

Quicktest

Fender Cabronita P-Bass £790

Low down action for the Cab that's simple to love...

CONTACT: Fender GBI **PHONE:** 01342 331700 **WEB:** www.fender.com

With the whole *Guitarist* team totally smitten by the Cabronita series, it's only right that we take a look at the Precision Bass version. The basic shape comes from the original 50s model with an all-maple neck, Tele-style headstock and now with an alder body. The design worked then and it works now, but here with the addition of the Fender Hi-Mass Bridge and a single Gretsch-style Fidelitron humbucking bass pickup it offers a surprisingly fresh approach. In keeping with the classic vibe of the instrument, the tuners are reverse action open-gear types: absolutely the right choice with this headstock shape.

Add the usual Cabronita touches of a small one-ply scratchplate, surface-mounted controls and edge-mounted jack socket, and you have something that looks and feels really special. The only body contouring is a very welcome forearm chamfer, which helps to prevent your arm going dead during long sessions!



Sounds

So, how different does it sound compared with the regular model? Well, it's slightly more tonally 'compact' but surprisingly full and fruity with a very pleasing tendency to growl if you play hard. It actually falls rather neatly between the sound of the original single-coil P-Bass and the later split-coil so effectively it offers an entirely new sonic stamp. While the sound is clean, it's never thin, while the output level is high and it projects really well: absolutely no complaints at all.

Verdict

This bass fits beautifully into the current Cabronita experience and will delight most players. It sounds great, the weight is reasonable and the general feel is excellent, although the predominantly slab body won't appeal to all. **[RN]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: *The rudimentary ethos won't suit everyone but if simple is your thing, here's a very cool-sounding place to start*



Cymatic Audio LR16 £449

Live multitrack recording made easy

CONTACT: JHS **PHONE:** 01132 865 381 **WEB:** www.cymaticaudio.com

A stereo handheld recorder may be sufficient if you want to get a useful warts 'n' all recording of one of your band's gigs, but the balance may not be all that brilliant and you'll likely have to contend with audience noise and other peripheral clatter near the stereo microphone. It's probably far better if all the instruments (via mic or DI) are going through the mixing desk. This will allow you to record the individual channels to a multitrack recorder for mixing later, giving you a cleaner sound, a better balance and the chance to create a pro-sounding 'live album' that you can sell.

Cymatic Audio's LR16 Live Recorder will let you do just that, offering 16-track recording direct to USB with audio files that you can then transfer to a DAW for mixing.

In Use

Extremely easy to operate, the LR16 simply connects into a

mixing desk's channel insert points via TRS jacks, taps off some of the signal without affecting the front of house mix, and continuously records 16 wav files at 16/24-bit, 44.1-48kHz. All you need to do is hit the record button and it will capture a whole multitracked gig to a connected USB 2.0 hard drive. What's more, it also doubles as a USB audio interface, so you can use it to record to a computer or an iPad.

Verdict

If you want multitrack recordings of your gigs and rehearsals, the light and compact LR16, together with a pair of eight-way cable looms and a USB drive, makes a portable and cost-effective package for the task. **[TC]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: *A great way of capturing your live gigs. Just add band and talent*

Palmer FAB5 £420

Totally fab and groovy - Palmer releases a rather special small combo

CONTACT: Palmer Musical Instruments PHONE: N/A WEB: www.palmer-germany.com

From German speaker emulation specialist Palmer, the FAB5 is packaged in a unique cabinet, with textured paint sides and a two-tone speaker grille that wraps over the top. It's not just the looks that are a little different; where many of Palmer's competitors use solid-state stuff in the preamp or rectifier, the FAB5 is a real all-valve design, using a single 12AX7 preamp, a 6V6 power valve and an EZ81 rectifier. It's all built to a decent standard and looks capable of standing up to a few knocks. The controls are simple, with knobs for volume tone and boost level, while on the back panel there's a three-step built-in attenuator,

an external speaker jack and a footswitch socket that lets you connect a standard latching footswitch to operate the boost. Don't have one? No problem, because the boost is preset to on, not off.

Sounds

The best way to have fun with the FAB5 is to turn everything up to 10 and use the rear panel attenuator to moderate the volume coming out of the excellent Eminence Ragin' Cajun 10-inch speaker. There's a huge variety of overdrive and distortion effects from brash, blazing classic rock stuff to a sweeter, almost-clean rhythm sound. Thanks to the valve



rectifier, the FAB5 has a very cool dynamic response that acts almost as a natural compressor, smoothing out peaks and adding a little sustain to make even the dullest guitars sing.

Verdict

If you just want a practice amp you can spend a lot less, but the FAB5's boutique-quality tone can mix it with amps that cost

two or even three times as much. For a real all-valve combo with solid build quality and a great loudspeaker, we think it's a steal. Check it out soon. [NG]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: *Totally FAB, this little all-valve tone monster offers immense flexibility and has recording amp written all over it*

G2D Morpheus £199

It's the pedal for the metal

CONTACT: G2D PHONE: N/A WEB: www.g2d.co.nz

New Zealand pedal manufacturer G2D describes the Morpheus Distortion as "a hard out distortion pedal not for the faint-hearted", reminding you that what you're getting is a distortion stompbox that has been designed with metal guitarists in mind.

A four-knob pedal that runs off a battery or a power supply from nine to 18 volts, the Morpheus has standard volume, tone and drive controls, but also features a noise gate. To get rid of any hiss you simply turn the knob clockwise until it disappears - operation is not at all intrusive at the threshold and you won't cut off the tails of any notes. You can, though, turn the knob further if you really want it

to clamp down hard so you can use it for really tight rhythm playing or as a percussive effect at the start of notes.

Sounds

There's loads of rich distortion available here, spanning a range not dissimilar to a Pro Co RAT and all delivered via a tone control that runs from dark and weighty through to letting you emphasise the upper frequency area where your sound will best cut through.

Verdict

Okay, it's promoted as a metal or hard rock pedal and succeeds



admirably in that role, but strip the macho branding away and what you've really got is a distortion pedal that delivers a very nice flavour of grit that could also suit several other genres of music. [TC]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: *Decent, if a little overpriced, distortion from Down Under if you don't mind a three-inch-tall pedal*

Squier Vintage Modified Bass VI £358

A bass that guitarists will love? Step right down...

CONTACT: Fender GBI PHONE: 01342 331700 WEB: www.fender.com

While the laws of taste and decency dictate that the correct number of strings for an electric bass guitar is four, the Fender Bass VI is the exception that proves the rule. Introduced in 1961 as a competitor to the Danelectro UB2, the Bass VI's 30-inch scale, trio of single-coil pickups and Jazzmaster-style vibrato marked it out as more of a natural lead instrument despite being designed to be tuned an octave below a conventional guitar. Its unique sound and achingly cool looks saw the Bass VI find favour with Jet Harris and Jack Bruce, while Lennon and Harrison both used one during sessions for The White Album, *Let It Be* and *Abbey Road*.

The model was discontinued in 1975, and original examples now command prices way beyond the mortal pocket. But happily, NAMM 2013 saw the Bass VI revived, albeit in streamlined form, in Fender's Pawn Shop Series for £826. We reviewed it in issue 367 and found it to be a thoroughly inspirational ride, but the price may still be a little off-putting for something that most would regard as a luxury rather than essential purchase.

Enter from stage left, then, this much more affordable new Squier Vintage Modified model. It shares the Fender's 762mm (30-inch) scale and modern C-shape neck, but resurrects the individual on/off pickup slider switches and low cut 'strangle' switch that featured on the second iteration of the Bass VI, which followed the Jaguar's introduction in 1962.

Out of the box, it's strung with wound 0.025 to 0.095 strings compared with the Pawn Shop's factory-fitted 0.024 to 0.084s,

which lend it more of a bass-like response compared to the Fender's baritone-style feel. It's worth experimenting with gauges and tunings to see what best suits. The Squier's fit and finish is excellent for the price and the floating vibrato bridge is smooth and stable despite the lack of a locking mechanism – just be prepared to give it a little more welly than you would a regular six-string's whammy!

Sounds

If you've never played a Bass VI before you're in for a mind-expanding treat; full chords work best when you choose root notes from A upwards, but even partial chords are rich with harmonic overtones. Into a clean amp, just add reverb and vintage-style tremolo and be prepared to lose hours. The bridge pickup and 'strangle' switch are particularly useful with added drive, but this is such a versatile and expressive instrument overall that if you're using it to layer parts in the studio you might find that you don't reach for a regular electric guitar at all, such is the range and depth on offer.

Verdict

With street prices currently as low as £274, it's difficult to find a reason not to recommend a musical tool as useful and inspirational as this. Much more than just a retro curio, the Bass VI is a must-try for forward-thinking musicians. **[CV]**

GUITARIST RATING: ★★★★★

Guitarist says: *Whether your playing encompasses 60s surf, post-rock or anything else for that matter, at this price, the Squier Bass VI is a no-brainer*

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T-Rex Alberta II & Fuel Tank Goliath

£199 & £250

Two monster classics, revived

CONTACT: Westside Distribution **PHONE:** 0141 248 4812 **WEB:** www.t-rex-effects.com

Since its inception back in 1996, T-Rex has made an impressive imprint on the effects world, thanks to an ever-expanding range of carefully engineered stompboxes and accessories. Two of the company's biggest successes are the Alberta overdrive and Fuel Tank range of power supplies – and both have seen recent updates in the form of the Alberta II and Fuel Tank Goliath.

Legend has it that some players loved the original Alberta overdrive so much that they would use two of them: one for rhythm, and one for solos. The Alberta II gives those guitarists exactly what they want, offering up two channels of dirt, each with a fat switch for extra low-end punch. T-Rex has also imparted channel two with a more open, less compressed sound for lighter overdriven tones, while still retaining the same Alberta voicing.

With a capacity befitting its name, the Fuel Tank Goliath

offers a whopping 3,000mA of power for pedals – almost double that of the Fuel Tank Classic and Chameleon. It delivers the goods via seven outputs: five 9/12-volt outputs at 450mA each, one 18-volt 250mA output, and a 12-volt AC output at 450mA. Finally, all that comes in a weighty 1.4kg metal enclosure, with switchable 115/230 voltage.

In Use

Like the original Alberta, this sequel delivers smooth-as-butter Tube Screamer-esque overdrive, with a healthy mid kick and a raunchy American flavour. Wind up channel one's gain, crank the volume and you're in Texas blues territory, while lower-gain settings retain crisp note definition, ideal for extended chords.

True to T-Rex's word, channel two has a noticeably less compressed nature than its hotter counterpart, offering a more transparent, boutique take

on the classic Tube Screamer sound. Another thoughtful addition is the fat switch on each channel, which gives the low-end a boost. It's perfect for transitioning between home and gig tones: flick the fat switch on for playing alone, then off to let the bass take over the low end, either on stage or in the studio.

The Fuel Tank Goliath also offers up a range of goodies: in the box, you'll find a pedalboard mounting plate, plus just about every right-angled power cable you could think of, including mini-jack, polarity inverter and current-doubler options. But while other pedal power supplies offer more isolated outputs, the Goliath produces enough milliamps to allow you to daisy-chain multiple pedals from one output – a link cable is included for this purpose.

Try as we might, we couldn't overload the Goliath. It copes admirably with power-guzzling digital delay units, valve-powered drives and daisy-

chained analogue pedals – all without hum or hiss. But while the 18-volt output is a boon for anyone who likes increased headroom on compatible overdrive pedals, most users will struggle to find use for the 12-volt AC output. Still, there should be enough power from the other six outputs to satisfy most pedal hounds.

Verdict

They're not the cheapest examples on the market, but the Alberta II and Fuel Tank Goliath demonstrate T-Rex's unending dedication to improvement. Both offer superb attention to detail and build quality, and are sure to find a home on many a guitar player's pedalboard. **[MB]**

GUITARIST RATING

T-Rex Alberta II ★★★★★
Fuel Tank Goliath ★★★★★

Guitarist says: An exceptionally smooth blues overdrive and highly capable power supply

Martin LX1E Ed Sheeran £499

A signature guitar from Martin that's actually affordable

CONTACT: Westside Distribution PHONE: 0141 248 4812 WEB: www.martinguitar.com

We'd wager that Ed Sheeran may be one of the most popular Martin signature artists ever, in terms of the number of guitars he has sold for the company. Okay, so he famously plays the dinky and very affordable LX1E models, but in the past couple of years his ascending star has seen these Lil' Martins become, we're told, "as rare as hen's teeth". Well, the world of the 'travel' guitar has a new star: the LX1E Ed Sheeran.

Typically sharply built in Martin's Mexican factory, this guitar centres around a 584mm (23-inch) scale length with 14 frets to the body. Nut width is regular at 43mm (1 11/16 inches in old money), and with a string spacing at the bridge of 53.5mm, it's only a little narrower than Martin's standard 56mm. Its top is solid sapele and very mahogany-looking, while the back and sides are 'jet black' HPL (as in High Pressure Laminate). Made from multi-laminate Stratatomb, the nicely shaped neck with a 'modified low oval' profile has shallow shoulders and is extremely playable. That leaves the dense black bridge, fingerboard and head facing made from Richlite. This is a paper/wood fibre and phenolic resin synthetic material that has been successfully used by Martin, Gibson and others for fingerboards. Here it looks like high-grade ebony.

Not surprisingly, Sheeran's chart-topping debut album, +,

is referenced graphically on the guitar in the orange headstock emblem that sits below the classic 'CF Martin Est 1833' logo, and cheekily below that '+' is 'Est 1991', Sheeran's year of birth. A large '+' is cleanly laser-cut into the treble-side top; on the bass-side is the word 'each', an acronym of the charity to which Sheeran is donating all of his cut of the sale proceeds, East Anglia's Children's Hospices. That gets a round of applause from us.

The final icing on the cake is the Fishman electro package with its under-saddle pickup and small side-mounted Isys T preamp. This has a rotary volume control, onboard tuner and push buttons for phase (to reduce feedback at high volumes or enhance bass at low volume) and contour (a preset tone modification).

Sounds

One of our favourite small guitars is Taylor's GS Mini and while that – with its additional magnetic soundhole pickup – is a pricier option, it certainly has more width to its acoustic sound in terms of low end. But the smaller-bodied LX1E, not least with its hardwood top, kicks out impressive volume if you hit it hard and it has a really quite delicate sweetness when fingerpicked. Its electro performance (through a Line 6 StageSource L2t) is impressive with a strong punchy voice, or, with the contour engaged,

enhanced bass and treble with a midrange cut. The onboard tuner seems accurate and the display is bold and bright. So long as your PA or acoustic amp is of good quality, this lil' chap should really produce a sound that's way bigger than its physical dimensions.

Verdict

This well-priced signature package also includes a padded

gigbag, and few could complain about the quality of the guitar's build, sound or playability. And, hey, whether you're an Ed Sheeran fan or not, it looks pretty cool, too. **[DB]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Ed Sheeran's Lil' Martin is the perfect guitar to bring out the inner troubadour in us all. Superb on all counts

Guitarist
CHOICE

