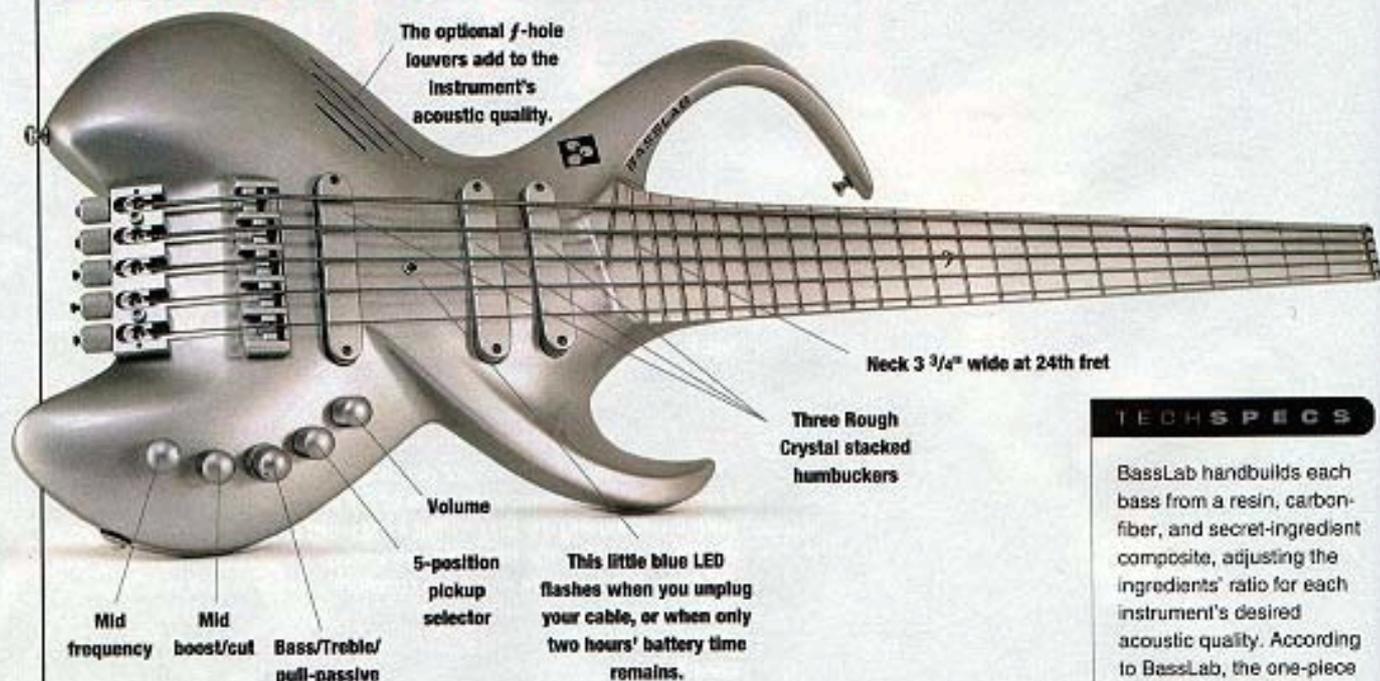


soundroom

ONE-PIECE MOLDED HOLLOW 5-STRING WITH ACTIVE ELECTRONICS

BASSLAB STD



BY BILL LEIGH

Like to go against the grain? Try stepping onstage with a BassLab STD. I did, and the instrument's radical design inspired all sorts of strange looks and bandmate comments at a funk gig. With its long, curved horns and ballooning body bouts, the BassLab STD truly looks like no other bass—but it's also built like no other.

Constructed of molded composite, the STD is a one-piece instrument that's completely hollow, even along the length of the neck. Heiko Hoepfinger, a German musician, physicist, and former acoustics consultant, bases his hollow composite BassLab designs on the idea that using acoustically tuned synthetic materials maximizes both resonance and string-energy transfer into the instrument body. With the STD, his main goals were to enhance clarity, sustain, and frequency response while providing good acoustic and ergonomic qualities. Though the STD's resulting visual aesthetic suggests strange science and a cold, metallic future, the musical result tends more toward a rootsy, acoustic sound,

with some distinctive characteristics.

Hoepfinger placed the BassLab's strap buttons in a position that encourages the headless neck to hang more vertically, allowing the fretting-hand wrist to be straighter. The curved body forms an easy armrest for the plucking hand. Additional gig-worthy elements include light weight and easy balance, a passive/active switch, and quick-change battery compartment—though I found the plastic compartment tough to open without tools. Three pickups and sweepable mid EQ promise sonic versatility, and the curved placement of the five knobs make them easy to reach.

BassLab STD

List price: \$2,875

Score 1 2 3 4 5

Construction: ●●●●●

Electronics: ●●●●●

Playability: ●●●●●

Sound: ●●●●●

Value: ●●●●●

Pros: Distinctive looks; flexible, traditional sounds

Cons: First position seems far away; no neck adjustability.

Breaking The Mold

While familiarizing myself with the STD's rich acoustic qualities before plugging in, I realized the unusual looks and tailpiece tuners weren't the only aspects that would take getting used to. First, there's the ultra-flat fingerboard and neck, whose relief can't be adjusted since there's no trussrod. (BassLab notes that trussrods are now a part of the production process, but can be omitted if the customer chooses.) Fortunately, string-height

TECH SPECS

BassLab handbuilds each bass from a resin, carbon-fiber, and secret-ingredient composite, adjusting the ingredients' ratio for each instrument's desired acoustic quality. According to BassLab, the one-piece body also maximizes energy transfer from the string, allowing for bass-body resonance to play a greater part in tone generation.

Scale length: 34"

Weight: 7 lbs, 12 oz

Body & neck: One-piece hollow composite

Options: Left-handed (no charge); choice of two humbucking pickups or three stacked humbuckers (no charge); acoustic soundholes (\$50); integrated thumbrest (\$50), ramp between pickups (\$80); small cosmetic headstock (\$50)

Made in: Germany

List price: \$2,825

(\$2,875 as tested)

Gig bag: Included

Warranty:

Two years limited

www.basslab.de

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