

BASSLAB L-BOW

5 STRING BASS GUITAR

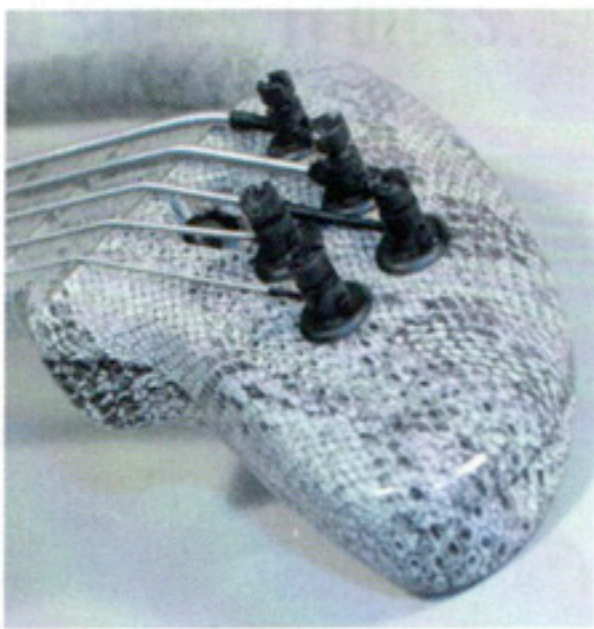
BassLab aim to stir the pot with something a little different. By Will Beecham

With the advent of shows like *Pimp My Ride* and *American Chopper*, we're all used to seeing the customised creations of workshops trying catch peoples eye and maybe even their hearts (aww!) but taking your bass down to the local shop and being handed back something that looks like the L-Bow is a good way to get your show axed!

WHAT THA?

According to the creators, a German outfit known as BassLab, this is a no-compromise instrument that has a few features that set it apart from the rest of the pack. Their claim is the super lightweight construction also allows 'high dynamic gain through all frequencies', a load of sustain and probably more importantly, an instrument that is not affected by temperature or humidity. All these things sound great, but how does it fare off the paper and into the real world?

THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY...



For your dollars you will be given a computer generated, hand made 5 string, 24+1 fret monster with Delano pickups and BassXX active pre-amp. You get bass, treble and a parametric mid control with a handy LED to tell you when the battery has 2 hours of playing time left. A layer of carbon through the body and neck provides electronic shielding keeping noise to a minimum. The tuning hardware is by ABM and headless with the tuners on the back of the bridge. Scale length is 867mm and strings are spaced 19mm apart. It's worth noting that regular single ball strings can be used with the string clamped down by the tuner at the headstock.

The neck is almost rectangular in profile and not nearly as strange to play as you'd think. Both the neck and the 'bow' above the neck are hollow, one piece and made of a mixed composite (carbon, graphite and other BassLab 'secret' ingredients) which including all the hardware

brings the L-Bow to a total weight of around 3 kilos. That is light, Around half the weight of a big old 5 string bass, weight might not be on the top of your checklist but is worth considering if you're doing long sessions or don't want to throw your back out jumping off a drum riser. Speaking of long sessions, playing this thing sitting down is awkward without still having it strapped on, there's nothing to attach to your knee!

There is little to say about the L-bow's appearance, that can't be summed up by a photo, you either love it

WOOD YOU LIKE TO HEAR IT?



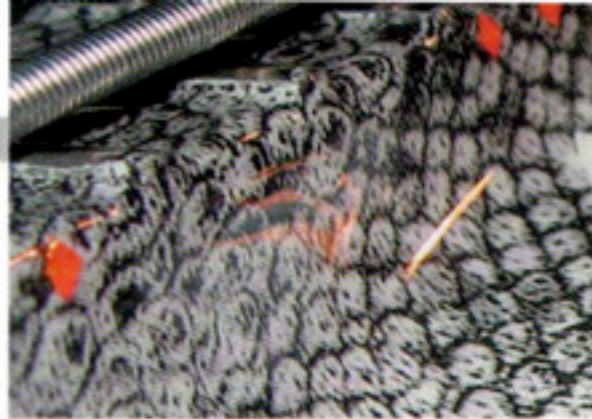
BassLab claim that their materials and construction techniques allow more of the strings energy to be transmitted to the body of the bass. This makes sense and in practice, they are actually on to something. Despite the woeful setup when initially handed the instrument, the B string has a definite clarity that usually sets apart top quality and inexpensive 5 string basses. BassLab repeatedly mention that they can customise anything to suit your playing style. This should give you an idea of their target buyer, and that is someone who knows what they want.

A trap here can be that you might not get to demo one of these units with your own rig and this is something I think totally necessary when going for a bass with a more radical design and a focus on 'natural' tone. The pickups tone control is wide and between that and any amp EQ you should be able to get what you need. I found myself chasing my usual mellow, bottom heavy tone and it just seemed to be impossible.

Regardless of preamp adjustment the attack is always sharp, almost brutal which could be the very thing that eludes more conventional basses.

THE BOTTOM LINE

BassLab should be applauded for staying at the cutting edge of bass creation, blending acoustics, physics and not relying on traditional safe designs. For styling and sound, the age of the tone wood is not over but if you're after a bass that feels and sounds very 'alive' and is eye catching to boot, the L-Bow could be just what you're after.



SPECS

Made Germany
Price \$4267 for 5-String
Scale length: 34"
Frets 24+1
Width/thickness at nut 51mm, 20mm
Pickups 2 Delano Soapbar
Preamp BassXX (bass, treble, parametric mids, active/passive switch, battery control-LED)
Power Supply 9V
Hardware ETS bridge, truss rod, string locks (no double ball ends needed)
Colors all, pearl and metallic effects
Neck shape flat "D"
Weight 2900-3200grams (about 6.3-7 pounds)
Available as 4, 5, or 6-string

CONTACT

Konig BassworX
0439 452 336
www.konigbassworx.com.au

WHAT WE RECKON

PROS

- ▲ LIGHT! Oh so light
- ▲ Top quality pickups
- ▲ Innovative use of materials

CONS

- ▼ "Unique" styling may scare off some buyers
- ▼ Quite a steep price tag

