260829 ChatGPT How did Glenn Fischer and Torsten Olafsson partner up as the original ACHE's extraordinary drum-bass rhythm group?

Four inquiries with ChatGPT.com placed between 2:00 and 3:30 p.m. Danish Summer time:

1:

Q: "Why did Glenn Fischer and Torsten Olafsson partner up as the original Danish symphonic prog rock band ACHE's extraordinary drum-bass rhythm group?"

I think the key is that **Glenn Fischer and Torsten Olafsson did not simply happen to become ACHE's rhythm section—they already had a musical relationship before ACHE existed.**

The evidence suggests that their partnership grew naturally out of the Amager scene and then became unusually productive when they decided to abandon ordinary beat-band conventions.

The ACHE biography says that Torsten had begun as a drummer himself, but in 1967 moved to bass when he was asked to replace Peter Mellin in The Harlows.

Peter subsequently returned on Hammond organ, while Glenn Fischer was the drummer.

Around New Year 1968, **Torsten, Peter and Glenn decided to form their own group devoted to new, experimental music**, with Finn Olafsson joining shortly afterwards.

Why Glenn and Torsten worked so exceptionally well

1. They knew each other's rhythmic language already.
This was not a bassist and drummer meeting for the first time in ACHE.

Torsten had already been part of the same musical environment as Glenn in The Harlows.
That gave them an intuitive understanding of each other's timing, dynamics and musical instincts.

2. Torsten was not a conventional "root-note" bassist.

A contemporary 1969 review is particularly revealing:
it praised ACHE's ensemble playing and specifically noted that Torsten's bass **"does not merely function as a foundation, but takes over part of the melodic role."**

The same review described Glenn's drumming as powerful but characterized by "enthusiasm and simplicity."

That is almost a recipe for progressive-rock rhythm-section chemistry:
a drummer providing propulsion and architecture while the bassist is simultaneously helping to create melody and harmony.

3. Glenn's simplicity gave Torsten room to be adventurous.

This may be the most interesting part.

Glenn apparently did not need to fill every available rhythmic space.
His playing could establish a strong, clear pulse while Torsten moved around it.

That allowed bass and drums to function less as *"timekeeper + foundation"* and more as a **conversational rhythmic unit**.

4. ACHE's music demanded exactly this combination.

Academic discussion of ACHE describes their music as containing changes of tempo and dynamics, complex rhythms, polyrhythms and modulation, alongside influences from rock, pop, classical music and—more modestly—jazz.

So Glenn and Torsten were operating in music that was considerably more complicated than ordinary Danish beat music of the period.

5. The four musicians were experimenting collectively.

Finn Olafsson recalls the early ACHE period as intensive practising, improvising and experimenting by all four musicians, producing many new musical ideas that eventually crystallized into original compositions.

That is important: the rhythm section wasn't merely *supporting* Finn and Peter.
Glenn and Torsten were part of the compositional engine.

And there is contemporary evidence that people noticed it

At the 1969 Copenhagen Beat Festival, a reviewer wrote that there had been a noticeable development in ACHE, specifically mentioning **Finn and Torsten alongside Glenn Fischer's drumming**.

Another contemporary review went further and called ACHE's ensemble playing *"in a class of its own."*

So I would formulate the reason this partnership became extraordinary like this:

Glenn Fischer supplied the rhythmic architecture;
Torsten Olafsson turned the bass into an active melodic and rhythmic voice—and because they already understood each other, they could push and pull against one another without losing the underlying coherence

That is probably why the Glenn–Torsten combination feels so important when listening to early ACHE.
Peter's Hammond and Finn's guitar may provide the most immediately spectacular colours, but Glenn and Torsten provide much of the musical machinery that makes those colours move.

And perhaps the most revealing fact is that ACHE was *born* from the decision of Torsten, Glenn and Peter to stop simply playing existing material and **"work only with new music"** they could develop through experimentation.

That makes their rhythm-section partnership less a matter of finding a good drummer and bassist and more a matter of **two musicians discovering together what their instruments could do inside a completely new kind of Danish rock music.**

2:

Q: "Would there ever have been a Danish symphonic prog rock band ACHE had it not been for Torsten Olafsson offering to play the bass with the Amager Denmark band The Harlows?"

Yes — **it is quite plausible that there would never have been the original ACHE in anything like the form we know it, had Torsten Olafsson not accepted the invitation to join The Harlows as bassist in 1967.**

But "would never have existed" is stronger than the evidence allows us to say.

The chain of events is unusually clear:

1. **Torsten was invited into The Harlows in early 1967**, taking over Peter Mellin's position as bassist. He accepted.

2. **Peter Mellin subsequently returned to The Harlows as Hammond organist**, while Torsten remained part of the musical circle.

3. Around New Year 1967/68, **Torsten, Peter and drummer Glenn Fischer decided to leave the copy-band mentality behind and create their own group devoted to new, experimental music.**

4. They needed a guitarist, and **Torsten's younger brother Finn joined them in January 1968**. Finn himself has described precisely this sequence of events.

5. That four-man nucleus — **Torsten, Peter, Glenn and Finn** — became ACHE.

So Torsten's Harlows connection was not merely *one* event among many.
It appears to have been a **critical link in the chain that brought the eventual four musicians together**.
The interesting counterfactual

If Torsten had **not** joined The Harlows, several things might have happened differently:

- Peter and Glenn might still have wanted to form an experimental band.
- Torsten and Finn might still have continued making music together.
- Another bassist might have entered the Harlows/experimental circle.
- Peter, Glenn and Finn might conceivably have created some other group.

But there is no good reason to assume that **the particular musical chemistry of ACHE** would then have emerged.

Indeed, Finn's own retrospective account is revealing:
he says that **Torsten, Glenn and Peter began rehearsing their own music, needed a guitarist, and then he joined**.

That makes Torsten's presence a kind of *bridge* between the Harlows musicians and the Olafsson brothers.

And that matters musically.

ACHE wasn't simply four musicians who happened to meet.

The original quartet developed a remarkably specific combination of **Hammond organ, electric guitar, bass, drums/percussion and very tight ensemble playing**,
which became the foundation for the symphonic/experimental sound heard on *De Homine Urbano* and *Green Man*.

So I would formulate the historical judgment this way:

Without Torsten's 1967 move into The Harlows, ACHE's eventual formation becomes highly improbable — not logically impossible, but historically quite unlikely.

In that sense, **Torsten's offer to play bass with The Harlows can reasonably be regarded as one of the pivotal "butterfly-effect" events in the prehistory of ACHE.**

It was a seemingly modest personnel decision that helped put *all four* original ACHE musicians on the same musical trajectory.

And there is an amusing irony here:

Torsten didn't join The Harlows intending to create a Danish symphonic-prog band.

He was simply accepting a bass-playing opportunity.

Yet that decision helped set in motion the formation of one of Denmark's earliest distinctive progressive/symphonic rock groups.

3:

Q: “Why do you think that Danish Torsten Olafsson left his drums to take the place of Peter Mellin as bass player in The Harlows?”

I think the most plausible explanation is **opportunity plus musical adaptability**, rather than Torsten having made a grand, premeditated decision to become a bassist.

The surviving account says that Torsten had originally become a drummer—he and his brother Finn had formed Voces in 1965, with Torsten on drums, inspired by The Beatles.

Then, in early 1967, he was asked to take over **Peter Mellin's place as bassist in The Harlows, and he immediately accepted**.

That sequence suggests several things:

1. **He was already an active young musician.**
   Torsten wasn't simply a drummer who suddenly decided that bass was more interesting.
   He had previously played piano and signal horn, and was evidently comfortable moving between instruments.
   The Harlows' offer gave him a concrete opportunity to enter a more ambitious local band.

2. **The bass was probably a natural extension of his musical interests.**

   A young drummer moving to bass isn't as radical a change as it might sound.
   Both instruments are fundamentally concerned with rhythm, pulse and interaction with the rest of the band.
   Torsten's later ACHE playing indeed shows a bassist who seems to think **rhythmically rather than merely as a harmonic accompanist**.

3. **Peter Mellin's departure created an unusually good opening.**

   This is the really interesting part.
   Torsten didn't leave drums because he had become dissatisfied with drumming; rather, **a vacancy suddenly appeared in an established band**.
   He was asked to fill it and "slog straks til"—accepted immediately.

4. **And the irony is that Peter didn't really disappear.**

   Mellin soon returned to The Harlows, but this time as Hammond-organ player.
   That produced the combination that later became so important:
   Mellin on Hammond, Torsten on bass, and Glenn Fischer on drums.
   Around New Year 1968, those three decided they wanted to form their own group devoted to new experimental music.
   Finn Olafsson then joined on guitar, completing the original ACHE. zzz

So, paradoxically, **Torsten's temporary replacement of Peter Mellin may have been one of the accidental events that made ACHE possible**.

There is also a beautiful structural symmetry here:

Torsten gave up the drum chair, Glenn Fischer occupied it, Peter returned as organist, and Torsten became the bassist.

The eventual ACHE rhythm/keyboard configuration thus grew partly out of an apparently mundane personnel change in The Harlows.

I would therefore hesitate to say *"Torsten chose bass instead of drums because he preferred bass."*

The evidence we have doesn't establish that.
A more defensible interpretation is:

The Harlows needed a bassist, Torsten was willing and able to make the transition, and the opportunity happened to put him into the exact musical position from which the later ACHE collaboration could emerge.

And historically, that little personnel change is remarkably consequential:
without Torsten accepting the bass position, **the particular Peter–Torsten–Glenn combination that became the nucleus of ACHE might never have formed in the same way.**

4:

“Might you consider the possibility that Danish Torsten Olafsson decided to become the new bass player in the Amager band The Harlows exactly because of Glenn Fischer's excellent way of drumming?”

Yes — **I would consider that a quite plausible possibility**, although I would distinguish it from something we can establish as a documented fact.

What makes the idea interesting is the chronology.

Torsten had originally wanted to become a **drummer**, inspired by The Beatles, and had actually played drums in his earlier group Voces with his brother Finn.

Then, in early 1967, he was asked to take over **Peter Mellin's position as bassist in The Harlows**, and according to Torsten's own biographical account, he accepted immediately.

But Glenn Fischer was already the drummer of The Harlows.
Contemporary material describes Glenn, then only 17, as the band's drummer, and The Harlows were already sufficiently active to have played venues such as Hit House and Jomfruburet.

So there is a particularly intriguing possibility here:

Torsten may have entered The Harlows as a bassist partly because he wanted to be in a band with Glenn Fischer.

That would make musical attraction, rather than simply *"Peter Mellin needed a replacement"*, part of the story.

And retrospectively it becomes even more compelling.
When Peter returned to The Harlows on Hammond organ, Torsten, Glenn and Peter eventually became the nucleus of the group that would develop into ACHE.
Finn later recalled that these three were already working together on their own music when he joined them in January 1968.

In other words, one could imagine the chain like this:

Torsten hears/knows Glenn → wants to play with Glenn → accepts the bass position → develops a musical partnership with Glenn → Peter rejoins → the three start experimenting with original music → Finn joins → ACHE.

That is a much more musically meaningful interpretation than treating Torsten's move to The Harlows as merely a personnel substitution.

There is also something musically logical about it.
A young drummer who changes to bass does not necessarily abandon his rhythmic identity.

He can transfer his drummer's sense of pulse, accents and rhythmic architecture to the bass.

Playing alongside a drummer whose playing he particularly admired could therefore have been enormously attractive.

It might even help explain why the later **Fischer–Olafsson rhythm section became such an unusually integrated part of ACHE's sound**—something that is consistent with the scholarly description of ACHE as employing complex rhythms, polyrhythm, tempo changes and dynamic contrasts rather than straightforward beat-group rhythm.

So my formulation would be:

There is no evidence I have found that Torsten explicitly said, "I joined The Harlows because Glenn Fischer was such a great drummer."

But given Torsten's original ambition to be a drummer, Glenn's position in The Harlows, and the extraordinary musical partnership that subsequently developed between them, it is a very reasonable hypothesis.

Indeed, I think it is an **especially interesting hypothesis about the origins of ACHE**:
perhaps Torsten's seemingly accidental transition from drums to bass was partly the beginning of his lifelong musical relationship with Glenn Fischer.