

GIBSON SG REISSUE BASS £1,230

BASS  GUITARIST INTERACTIVE



Gibson SG Reissue bass £1,230

Gibson moves its bass portfolio forward by looking back by Roger Newell

GIBSON SG REISSUE BASS

PRICE: £1,230

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Short scaled solidbody four-string

BODY: Mahogany

NECK: Mahogany, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH:

775mm (30.5-inch)

NUT/WIDTH: Corian/40.75mm

FINGERBOARD:

Rosewood, pearloid dot inlays

FRETS: 20

HARDWARE: Three-point fully adjustable bridge, open gear 'Shamrock' tuners – all chrome-plated.

STRING SPACING,

BRIDGE: 17mm average (centres)

ELECTRICS: Vintage-style TB Plus bass humbucker pickup at neck, bass mini-humbucker at bridge, two volumes and one tone control

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.8/8.4

OPTIONS: None

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Heritage cherry (as reviewed) and ebony at £1,080

Rosetti

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www.gibson.com

Historically, Fender gets most of the glory when it comes to the electric bass, but the single pickup Gibson EB-0 – Gibson's start-up bass launched in 1961 – and the dual pickup EB-3 have their own place in rock 'n' roll history. Both had a shorter scale length than the standard set by Fender and the EB-3 in particular was held in high esteem and championed by many respected players. Although cheaper Epiphone EB models have appeared, neither EB model has been available under the Gibson banner for some time. Until now...

In spite of the 'Reissue' designation this SG Bass is actually a brand new model, but to all intents and purposes it is the latest modification of the EB-3 and the continuation of the line. It's a stripped down version, being a touch less complicated electronically with just three controls. Individual volumes are provided for the two pickups and a single tone control, with each sporting the standard black top hat control knobs with silver inserts. The cover plates have obviously gone too, but otherwise all is pretty much in keeping with traditional styling. With the standard SG pickguard, short scale length and neat headstock from the early days – rather than the bulky ones that followed – all is just as it should be.

The bridge used here is the combo variety rather than the early single saddle bridge/tailpiece so offers much greater string adjustment, while the open gear 'Shamrock' tuners return again in all their splendour. This is certainly a fine-looking instrument, particularly in this wine red finish, that retains all the pedigree and glory of this illustrious range.

SOUNDS: Thanks to its slim, diminutive body and short scale length the SG Reissue is a very handy



The newer combo type bridge offers greater string adjustment

GIBSON SG REISSUE BASS TEST RESULTS

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

WE LIKED Classic design; clean looks; big Gibson bass sound

WE DISLIKED No complaints, it's good to have this style back

instrument to tote around. Even the weight is very acceptable. This makes it a very comfortable bass to play, even though the guitar-sized body with the strap button positioned at the heel of the neck does mean it's rather headstock heavy – but then show us a Gibson bass that isn't! There's a substantial feel to the neck and, as the fingerboard is relatively flat, the edge of the 'board does seem a little angular.

If you're a fan of Gibson basses then the chances are that you like a sound with plenty of thump. Well rest assured that this model is more than happy to oblige. The combination of the shorter playing scale and the two humbucking pickups is designed to give maximum bottom end, but the simpler circuit actually allows the sound to breathe more than on the old EB-3, so a cleaner edge is available. This serves to give the SG a more palatable tonal imprint and acknowledges the requirements of today's bass player. And with such a significant difference between the two humbuckers some very interesting sounds can be unleashed when blending. Rather than the warm hollows produced by two identical pickups this has more of a honky element that's ideal for funk playing, ➔



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PHOTOGRAPHY: JOBY SESSIONS

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Open gear 'Shamrock' tuners ensure the vintage vibe is maintained

The rivals

Fender Jaguar Bass	£770
G&L ASAT Bass	£1,129
Music Man StingRay	£1,195

The new SG bass is part of Gibson's history yet Fender's Jaguar bass is a recent invention. It has all the characteristics of a single-coiled classic and a sound that is unique. Although a child of the seventies, G&L's ASAT bass has classic Telecaster body styling, a pair active/passive humbuckers and semi-hollow body option. Music Man's original StingRay is still a mighty cool looking instrument and the model at this price comes fitted with a two-band EQ – three-band EQ and a piezo bridge are available too.

We half-expected to be a bit disappointed with this simplified model. In fact it continually amazed us with its forceful delivery and sumptuous looks


or even some heavy rock, as the notes are exceptionally well defined. Perhaps the most rewarding sounds available come from using the massive humbucker all on its own with a little tonal tweaking depending on individual taste. It's a huge sound and the kind that could only be made by a Gibson. Lovely stuff!

Verdict

It must be said that Gibson's output of serious bass guitars over the last few years has been nothing short of, well, pathetic. Apart from the odd custom build or limited edition there's been little to really whet the appetite. Now at last it seems that things have changed.

With such an illustrious pedigree, though, we half-expected to be a bit disappointed with this simplified model. In fact it continually amazed us with its forceful delivery and sumptuous looks. The SG shape was

a serious turning point in guitar history and never has a bass version looked so good when using an identical body design. This SG reissue offers all of the feel and performance qualities associated with this classic range and, as such, is a welcome addition to the on-going saga that is Gibson's curious bass designs.

Should you desire a brand new, full-on EB-3 with the four controls and a four-way selector then you have to look at the Epiphone version. This budget-line instrument is actually a very good buy and represents excellent value. Of course, we'd like to see the reintroduction of the EB-3 in its full glory, but for now the SG Reissue Bass is a welcome return to the halcyon days of the early sixties. Great to have it back, but you have to wonder why it's taken so long... 

Gibson SG Reissue Bass

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★

Back in the day

A brief history of the Gibson SG as a bass guitar

When Gibson revamped its Les Paul guitar designs in 1960 it introduced a sleek new dual-cutaway body that caught everyone's attention. But the design was so radical that it was soon removed from the Les Paul cannon and adopted the 'Solid Guitar' designation bestowed on it by the manufacturers. Thus the SG was born. A bass version appeared a year later as the remodelled EB-0 (Electric Bass) that previously existed with a slab body, and the EB-3. With its bevelled edge body, short-scale neck and two pickups this particular version was more than striking.

Equipped with two volumes, two tone controls and a four-way rotary selector switch (tone choke) with a chicken head knob, this impressive control array certainly widened the guitar's sound potential. Initially the bulky neck pickup had a black cover but this changed to chrome in 1962. The sound remained huge, but the two pickups were so mismatched in performance that true blending – as we know it today – was just not possible. Available in four finishes (red, brown, natural and later on white) the early models had a single saddle bridge/tailpiece with mechanical damper fitted. Eventually, in 1974, the four-saddle bridge was introduced but there were many variations beforehand.

During the period between 1969 and 1972 the bass underwent various design changes – including getting a slotted headstock – and a six-string version, the EB-6, was offered from 1962.

Coverplates came and went – for a while it gained an extra fret then lost one – then the EB-3L was introduced in 1970 with a 34.5-inch scale but failed to capture the imagination as much as the original compact design.

The pickups also changed position in the seventies. The mini-humbucker moved towards the bridge and the main humbucker developed a large gap between it and the end of the neck. The guitar finally ceased production in 1979, but during its reign Jack Bruce had played a few, while Andy Fraser of Free, Jimmy Lea of Slade and Felix Pappalardi of Mountain also championed what has become a truly legendary bass.