

# Bash Street Kid

Legendary bassist Doug Wimbish brings his Wimbash event to Ramsgate. Ellen O'Reilly dives into the moshpit

I'm sure many *BGM* readers are already familiar with the virtuoso bass playing of Doug Wimbish: he's played many a trade show - including the recent London Bass Guitar Show - and is world renowned for his work with Lauryn Hill, Living Colour, the Rolling Stones and Depeche Mode to name a few. However, he also has his own venture known as the Wimbash - and it's so much more than your

average music festival...

Doug has already organised one Wimbash here in the UK, and it was a roaring success - so when he came back over for round two, I hopped on the train to Ramsgate for the event and met the man himself. "It all started about 13 years ago," he tells me. "I had been living in London and New York, and I went back to my hometown of Hartford, Connecticut. A friend told me to check out a place called Sully's, because they had live music there seven nights a week. I became mates with the owner, and he said if I ever wanted to do something just to let him know, so that conversation went on for a while.

"Then Skip McDonald, who got me into the music business, was due to come home for a few months, so I decided to throw him a welcome home party. Now there were lots of musicians there who I grew up playing with, who are older and have kids and had become weekend warriors. So Skip was coming home for a long overdue visit and I thought, 'Well, if you have someone as great as Skip and we're getting together in our hometown, let's embrace some of the kids that are up-and-coming' so I started asking around about local bands. I

called in some favours and I got Living Colour and Tackhead to play. It was almost like holding a family reunion."

A spelling mistake by a hotel in Germany gave Doug his title for this initial party, which fortunately for us has grown and continues to grow, "The first event ended up being 10 bands, two stages and we ran it all day. It just grew from word of mouth. Some guys were there at the first one from Rock House DVD and they were like, 'We want to bring this to NAMM'. They were cool because they were making DVDs and were in among all these guitar and amp companies that are out at NAMM, so we thought that was perfect. I managed to get some of the LA folks and the cats that were at NAMM to participate. We got the party room at the Hilton Hotel and put on our first NAMM Wimbash. Lots of artists started to reach out to me to bring the Wimbash to their hometowns, and it went viral."

Since its inception 13 years ago, the Wimbash has started to spread out across the globe. Doug has taken his festival series to the Caribbean and all across the United States. The Wimbash also has an educational element to it, he tells us. "There were some old friends of mine who had relocated to the Dominican Republic and become connected to the DREAM project, which stands for Dominican Republic Education And Mentoring, and I got a call to bring Wimbash over there. We would have clinics on during the day: I'd bring my attorney down there to teach the kids about law and my accountant to teach them about money. We've also teamed up with the School Of Rock and since then every Wimbash outside the UK has had a School Of Rock chapter playing. When you see kids there playing and nailing it, it really rounds everything out. My vibe is, leave your ego at the door and let's have a conversation: all it takes is one conversation to make a big difference in someone else's life."

With that in mind, I made my way to a spot in the crowd to witness the Wimbash for myself: Doug opened the show with one of his legendary loop bass solo pieces, and then got the rest of his fellow players up - Skip McDonald, Jennie Bellestar and legendary producer Adrian Sherwood. Doug also used a local drummer and called the Northern Irish singer-songwriter Seraphim Kelly to the stage. Doug and the guys played sensitively for his performance, which was followed by singer Loretta Haywood. Mark Stewart of the Pop Group then took the stage and performed with all his trademark fervour, while Doug and the band created an almost dubstep dance vibe which complemented his style perfectly.

After jams with Skip McDonald and local musicians, the night finished off with Jennie Bellestar taking to the stage to perform some dubstep tunes which were so bass-heavy one of the speakers in the in-house PA system blew!

Doug and his wife Diane have big plans for the future - they want to be able to bring the Wimbash around the world and to a town near you. I'll be there: will you? ■