

ADELINE



FINDING HER VOICE

By Bill Leigh | Photos By Dennis Manuel

The stars seem aligned for Adeline. Since moving to New York from Paris 14 years ago, the singer/bassist fronted two albums with slick 17-piece disco throwback band Escort, including a self-titled debut, which made *Rolling Stone's* top 50 albums for 2012. Then there was a two-year stint playing on NBC's *Meredith Vieira Show*, which led to a bass-and-backing-vocals gig with singer CeeLo Green. Now with her debut album, *Adeline* [ad-uh-leen] — a funky outing influenced as much by Prince as by the Caribbean music of her father's native Martinique — Adeline is coming into her own as a solo artist. "I was always writing my own stuff," she says. "It just seemed like a natural evolution as an artist."

Finally releasing her first solo album required a bit of a psychological "push," as Adeline describes it. "I was a huge fan of Prince, and when he died I was devastated. People I met who had worked with him told me, 'He'd love you,' so his death kind of selfishly shattered my dreams of someday collaborating with him. But I was also inspired, because Stevie Wonder spoke about how fearless Prince was in his music, and that if you introduce fear into your music, you cease being creative. That hit me so hard; I realized I'd been afraid of doing this solo stuff, and I had no more excuses. So I just went for it."

Adeline had been a touring singer even as a child, and she took up guitar at age 15 to begin writing her own songs. Bass entered the picture shortly after she moved to New York, when a hired bassist cancelled the day before a gig, and her bandmates encouraged her to play bass. "I totally fell in love with the way it felt on my fingers, the way it sounded, the feel, and



just the attitude and everything about it. It was like, Oh my God, that's what I was looking for."

Once hooked, Adeline locked herself in her apartment for a year of intense practice. "I was lucky to be surrounded by some amazing bassists who could show me things," she explains. Chief among her bass mentors was Fred Cash Jr., son of Impressions co-founder Fred Cash Sr., who had himself been mentored by Impressions and Curtis Mayfield bassist and music director Joseph "Lucky" Scott. "Super Fly" was one of the first big songs I had learned; I'm a huge Curtis Mayfield fan and was really drawn to Lucky Scott's sound. So my mentor was mentored by my favorite bass player."

Adeline's bass influences can be heard all over *Adeline [ad-uh-leen]*. There's the Lucky Scott-style R&B syncopation driving "Never Know" and the disco octaves and hammer-ons of "Before"; the stuttering Bernard Edwards-meets-Jamiroquai pulse of "Echo";

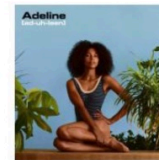
the taut, pocketed slaps anchoring "Emeralds" and "Café Au Lait"; and the greasy hip-hop subhook of "Satellite." She's also inspired by her contemporaries, like Alissia Benveniste [Bootsy Collins] and Brooklyn-based doubler Burniss Earl Travis II [Common, Robert Glasper]. Vocally, Adeline pays close attention to other bassists who sing. "Meshell Ndegeocello is my favorite, and I also love Larry Graham's work with Graham Central Station. In terms of singing and playing, technically, Esperanza Spalding does it at the highest level."

So how does Adeline approach playing and singing at the same time? "When I started playing bass, I learned the parts for songs where I was already singing. So I was already thinking of bass as an accompaniment to singing, but it's still extremely challenging. I realized that it was taking me like five times longer to learn a song than other people, because when you're singing and playing, you've got to run it over and over. Now it's

just part of my process. One trick I use when the rhythm of the vocals and bass are different is to count out the bass-line rhythm slowly with a metronome until it becomes second nature. Then I place the words in the rhythm. But that's why I enjoy playing for other people also, because I'm a bit freer on bass when I'm not singing at the same time."

When it comes to refining her musical voice, Adeline also focuses on getting a good bass tone. Her tools include Sadowsky basses and Aguilar amps. "Both Roger Sadowsky and the guys at Aguilar set me up in style for Meredith's show, and they continue to provide amazing support," she says. Underfoot,

a favorite is her Aguilar Filter Twin. "That's the one I really like. I use it for Bootsy Collins moments of slap with filter effects." She continues, "I'm a huge fan of Meshell's sound, and the last time I saw her play, it made me understand that I needed to spend some time on getting my bass tone, so that's what I've been working on since my last tour. I just spent more time getting the sound right in soundcheck and in band rehearsals." Adeline's bass tone philosophy is simple: "I really want to get my tone to be like a second voice, besides my singing voice. People focus on my voice because I'm a singer, but I want to have a pretty voice with my bass, too." ●

**LISTEN**

Adeline [ad-uh-leen], 2018

GEAR

Basses Sadowsky

J-Basses

Strings Sadowsky Blue Label stainless steel (.045–.105)

Amps Aguilar DB 751 head with DB 810 cabinet; Tone Hammer 500 head with SL 112 cabinets

Effects Aguilar Filter Twin, DigiTech Bass Whammy, Boss Super Octave