

BASS



# Peavey Cirrus 5 BXP & Cirrus 5 Redwood basses £399 & £1,520

Cheap, chipper and custom! It seems that Peavey's Cirrus range has now got the lot by Roger Newell

**PEAVEY CIRRUS 5 BXP BASS**  
**PRICE:** £399  
**ORIGIN:** Indonesia  
**TYPE:** Neck-through body, active five-string  
**BODY:** Agathis with natural darkwood top  
**NECK:** Multi-laminate maple with stringers  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 889mm (35-inch)  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Graph Tech/45mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**FRETS:** 24, jumbo  
**HARDWARE:** Black-plated Peavey-logo tuners with string-through finger-style bridge  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 17mm average (centres)  
**ELECTRICS:** Two VFL active pickups, active three-band EQ with boost/cut  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 3.8/8.4  
**FINISH:** Darkwood natural  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** Bubinga top natural, and quilt top tiger eye (both £399). Also four-string versions in same three finishes at £349 each  
**Peavey Electronics**  
**01536 461234**  
**www.peavey.com**

Unlike our guitar-wielding brethren, we bassists tend to cast our desired instrument net a little wider and happily acknowledge that there are several makes and models of basses around today that show real merit. This has become particularly true within the realm of the medium-priced basses championed by companies like Peavey. The continuing popularity of its Cirrus Bass range has spurred the company on to include some excellent new models. We compare a pair of fresh five-stringers from the range to see if they differ in more than just their country of origin.

Visually there are a lot of aspects that are common to both, like the neck-through body construction and the use of two VFL soapbar pickups supported by five controls. Both also employ a 35-inch scale length and even the neck dimensions are close, but there's more than the colour of the hardware to separate these two beauties. The finishes and the bridge formats might be the only obvious visual deviations but there's a lot more individuality here than looks alone will reveal.

### Cirrus 5 BXP

This new addition to the starter end of this ever-growing range promises great value for money. The exaggerated body horns have now become something of

CIRRUS 5 BXP	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
■ <b>WE LIKED</b> String-through bridge option; bottom-end growl	
■ <b>WE DISLIKED</b> Finish is a little too natural	

a classic shape and the general format of the species is obviously retained, but being built in Indonesia means material and production costs are kept to a minimum. The BXP has the slightly narrower neck of the two and it's only a bit bigger than those found on many long-established four-string models. This doesn't mean that the strings are too close together for comfort though, in fact the spacing is similar to that found on many Jazz basses.

Curiously, this is the model with a bank of individual bridges and a choice of surface or through-body stringing. This genuinely is a touch of luxury and one that is seldom seen on a budget line bass, which makes it all the more impressive here. The two Custom VFL active pickups make a strong visual statement as well as providing quality performance, and are supported by a three-band active EQ. This bass also benefits from an 18-volt onboard circuit, which is another unusual addition for this price.

**SOUNDS:** There is a raw quality about the look of this bass and it has something of a 'back to nature' feel about it too. Instrument balance is good, and generous rear scooping not only gives the impression of a very slender body but also makes for a very comfortable bass to play. The neck-through body design also helps keep things comfortable when making use of the full 24-fret complement, as well as improving string sustain.

Anything designed to expand sound qualities is always welcome, particularly with five-string basses where that low B string is such a difficult animal to tame to best effect. Fortunately the BXP's high voltage circuit – with a fully active pickup and preamp system – offers plenty of control options and, as a result, it produces a wide range of meaningful tones with powerful delivery. In fact, this is actually the louder of the two basses – but it's in the quality of the tonal response where the real differences between the models can be fully appreciated.

### Cirrus 5 Redwood

This is a very well crafted instrument with lots of attention paid to every detail. The basic design is the same, of course, but as good as the budget version sounds and plays, the Redwood



The Cirrus 5 basses: choosing between them is a question of tone as well as budget

PHOTOGRAPHY KATHARINE LANE-SIMS

CIRRUS 5 REDWOOD	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
■ <b>WE LIKED</b> Plain wood feel of the neck; hollow-tone extravaganza	
■ <b>WE DISLIKED</b> Lack of fret markers on fingerboard not to everyone's liking	

is in another class altogether. From the moment you put it on that extra quality is apparent in the feel alone, but other differences also come into play. The most obvious is the gold-plated hardware, but that's nothing compared to the cool graphite facing that adorns the Redwood's headstock, the non-glossed neck and the generous use of maple within the multi-laminated neck. The low-profile bridge is a really solid affair and assists in giving the Redwood superior sustain abilities. And much as we liked the through-body stringing aspect of the BXP, the bridge here has a super chunky feeling and is more solidly constructed on the whole.

The onboard preamp benefits from a circuit board and is powered by a pair of nine-volt batteries. This advanced circuitry allows you to get maximum effect from the bass, middle, and treble controls, so you can take full advantage of the cut or boost facility. A blend control is employed rather than individual volumes for each pickup and it is when using this control in particular that some of the major differences between the two models become fully apparent.

**SOUNDS:** Due to the way this bass hugs the body, the 35-inch scale is somehow more noticeable here than on the BXP. There seem to be acres of

### All the frets on the Redwood fall effortlessly beneath the fingers to offer a very comfortable ride indeed

unadorned fingerboard at your disposal, yet all the frets on the Redwood fall effortlessly beneath the fingers to offer a very comfortable ride indeed. String spacing over the pickups is generous and – as always – the soapbar units offer plenty of positions to place the thumb when using your fingers to play.

When the series was first introduced back in 1998, the Cirrus four-string bass had a distinctly rich character within its tonal makeup – both sonorous and full. Peavey has continued in this tradition and made sure that this particular five-string version stays true to form right down to the low B. That factor is particularly evident when the two basses are directly compared and it highlights a brashness and nasal quality to the BXP as a result. That could well be a desirable quality in itself, but here it does seem a little unsophisticated against the lush full tones on offer from the Redwood. Blending the pickups produces some vastly superior hollow tones too – revealing the added quality of sound produced by the onboard circuit, and while the 18-volt electronics provide the means to make this possible, there is no background noise whatsoever.


#### Verdict

The five-string format of both basses, with the extended range it offers, is very popular. And if money is the ultimate deciding factor in your purchase considerations then your choice here is simple.

If both instruments fall within your budget, however, this is nothing like a straightforward decision.

As far as comfort and purity of sound quality are concerned the Redwood wins hands down, but some may well prefer the rugged appearance of the darkwood BXP. Indeed, that gnawing string sound may also take your fancy and is particularly effective on the lower register – growling away for some monstrous metal mayhem or some seriously solid rock.

Whatever your personal preferences (or financial state), Peavey's dedication to providing a multi-level entry point on its bass ranges – as it does with its guitars – has to be applauded. It may not be a new trick but it certainly allows everyone a chance to take part in the fun no matter what their financial circumstances may be. And now that the full Cirrus ranges offers bolt-on or through-neck construction, as well as several alternative woods and finishes, there really is a great deal to choose from.

However, if you're really fussy and none of these production-line models shape up to your ideal then you can always visit the online Peavey Custom Shop. The Cirrus design is also featured here, you can order your own made-to-measure instrument. Happy days all round! 

#### Peavey Cirrus 5 BXP bass

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

#### Peavey Cirrus 5 Redwood bass

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

**PEAVEY CIRRUS 5 REDWOOD BASS**  
**PRICE:** £1,520 (inc case)  
**ORIGIN:** USA  
**TYPE:** Neck-through-body, active five-string  
**BODY:** Alder with highly figured redwood top  
**NECK:** Graphite reinforced neck with dual expanding truss rod and graphite overlay on headstock  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 889mm (35-inch)  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Graph Tech, 46mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Pau ferro  
**FRETS:** 24, medium jumbo  
**HARDWARE:** Gold plated, Peavey-logo tuners with milled ABM multi-adjustable bridge  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 17mm average (centres)  
**ELECTRICS:** Two VFL active pickups, volume, blend, active three-band EQ with boost/cut  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 3.8/8.4  
**FINISH:** Natural gloss  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** Maple 'board 5 or Fretless 5 at same price, four-string versions, fretted pau ferro or maple board or pau ferro fretless all at £1,370. A six-string, with the same options, costs £1,610

### The rivals

CIRRUS BXP & CIRRUS REDWOOD 5	
Yamaha RBX775	£545
Yamaha BB2005-K	£1,175
Tribute by G&L L	£2500
Plus	£589
G&L L-1505	£1,199
Fender Deluxe Active Jazz Bass V from	£699
Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass V	£1,299
Few companies offer what is effectively the same bass in two price ranges and the use of more cost effective materials comes into play for retail price. Yamaha comes out particularly well with their active five-stringers, with 35-inch scale and neck-through construction on the BB2005-K. Although the Tribute range by G&L has different spec – the L-1505 has only a single Magnetic Field humbucker – they are both very capable machines. As ever Fender has a huge variety of models and entry points. The Deluxe Active Jazz Bass V is particularly tasty and even its higher quality American built counterpart offers excellent value	