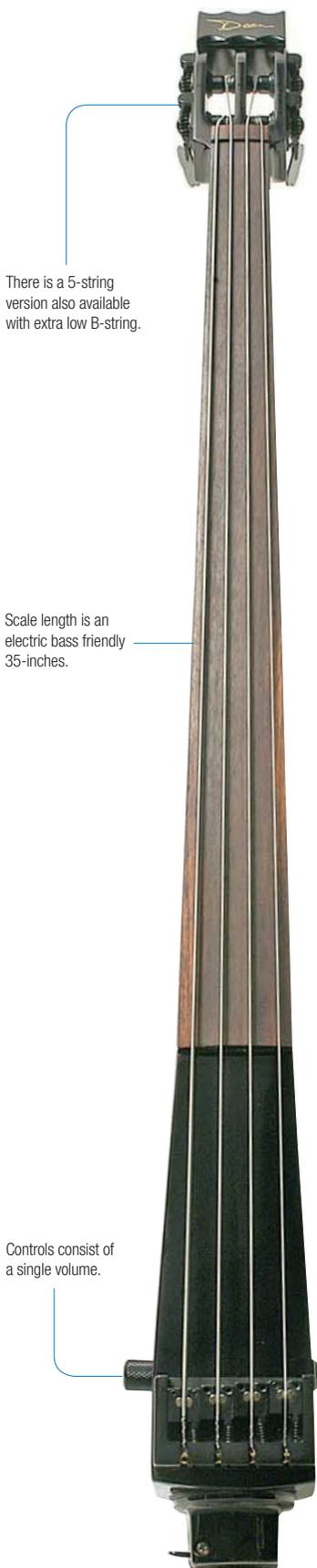


DEAN PACE BASS

ELECTRIC UPRIGHT - 35-INCH SCALE LENGTH - £599



There is a 5-string version also available with extra low B-string.

Scale length is an electric bass friendly 35-inches.

Controls consist of a single volume.

The Dean Pace Bass is an upright for bass guitarists who want the sound of an upright without the muscle strain. Is it the ultimate solution, or too much of a compromise?

Many bass players would like to try double bass, but the sheer weight, size and muscle demands put them off. Although electric uprights have been around since the 30s (rumour has it that Rickenbacker's Lloyd Loar made one in the 20s) they never gained large scale acceptance amongst the bass fraternity until the last decade or so. With the likes of Tony Levin strutting his stuff on electric uprights, interest has blossomed, so Dean's Pace Bass is a typical example of the latest approach to uprights, offering a more bass guitar than double bass oriented approach.

For the neophyte, first impressions will be startling. The Pace Bass is an oversized stick format with a two piece stand. It all fits into a custom case about the same size as a decent bass guitar hard case, so no-one will guess what's in there until you take it out. My review model in black was superbly finished,

MANY BASS PLAYERS WOULD LIKE TO TRY DOUBLE BASS, BUT THE SHEER WEIGHT, SIZE AND MUSCLE DEMANDS PUT THEM OFF

with no marks of careless construction. The overall ambience oozes high quality throughout. This bass is a thru-neck solid block of hard maple with the classic slotted headstock design that you may have seen on other basses (Ampeg immediately come to mind) as well as double bass peg boxes. Tuners are vintage Fender style, finished here in matching black. The playing side is taken care of by a rosewood fingerboard giving a full two octave range. You can get an idea of how the Pace will perform by playing it acoustically: the sustain and resonance throughout the neck is formidable, allied to a superbly low action that means that you won't have to go into weight training as you would when playing double bass.

The Pace differs from every other upright I've ever seen in that it uses a tripod stand (like a mic stand on steroids) with a fully adjustable pivot. This means that you can set the bass to stand at any angle you like and leave it. No holding the neck up while playing, or finding somewhere to park it when you've finished. Problems will be for small players. I couldn't find any way of reducing the height, so you may find your hand waving above your head when playing low positions. A call to the distributors pointed out locking collars on the stand that allow for further adjustment. Even with these pushed all the way in, the bass may

INFORMATION

PRICE: £599 4-string, £749 5-string
ORIGIN: China
BODY: Maple
NECK: Maple
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
HARDWARE: Black
PICKUPS: Piezo with buffer preamp
CONTROLS: Volume
SCALE LENGTH: 35"
COLOURS: natural, black, metallic red and ice blue.

CONTACT

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still be too high for some players. That said, this feature is exactly what upright players have been waiting for.

The scale length is 35": perfect for bass guitarists, but double bassists will have to adjust finger spacing. The good news here is that you can use each finger for semitones rather than classical bass fingering of 1, 2 and 4 only. Likewise the fingerboard curvature: at 6" it's ideal for guitarists, but not for string bass players, where the curvature is much steeper. This means that you can forget any bow use, as you'll end up playing adjacent strings. Dot markers are fitted on the side of the neck, which can be a help, but I found out the hard way on gigs that they disappear under certain stage lighting conditions when playing fretless. So here you'll have to train your muscle memory and ears to get accurate pitching! The neck heel is in the wrong place for string bass players, but fine for guitarists, which is a small but important point when shifting positions. Like all new approaches, you'll eventually get used to it. The electronics side of the Pace Bass is provided by a bridge piezo pickup powered by twin 9-volt PP3





batteries. Controls are simplified to the point of austerity: just a volume pot and that's it. You might think that Dean would have to be very confident about the performance of this pickup to give no tone controls and you'd be right. I plugged my review instrument into a Roland Cube and was astounded by the tone. Powerful, rich and with superb sustain, the sound reminded me very much of a Pedulla custom fretless, where there's a certain nuance to the tone that oozes quality and character. Then I was off; once I'd got used to the idea of using bass guitar fingering I was soon comfortable. Compared to a double bass, the Pace Bass is almost absurdly easy to play. Octaves, tenths and chords generally are easy, slides (including harmonics) of over an octave either way are simplicity itself, and I even tried some hammer-ons and two handed taps which were surprisingly simple. Using the amp modelling and FX on my trusty Roland Cube gave superb results, with chorus and flange setting producing wonderful results.

THE PACE DIFFERS FROM EVERY OTHER UPRIGHT I'VE EVER SEEN IN THAT IT USES A TRIPOD STAND (LIKE A MIC STAND ON STEROIDS) WITH A FULLY ADJUSTABLE PIVOT.

For me the Pace Bass was a revelation. It's removes at a stroke the usual problems of portability and convenience associated with upright basses, and provides electric players who want to investigate the upright with what is currently a very attractive proposition. For bass guitarists there are no problems with scale, action or position (unless you're short in stature), and the sound is remarkable in every way. Double bass players may have some adjustments to make when approaching this bass, but any compromises are more than countered by the sheer convenience and ease of use of the instrument. While other manufacturers produce uprights, they don't come as competitively priced as this and rarely in such a handy package.

David Etheridge

SPECIFICATION

BUILD QUALITY 20

Excellent. Well finished and impressive with an ingenious stand that can be angled to taste.

SOUND 20

The rich and sonorous sound of a custom fretless from an expensive manufacturer. Superb tone and sustain, easy chords and slides. Exquisite sound through FX.

PLAYABILITY 16

Good news/bad news time, depending on your approach. The stand is a superb concept, but too high for short players. The fingerboard is too flat for double bass players although it'll be fine for bass guitarists. Forget it for bowing. Fabulous action gives effortless playing. Chords, hammer-ons and two handed taps are a doddle!

VALUE 20

Compared to other makes, extraordinary value for money.

WOW FACTOR 19

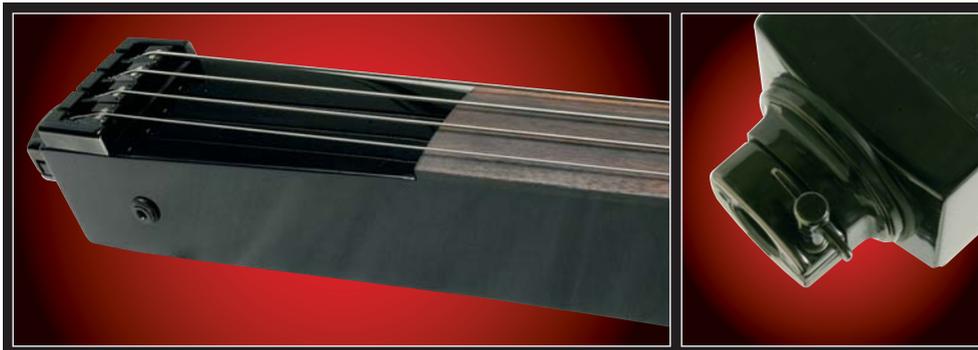
The very sight of it perched on its stand will provoke comment. Stylish and unique.

TOTAL SCORE 95

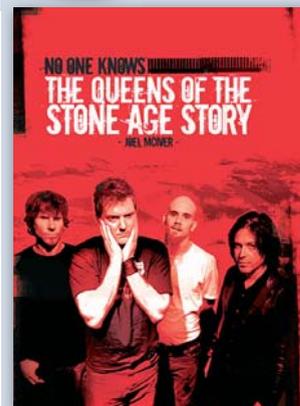
In offering a workable solution for players who want to try the upright approach, Dean has succeeded admirably in solving the problems. However, for double bass players there will be some adjustments need in approach to get the best results. Despite that, a wonderful instrument that plays and sounds superb, and is a fraction of the price of other electric uprights. A 5-string version is also available.

ALTERNATIVE

- Bassix Hi Tech RL: £850
- Yamaha SLB 200: £1899
- Aria SWB Lite: £799



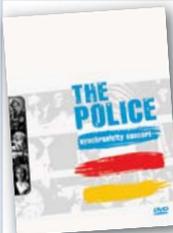
BASS BITES



NO-ONE KNOWS: THE QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE STORY JOEL MCIVER (OMNIBUS, £16.95)

BGM's very own metal guru Joel McIver - who has previously written books on Slipknot, Metallica and many others - turns his attention to desert-rockers Queens Of The Stone Age (whose ex-bassist Nick Oliveri appeared in these hallowed pages earlier this year). The result is a deep analysis of the long and chequered career of Josh Homme, Oliveri et al, who first applied pick to guitar as Kyuss in California's Joshua Tree desert in the mid 1980s. The author makes it clear that the early roots of the band are what fascinate him most, and has dug out unpublished info and photos of those far-off days, with Oliveri - predictably! - the most vocal. There's much here for bass players, with details of the contrasting approaches of the punk Oliveri, his successor the doom-metal legend Scott Reeder and Homme himself, who has played bass for QOTSA on more than one occasion. Highly recommended.

Steve Harvey Info: www.joelmciver.co.uk



THE POLICE SYNCHRONICITY CONCERT

Sting's productive outpourings since the split of The Police have been varied, so there's never a bad time to remind the public just how great his former band were. This concert was recorded back in 1983, a fact that can't escape the viewer due to the main man's tremendous stage attire. Still, all of those excellent songs are here, from the classic 'Message In A Bottle' to the sublime 'Every Breath You Take', taking in the faux-reggae of 'Walking On The Moon' and the awesome sing along of 'Can't Stand Losing You'. The Synchronicity album was the band's most commercially successful, but it was also their fifth and final album before they split. What music they would have come up with had they stayed together, one can only speculate. Sting's rolling in enough dollars to not care. But this DVD package does serve to highlight what the sum of The Police's parts were capable of, and it's a hell of a lot more palatable than 'Fields Of Gold'.

Brett Callwood