended in a sham onstage fight—occasionally erupting into an all-out brawl when the audience's enthusiasm gave way to active participation.

Chris strongly feels that the Syn could have developed into a top band in time, but changing musical tastes within the group, complicated by the British Government's refusal to grant the Icelandic drummer a work permit, culminated in their calling it quits in 1968. Out of work and living in South Kensington, Squire spent the next nine months indoors, devoting his energies towards the refinement of his bass technique. "I suppose that playing bass on my own forced me to make the thing stand up on its own," he explains. "If you're playing with a group, you have all the other instruments to fall back on. But when you're playing for yourself, on your own, you have to make it interesting, so you tend to play it more musically."

During this period he did play with Mabel Greer's Toyshop, a notorious underground group, but the association only spanned three or four gigs. Strangely enough, Chris found them tame and ordinary, despite their reputation. "I suddenly realized that by joining them, I changed their sound so much that they lost their underground following."

The London club scene was at its peak during those years, and when not sitting at home practicing, Chris would be down at one of the more legendary establishments like the UFO, checking out the competition and keeping in touch with new trends and developments. "I remember going to see Steve Howe playing with Tomorrow. They were a really, really big psychedelic band. In fact, Pink Floyd and Tomorrow were the two biggest bands around back then. Steve really

knocked me out, I have to admit. And I kind of put him in the back of my mind thinking, 'One day I'll get together with him.'"

Squire listened to a wide variety of acts, centering particularly on American performers like Simon And Garfunkel, the Byrds, and Vanilla Fudge. He didn't have any decided favorites, nor was he especially influenced by any other bassists. "I'd started in my own direction by that time. I felt pretty certain about what I wanted to do, and nobody else seemed to be doing it in quite the same way," he states.

Shortly after his brief sojourn with Mabel Greer's Toyshop, Squire chanced to meet up with Jon Anderson, then working in London's La Chasse club. Realizing that they shared similar musical ideas ("We both wanted to form a more musical version of Vanilla Fudge"), the two set about putting their concepts into action—enlisting Tony Kaye on keyboards, the guitarist from Mabel Greer's Toyshop, and drummer Bill Bruford, who joined the fold when Chris and Jon found his ad in *Melody Maker*. Chris recalls, "We had an offer to play a Saturday night booze-up at some college, so we rang Bill up. We weren't really a band at that point, but we went down there anyway and did a couple of twelve-bar blues things—a slow one and a fast one—and finished up with 'Midnight Hour.' That was essentially Yes' first gig."

Squire was using a Vox AC-30 amp, but eventually traded it in for a 100-watt Marshall, and continued rehearsing with Yes in a cramped basement on London's Shaftesbury Avenue. The guitarist left eventually, and was replaced by Peter Banks. Thus, the completed lineup that, after a slogging apprenticeship, entered the studio to record the first Yes album was Squire, Anderson, Kaye, Banks, and Bruford.

To a great extent, it was Chris' stunning bass work, virtually leaping out of the speakers, that attracted so much critical attention to that debut recording. Over the years, his piercing, treble-oriented style has been altered and refined to fit the changing moods and personnel of the band, but that Rickenbacker bass has seen him through every change. Chris considers his Rickenbacker to be an integral part of his musical personality, and it remains, ten years after its purchase, the most treasured piece of equipment he owns.

"It's a really good bass," Squire attests, "but I've talked to lots of other people—who I feel know what they're talking about—and they can't get on with Rickenbackers at all. They say the necks bend, but my bass has been dropped, chipped, thrown from one side of the stage to the other—not recently, but it has been done—and it hasn't bent. I bought another one in 1970, which is a nice guitar—stays in tune, good neck, easy to play—but it doesn't sound the same as the old one. Something's missing, although it probably has something 'better' about it, because I'm sure they've tried to improve them. Still it just isn't right. The original back pickup—the all-metal one with the split down the middle—seems to be better for some reason. I went to the factory in Santa Ana, California, and found the last split pickup they had lying around the shop. They told me that the inside bit on the new ones isn't any different, just the piece over the top, but they definitely don't sound the same.

"The thing is, I've grown so used to that original guitar, and know how every note is going to sound before I play it, that I play to that guitar." He continues, "I know exactly how much pressure to put on each note to make it sound just right. It's the only bass I'm ever going to be able to do that with, because it's something that you have to spend years finding out. I think the sound I get out of that particular bass is unique, even though lots of people have tried to copy it. It's *my* sound, and though I own about fourteen other basses, and play them, it's not the same kind of relationship. I'll always turn to the Rickenbacker, and I'm still experimenting with it. There are so many sounds in that one instrument. There were many that I didn't even discover until two or three years ago. I've found a new, improved variation of the sound I've been using all along. It's opened up a whole new vista in my playing, and it's come from the very same instrument."

Chris still hasn't totally perfected the sound to his full satisfaction. He reports, "The whole idea for my sound is that it's supposed to be really pure—like the sound of a Bosendorfer grand piano. I'm always working on bringing my sound up to that standard of quality. Of course, it doesn't work all the time, because every concert hall and studio is different."

Squire emphasizes the treble, but not as much as many people might think. The volume control on the treble pickup is set full open,

while the tone control is backed off so that it's only about a quarter of the way on. For the bass pickup, the volume control is turned up about two-thirds full, while the tone control is, once again, about a quarter of the way up. The toggle switch is set in the middle position, all adding up to the recognizable Squire sound. As he thinks of it, "It's a singing sound. It flows. It has more depth to it than if you use more treble. What's amazing is that by making very slight alterations in the controls, I can get so many different sounds from that one guitar. But the funny thing is that if somebody tried doing it with a different guitar, even a Rickenbacker, they would more than likely end up with a terrible sound. Each instrument has its own point of response and, as I said, I think the sound I get from mine is unique. I've never heard anybody else do it in quite the same way."

In addition to the two Rickenbacker 4-string basses he has already mentioned, Chris owns yet another Rickenbacker (that used to belong to Donovan), along with a custom-built Rickenbacker 8-string bass and a Model 330 electric 12-string (with a 6/12 converter). From Fender, he has a Telecaster bass, a Jazz Bass, and a Stratocaster guitar, while his collection of Gibsons includes a Thunderbird bass, an EB-1, a double-neck (6-string guitar and bass which he used on parts of *Relayer* and the final solo passage of *Fish Out Of Water*), a Ripper bass ("it's a load of crap—a completely characterless guitar"), and an old Fifties upright bass, purchased more or less as a collector's item.

"Then there's the solidbody, short-scale Guild fretless," Chris adds, "which I used on 'Close To The Edge' for all those slide things. I also have a Guild acoustic 12-string, it is really hard to play; a Danelectro 6-string bass, which is really good because you can bend the strings; and one of those Ampeg standup basses, which I use for practice every now and then—grab it for ten minutes until my fingers get sore. I've got an Earthwood acoustic bass, which I played on *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, but it doesn't stay in tune anymore. Then I have a Martin D-45 acoustic guitar. I figured that as long as I was going out to buy one, I might as well buy the best. I haven't really gotten used to it, because I don't like the heavy-gauge strings that Martin recommends for it. But then, Rickenbacker recommends their

own strings for their electric 12s and they're better than anything else. The strings you get on their basses are also quite good. It's almost impossible to find a place that sells them though."

The strings Squire invariably uses are Rotosound RS-66s. He finds that they work equally well on all his basses, though he admits that he has little time for experimentation. "I don't mind that they put John Entwistle's picture on them either," Chris jokes, "In fact, I'm really happy for him, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Of course, ever since then, they've been sending me all sorts of new strings saying that if I like them, they'll market the strings with my picture on the package!"

Unfortunately, Chris periodically has to have his Rickenbacker refretted, as the round-wound Rotosounds have an annoying tendency to wear down frets. It's a necessary inconvenience, Chris feels, because the sound those strings produce would undoubtedly change if any alterations were made in their design, and the Squire sound would suffer. As for major modifications, Chris has had most of his instruments converted to stereo. He went through a period of using several amps for a true stereo effect, but discovered that he didn't like having the treble sound coming from one amp and the bass sound coming from another. Squire claims, "It's only when you put the two together, coming through the same speaker, that it sounds good, and then it's not stereo anymore. I gave it up, though I do use the stereo jack for effects. I might have a fuzz tone on the bass pickup, but not on the treble, for example."

Besides working on his sound, Chris has been subtly changing his playing style, becoming noticeably more economical over the past couple of years, particularly around the time of *Tales From Topographic Oceans*. His earlier work was often complex. But his recent contributions have revealed a more bass-like approach—far more streamlined and spare. It's one that adheres to the basic rhythmic structure more closely. He feels, "I've been more conscious of that lately. When you're younger, you tend to be a little more extroverted, but you naturally learn a lot along the way. Basically, I'm trying to combine the best aspects of both the lead role and the strictly bass role. I think it's possible to do it.

There's only so much you can do on the bass. You can play a solo like I did on *Yessongs* that's very trebly and fast, but at the end of the day you always try to put aside what you did, appreciate it for what it was, and try to improve on it. That often means making your ideas a bit simpler—more concise. It's the only way you can keep getting better and I think I am."

With *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, Chris seemed to be exploring the subtler aspects of melodic structures and interaction, the one thing he feels most bassists *don't* do, which probably explains why they go unnoticed by the general listening public. He doesn't feel that it's the riffs (as in "Roundabout" from *Fragile*) that attract people to his playing, but his choice of individual notes over certain chords—the melodic line of the bass superimposed over whatever the other instruments are playing.

It's a classical way of thinking (mixed with a dose of rock thinking, of course) that aims to create pleasing, and often unusual harmonies, avoiding the obvious path that leads towards the root note of the overriding chord. But then, there are times when the obvious turns out to be the right thing to play, though, as Chris points out, "it all comes down to knowing what the right thing is. I follow the vocal a lot in what I play. Not directly, of course, but I like to use it as a center, playing in, out, and around it. I find that I usually relate more to the basic melody line of the song than to what's going on in the middle—the chords and all."

Chris' fluidity is the product of a highly developed fingering and picking technique. He can reel off lightning runs with a flowing sense of ease often found among guitarists, but rarely among bassists. He generally uses a Herco heavy or a tortoiseshell pick, varying his approach between direct alternate picking and straight downward picking, depending on the musical situation. Squire reports, "When I use a plectrum, it doesn't stick out very far. I play with the plectrum and then with my thumb immediately afterwards. It's a double-action thing. You get the attack and then the roundness.

"Recently," he continues, "I've been trying to use my fingers a lot more than the plectrum. A couple of the things on my solo album were done that way. I've always used my fingers for soft, bass-pickup kinds of things—

quiet things—but for some of the things I'm doing now, I'm using my fingers to play loudly as well. By using your fingers, you can get, for want of a better term, more 'soul' out of the instrument. The music physically circulates through your body—from one hand, through the string to the other hand. And from there through your whole body. It's something that's really part of you, without a piece of tortoiseshell or plastic getting in the way. Strangely enough, I find that I can get more attack with my fingers than if I'm using a plectrum. I can't play anywhere near as well with my fingers, but I'm quite happy with some of the things I've worked out that way. I want to work on using all the fingers on my right hand separately."

For left-hand fretting, Chris uses all four fingers to get the notes he's after—including that little finger. "For some reason, I've always done it. I knew it was a cop-out *not* to do it," he avers, "simply because most people don't. My 3rd finger is probably the one I use most, and while I don't depend on my 4th finger that much, I find I probably use less of my 2nd finger. I think it's really important that when you first start doing something, you do it right straight from the beginning. Any bad habits you form will only hinder you later on."

Squire believes that finger exercises are beneficial when mastering any musical instrument. "If I had a son born to me, and from the age of two taught him how to do finger exercises every day, then gave him a guitar six months later, he'd be *incredible* by the time he reached fifteen. And that's a fact, providing he was interested in it, of course. But I don't know if constant practice and finger exercises are all there is to playing an instrument. You have to use your mind and imagination as well. I feel that your background and what sort of surroundings you live in are just as important in determining the kind of musician you'll turn out to be."

Shortly after *Close To The Edge* was recorded, drummer Bill Bruford moved on and was replaced by Alan White. Chris feels that this has had much to do with his move toward simplification, "I often felt, even before Alan arrived, that I was possibly playing too much, though I was never really sure. With Bill, the things that I did felt right. But during the transitional period when Alan came, I was able to experiment with playing less, just because of

his style. I was more careful about what I was doing as well. We had to feel each other out, which is always the case when you change a member of the rhythm section. The drummer and bass player have to hit on a level of what works best for each of them. With Alan, I found that I was able to play a bit less than before and still get my playing across."

The more spacious aspects of Squire's playing ironically became all the more noticeable as the bass track on the last few Yes albums receded further and further back into the mix. Where his bass was the most consistently prominent instrument (as on "Roundabout," for example), it now blends evenly into the overall sound. A major exception is his work on *Fish Out Of Water*, where the bass functions as the nucleus of the whole extravaganza. Chris feels that his work was better defined on the early Yes albums because Bruford's drums were never recorded quite as well as they could have been. Since the drums never came across strongly, the better-recorded bass track seemed to push forward. When Alan White joined the band, Yes benefitted enormously from White's extensive studio experience, which transformed the bass and drums into a 'proper' rhythm section.

"I think what Alan and I played on *Relayer* was more to the point," says Squire. "Some of the bass and drum interaction on there is better than anything to be found on previous Yes LPs. But then, it's generally down to the quality of the mixing. With *Close To The Edge*, *Topographic Oceans*, and *Relayer*, we got into doing many more overdubs, and the more you try to put into that 'sandwich,' the further back everything gets pushed. There's much less space for everything to come through. In the case of our more recent music, it wouldn't have worked to have had the bass as loud as it was on 'Roundabout.' It would've been too clustered."

When working in the studio, Yes rarely stick to one tried-and-true mode of operation. With the possible exception of Steve Howe's solo guitar pieces, no one ever walks into the studio with a thoroughly arranged piece of music. Recording is more or less done by ear—a riff here, a chord sequence there with bits and pieces fitted together in building-block fashion.

"I like music that's primarily created from the bass and the basic melody line, with all the

other stuff laid in afterwards. A lot of chords often mean nothing to me, because all I need is a good melody to really get me off." He notes, "If I've figured out a specific bass riff, I find it interesting to see what the others put on top. But only after I've laid it down on tape. We never record a whole twenty-minute segment straight through. It's always done in sections. And while we always keep track of what goes into what, we frequently don't finalize where and how it's going to go until the very end. Then we'll cut a few bars out, add a bit, or whatever."

Yes spend months assembling their recordings in the studio and it's to their credit that they can adapt the music for 'live' performances—spontaneously recreating something that initially took hours of trial, error, experimentation, and electronic wizardry to get just right. "After recording it," Chris explains, "you naturally have it pretty well ingrained in your head, having been through the overdub sessions, and the vocal sessions. Then you get down to mixing it. After that, it's just a matter of being able to go out onstage and play it all the way through. But by the end of the tour we manage to play the thing as 'a piece of music.' Inevitably, it ends up being even better than it was on the studio album. It takes on a new identity as a total piece of music that one experiences from beginning to end. You feel the overall dynamics of the thing, and you know how you have to treat it as a whole, even before you start. You can give more thought to the actual portrayal of the music, without having to worry about what comes next or whether you're playing it right."

Playing it right and having it sound right (which are often two different things) are of the greatest importance to Chris. Even though he's found the perfect bass, all the subtle nuances he's developed in his playing would be lost if his amplification, both onstage and off, didn't closely match the instrument. Until recently, he was using a Sunn Coliseum Lead top and three Sunn 4x12 cabinets, which he discovered on Yes' first American tour. He recalls, "I didn't take any gear with me, because they were providing it there. So I tried out the Sunn for the whole tour. I was very happy with it. It had a very straightforward sound. When I came back to London, I bought the unit that Sunn had originally given to Eric Clapton for

free—but he turned around and flogged it to Sound City!”

Chris used that amp for the next six tours, but gradually came to feel that its transistorized innards left something to be desired. He went back to his old Marshall 100-watt bass amp, which he finds has more treble than any of the lead amps he's ever heard. Two Sunn cabinets remain in a 6x12 configuration, with four Gauss and two JBL speakers replacing the original Vegas that Sunn installed. One cabinet stands directly behind him during concerts, and the other at stage right (“mostly for Steve's benefit”). Normally, he sets the controls on the amp at: presence 10, bass 5, midrange 5, treble 10, and volume 5½.

The Marshall is also used in the studio, but is usually run through a Marshall cabinet with four low-power 12” speakers. For a change of pace, Squire will occasionally use a Vox AC-30 or a Fender Showman with a 2x15 JBL cabinet. He never puts his bass straight into the board, feeling that it takes all the character out of the sound.

Most bassists seem to shy away from extraneous effects, but not Chris. The onstage effects board that rests at his feet rivals those used by many guitarists. States Squire, “I've got a set of Du-tron bass pedals, which are kind of like organ pedals, only they use oscillators. I run that through the Fender amp and JBL cabinet. I usually play it at the same time I'm playing bass guitar, because it's very good for deep sustained notes. I might come to a point where the regular bass work will be trickier, and I like to have something more sustained running along underneath it.”

He also uses a modified Cry Baby wah-wah pedal. It has an adjustment that allows a certain amount of the natural sound to filter through, so he gets the wah-wah sound without losing any drive. He also uses a reverb unit, a custom-built tremolo unit, a muter pedal, and a Maestro Brass Master for fuzz, along with a German-made Compact phaser pedal with phase, modulation, and speed controls that produce a whole range of miscellaneous effects (“it's almost like a synthesizer”).

On occasion, Squire will plug his bass into a Pignose amp that's plugged into his Marshall. This gives him a dirty, fuzzy effect that, without losing any depth, distorts the whole bass signal. All in all, he's satisfied with his array of pedals and the variations in sound

they provide. He'd like to begin experimenting with onstage echo, but hasn't come across an echo unit that doesn't hum or hiss. There's an echo unit built into Yes' PA system, but Chris would much rather have a device onstage that he can control himself.

Chris shares John Entwistle's opinion that people overlook the importance of bass. In most cases, he admits, “It's really not all that surprising. I think most bass players have a certain mentality, which is probably the right one for playing bass the way it should be played. But I'm probably more of a freak, that's all. So is Jack Bruce. He's always



played the bass very much like a lead instrument. I mean, as far as acceptance of that type of playing is concerned, lots of people seem to dig it, even though it isn't the normal thing to do. On the other hand, with as many people as there are who seem to dig my playing, I'm sure there are just as many who hate it. I've spoken to guys in the States who are in other bands and come to see me or try to sell me a bass, and they'll say, 'Wow, I really dig your playing, but when I tried playing that way in my band, they told me to stop it.'

“As I said before,” Chris continues, “I think there's definitely a way you can combine

the best aspects of both the 'lead' and the 'bass' approach. That's basically what I'm working on at the moment. The bass is still there as a bass instrument, and is also important—but not for its volume or trebly sound—but for the actual notes that are being played, *when* they're being played. I mean, that's almost what Larry Graham does. He plays about five notes or something—well, that's being a bit unfair, because there's more to what he does than that—but when I saw Sly And The Family Stone four or five years ago, Graham didn't seem to do much more than that. His bass was so important, but he wasn't doing anything! That really made me think, 'Well, he's not doing all that [*Chris wiggles his fingers up and down an imaginary fretboard*] kind of stuff, yet it still stands out.' So that's a whole other area of bass playing, where what you don't play is just as important as what you do play."

A thin line separates creative bass playing from pure self-indulgence, and it's something that Chris thought about particularly when he was recording his first solo album. Although he had complete freedom to do exactly as he pleased, the bass often had to fill a purely functional role for the rest of the music to stand out and be at its best. "It's something I've always been aware of," he explains, "but I'm even more aware of it now. To get the whole piece of music across as a whole piece of music, there are times when the bass has to be fairly unspectacular."

Squire would much rather listen to the more inventive, lead-oriented players—"the freaks," as he calls them. He asserts, "Any vague similarities between their style and mine are purely coincidental. I really dig Entwistle, but he used to play with a more trebly sound in the early days of The Who. Then he suddenly seemed to go for a more ordinary sound and didn't seem to develop his style much further. Even still, I believe that the guy's a *fantastic* bass player. He has the most incredible technique for playing with his fingers.

"I like Jack Bruce as well," he continues. "I mean, he wasn't voted the Number One bass player four years in a row for nothing. Then there's Stanley Clarke, who I would say is a little too complex for the general taste because he's a jazzier at heart, though he certainly knows how to play electric bass. At the other extreme, I really like Larry Graham, who covers a completely different area. He has

a very universal style that most people can understand and identify with. I even voted for him in the *Melody Maker* poll! Then there's the guy who played with the Byrds: Chris Hillman. I've listened to him also, particularly on 'So You Want To Be A Rock And Roll Star.'"

A number of writers on both sides of the Atlantic have pointed out the strong similarities between Squire's melodic approach and that of American bassist Jack Casady. Chris relates, "I've listened to Casady, but he's never particularly appealed to me more than anyone else who's good. I heard him play something really nice on an early Airplane record, and I thought, 'Hmm, this guy sounds like he's going to be really good.' But I kept listening to other albums that they made, and David Crosby's album, I think. His playing just didn't do anything for me. I saw him on film in *Gimme Shelter*, but I've never seen him play 'live.' Maybe I should, because I've always felt that I play better 'live' than in the studio."

Squire is happy with most of his past work. He's become famous for his blazing bass runs, but that's not what he's proudest of. In his words, "Personally, one of the nicest things I think I've played is on side two of *Topographic Oceans*, 'The Remembering.' It's a very quiet song, and the bass playing is really gentle. I was playing the Guild fretless, and though it's not a hard sound or amazingly fast, I'm prouder of that than I am about some of the things I've played that people rave about. That section starts with a very interesting chord sequence. The key shifts for every bar, and the bass line just happens to bind it all together somehow by following a weird kind of scale. It's a very successful piece of arranging, and when I hear it, I definitely feel that I couldn't have played anything 'righter'—and one doesn't get that feeling very often."

He's not quite as pleased with everything he's done, however. "Listening to the solo I played after 'Long Distance Runaround' on the *Yessongs* album," Chris explains, "I have to say that I wouldn't play it that way now. I can appreciate it for what it was when I played it. But it's too clanky. It's just not mature. I'm not trying to say that my playing, even now, has fully matured. I don't know whether I should be putting myself down or anything, because it's what I did at the time, and at that particular time, it was what I felt was the right thing to do.

In three years' time, I might feel the same way about the stuff I'm playing now.

"Somehow," he continues, "a lot of my music and my playing has developed on a grand scale with a very monumental feeling. I don't think that's all I'm capable of, of course, because I can do much subtler things as well. But at this period in my life, I'm very into powerful music—not power in the sense of sheer volume, but in respect to dynamic power. Much of it comes from the things I used to enjoy when I was younger—with the choir, the huge pipe organ, and the guys with the straight trumpets. You can't help but be moved by that type of music, just because of the massive power behind it. I'm not really talking about the 'Hallelujah Chorus' type of thing, because I have a taste for a slightly more medieval form of music. You might call it epic music, but I don't have a one-track mind about it.

"Rhythm is the main thing, powerful rhythm. I feel it's something that there's not enough of. I don't want to be epic in the sense of [Rick Wakeman's] *King Arthur And The Knights Of The Round Table*, though," Squire points out. "That's not my kind of epic. Stravinsky's 'Firebird' is. It's the sort of thing where the bass can come into its own. So can the electric 12-string, for that matter. If I were fifteen years old and starting all over again on guitar, I'd find myself a really good Ricken-

backer 12-string and devote myself completely to that instrument. It's a totally different instrument from a Les Paul or a Stratocaster. It requires a completely different approach and way of thinking. But the sound you can get out of one is unbelievably powerful. I'm really amazed that more people aren't playing them."

Chris feels that he still has a lot of musical growing to do. Exactly where it's all going to lead is something that no one, least of all Chris Squire, can predict. He says, "You have to listen for yourself to figure out what sort of direction I'm going in, because I'm *in* it. I really can't be objective. I'm into making everything I do count. I don't want to be involved in something that hasn't had as much thought and concentration put into it as the last thing I did—figuring that I can do this one off-the-cuff and the next one 'serious.' I always try to be *interested* in what I'm doing, because it's the only way I'll put everything I have into it. I know I'm still learning. I can look back on what I did three years ago and think, 'Well, I wouldn't do that now, because I know how to improve it and make it more positive.' It all comes down to being open to change and not being so completely satisfied with what you've done that you stop growing. If you feel that you've got something going for yourself, keep working at it, even if people tell you it's too complicated—or too simple."