



# Hagstrom Viking Bass

**£566**

A hollowbody bass with big sounds and retro appeal – what's not to like? *by Roger Newell*

**T**he more, ahem, seasoned Guitarist reader may well cast their eyes over this new Viking Bass and be reminded of another Hagstrom four-stringer from the 1960s – the Concord. The Concord was a decent bass, but the Viking makes two significant improvements. Firstly, the two-a-side headstock looks far better than the Concord's Fender Coronado-like styling, but more importantly the Viking's sound options are far superior to its predecessor. But more on that later.

The Viking is a slimline hollowbody bass with a moderate weight and an appropriately shorter scale length to give good visual proportions. With a fully bound

body and neck, twin rounded cutaways and a couple of f-holes, the Viking pays closer homage to the classic Gibson EB-2, but thankfully at a far more pocket-friendly price.

With a harp-shaped trapeze tailpiece, separate bridge, floating scratchplate and a pair of pickups (that look like they came out of the Reslo microphone factory), this bass exudes a retro persona all of its own. Add to that the ebony-like synthetic 'Resinator' fingerboard adorned with tasteful pearl block inlays and you have a very fine-looking bass indeed.

## Sounds

As handsome as it undoubtedly is, the Viking is all about sound

and even though it's loaded with a pair of 'vintage-voiced' pickups, the exacting needs of modern players are well taken care of here. If you want those big, body-shaking tones of the

sixties soul bands then you'll find them here, but you can still easily clean up or toughen up your act, projecting every note with clarity right to the back of the hall.

The secret here lies with the chickenhead six-way rotary switch and the intelligent wiring that the dial controls. It provides single-coil or humbucking modes and the ability to use individual pickups or blends in both modes. So add these tonal selections to the volume and tone controls associated to each pickup and you begin to appreciate just



The pickups can be used as single-coils or humbuckers, and blended for variety



## The Rivals

Another well-priced and popular hollowbody bass is the **Ibanez AFB200 Artcore Series** (£467), a single-cut model with a maple top, back and sides. It features a wooden bridge, twin pickups and a trapeze tailpiece. The **Epiphone Jack Casady Bass** (£549) is a very cool-looking twin-cut bass and features a laminated maple body and a rosewood fingerboard. It sports a single JCB Low Impedance humbucker supported by a three-way Vari-tone switch. If you prefer a more traditional look then **Hofner's HCT 500/2 Club** bass (£650) has a compact design, similar in spec to the famous Violin bass but with a more conventional single-cutaway design. It has two Staple humbuckers and that unmistakable Hofner sound.

how much sonic variation is at your fingertips.

Using the selector switch to dial in your basic sound then tweaking tones and volumes you are presented with a selection of blended tones from that setting alone. Multiply this by six and you get an idea of how much fun you can have. To be honest, in a gig situation you're most likely to stick with the humbucking modes, as this is where the full force of the Viking is unleashed, but in the studio, the cleaner and subtler voices from the single-coils will often win you over. Our one gripe is that the Viking lacks the ability to blend one pickup in single-coil mode to the other



The Viking's two-a-side headstock is an improvement over the old Concord

For a gig you're likely to stick with the humbucking modes, but in the studio the single-coil voices win you over

in humbucking, but to be honest you're really not going to miss that here. We think Hagstrom has got it just right.

## Verdict

With such good attack, both fingerstyle and pick players will appreciate the Viking, but like most semi-hollow designs it doesn't suit slap techniques. Try that and someone is going to get hurt. Another thing to watch out for is that with the switching options and individual volumes, it's not too hard to accidentally turn yourself off, but let's face it, you'll only do it once.

Overall this is a handsome, retro-styled bass that, despite

its looks, is well-suited to the modern player. The Viking is well worth checking out if you want a striking and lighter-weight instrument with a very distinctive voice. **G**

## The Bottom Line

**We like:** Fresh retro-inspired looks; nice weight; great tonal variation

**We dislike:** Be careful not to turn yourself off!

**Guitarist says:** A hard bass to fault. Semi basses have never been as popular as solids, but at this price it's well worth trying out

## Hagstrom Viking Bass

**PRICE:** £566

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Twin-cutaway, slimline semi-hollow bass

**BODY:** Contoured maple laminate

**NECK:** Canadian maple, glued-in

**SCALE LENGTH:** 781mm

(30.75 inches)

**NUT/WIDTH:** 40mm

**FINGERBOARD:** Resinator with pearl block markers

**FRETS:** 21, jumbo

**HARDWARE:** 'Long travel' tuneomatic-style bridge with Hagstrom trapeze tailpiece, Hagstrom die-cast sealed-gear tuners

**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 19mm average (centres)

**ELECTRICS:** Two vintage-voiced Dyna Rail pickups, six-way rotary switch, individual pickup volume and tone controls

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 4.1/9

**LEFT-HANDERS:** Yes, tobacco sunburst only, £595

**FINISH:** Tobacco sunburst, white, wild cherry transparent (as reviewed) and black gloss

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## Test results

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

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★