260622 ChatGPT What is your opinion of Danish Torsten Olafsson as a bass guitar player?

ChatGPT.com at 11:40 a.m. Danish Summer time

What is your opinion of Danish Torsten Olafsson as a bass guitar player?

My opinion is that **Torsten Olafsson was a distinctly individual and unusually melodic bass player**, particularly in the original ACHE period.

I would not characterize him primarily as a conventional “groove bassist”; his importance was much more structural and musical.

A contemporary 1969 review in *Vi Unge* is especially revealing:
it singled out Olafsson's bass playing because it **“did not merely function as a foundation, but took over part of the role of the melody.”**

The same review praised ACHE's ensemble playing as being “in a class of its own.”

That observation fits what I hear conceptually in ACHE:

- **Melodic rather than merely supportive.**
  The bass often behaves almost like a second melodic instrument, interacting with Finn Olafsson's guitar and Peter Mellin's Hammond rather than simply underpinning them.

- **Strong sense of architecture.** In ACHE's long, symphonic pieces, the bass helps connect sections and contributes to the feeling of continuous development.

- **Very close interaction with Glenn Fischer.**
  The bass/drums relationship gives ACHE much of its unusual rhythmic identity:
  Fischer can be relatively economical while Olafsson's bass supplies movement, accents and melodic direction.

- **Freedom within the ensemble.**
  ACHE was fundamentally an instrumental and highly interactive band, with spontaneous improvisation reportedly forming an important part of their concerts.

- **A broad conception of the instrument.**
  Olafsson's musical activities extended beyond electric bass to acoustic bass, guitar, vibraphone, percussion and other instruments;
  he also continued performing bass and vocals in later ACHE incarnations.

What makes him particularly interesting historically is **the date**.
This was 1968–71, when the vocabulary of progressive-rock bass was still developing.
So I would hesitate to judge him exclusively against later virtuoso bassists whose instruments became much more foregrounded.
Olafsson's achievement was instead to make the bass **an active compositional voice inside a four-piece symphonic-rock ensemble**.

I would therefore put it this way:

Torsten Olafsson was not ACHE's bass player merely because somebody had to play bass.
He was one of the musicians who helped determine what ACHE sounded like.

And that is probably the most important distinction.

His bass playing seems inseparable from the band's particular musical language:
dark, melodic, rhythmically mobile, harmonically adventurous and unusually dependent on collective interplay.

The contemporary evidence specifically supports the idea that listeners noticed this quality at the time, rather than it being purely a later retrospective interpretation.

So, if I had to give a concise assessment:

a highly musical, melodic and ensemble-oriented bassist, with a genuinely distinctive role in early Danish progressive/symphonic rock.

I would regard his contribution to ACHE as considerably more important than the relatively small amount of discussion of him as a bass player might suggest.