



Bass Ace

Peter Strand earned his rock 'n roll stripes in Yipes! BY NANCY HENDERSON



Peter Strand

LEAVENS STRAND & GLOVER

ENTERTAINMENT & SPORTS

CHICAGO

As a kid, it took a while for Peter Strand to find the right instrument. Piano didn't enthrall him, too many classmates played drums, and cornet just didn't cut it. In the late 1960s, when he formed a garage band with his brother and best friends in their Milwaukee suburb, he went with guitar, but it wasn't a perfect fit. Then one day, he hit a literal lucky break.

"I happened to break the two strings that aren't on a bass, so I started playing bass notes on a regular guitar," recalls Strand, 63, a founding partner at Leavens, Strand & Glover, where he represents artists ranging from authors and film producers to Cheap Trick guitarist Rick Nielsen.

A couple afternoons later, his lead guitarist told him about a bass guitar for sale at a local music store. "And that's how I became a bass player," Strand says.

He continued to play with his buddies until the group disbanded in early 1977. The following year, he and four other guys—two from the previous band—formed Yipes!, which he describes as "wild and punky and New Wavy and raucous and fun," with a sound "a little less polished than The Cars, a little less poppy and a little more rocky than The Knack." After landing a recording contract with Millennium Records, and in-between club gigs, Yipes! began opening for headliners like Foreigner, Jefferson Starship and Kansas.

"When you're 22, 23, 24 years old and you're driving around from Madison to Oostburg to Sheboygan to La Crosse and then to Iowa City, you're having a blast," Strand says. "You don't think of it as hard work. It's only when I look back at it now that I get exhausted thinking about the hours we put in. We literally played 250 to 280 times a year."

Strand had toyed with the idea of practicing law but put the notion on hold while earning his journalism degree. But the idea of "sweeping floors, selling ads, doing the overnight shift and writing all the copy" at small radio stations soon lost its appeal, and he opted to work fulltime as a musician. In 1981, the record label dropped Yipes! and a few years (and one more band) later, Strand enrolled in law school. In 1987, he moved to Chicago with his wife and began practicing commercial litigation.

Within a month, musical peers started calling him for legal advice.

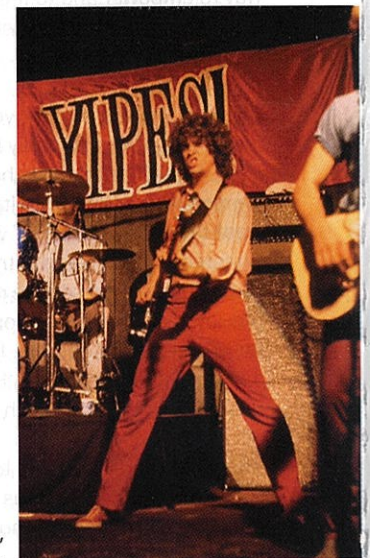
"I was lucky, because people I played with, or people I knew in the industry, when they learned I was a lawyer, started calling me," he says.

In 2009, Strand started his own firm with Tom Leavens and Jerry Glover, whom he'd met while doing pro bono work through Lawyers for the Creative Arts.

"These last eight years have been my favorite years of my practice," Strand says. "I think that, because of my background, I have maybe a greater capacity to empathize with [artists] with the struggles with business, and also I have some affinity for their artistic endeavors. So I think that helps me a little bit to be a better lawyer for them."

In 2013, Yipes! was inducted into the Wisconsin Area Music Industry Hall of Fame, where they gave a stellar performance. The members enjoyed the reunion so much that they decided to record a new album, which is almost finished. "It turned out that playing a thousand gigs together creates some kind of muscle memory and telepathy," says Strand, who also plays bass in a local "roots and folk-soul" group called Mystery Train.

"I heard someone say if you can quit the music business, you should. I guess I've never been able to do it," he says. "I keep a guitar out in my living room next to the chair where I watch TV so I can pick it up and noodle on it. I go to these entertainment seminars and it turns out there's a large number of very talented musical people that have become lawyers, and we borrow or beg guitars, or bring our own, and we find ourselves in some hotel room, with eight, 10, 12 of us singing and playing until the wee hours. It's just part of who I am."



Wide stance, red pants.