

WILD REDUX

Eastwood Guitars Classic 4 and EEB-1 basses

BY ED FRIEDLAND

EASTWOOD GUITARS is an unusual guitar manufacturer—unusual because it's dedicated to bringing back the quirky, unique guitars and basses from the days of old. Searching the Canadian guitar maker's web site, one finds a plethora of instruments that look like pawnshop prizes—only they are brand new and feature structural and tonal improvements that make them suitable as everyday guitars. The Classic 4 and EEB-1 basses are two Eastwood models whose looks and tone stray far from the beaten path.

FEATURES

THE SEMIHOLLOW Classic 4 looks similar to a Gretsch White Falcon, a new bass that is patterned on the Sixties-era Country Gentleman guitar. A solid center block runs through the body giving the instrument better sustain, and feedback rejection. The laminate maple body with maple top has attractive binding (also around the *f*-holes and fingerboard), a mirrored gold pickguard, and comes in orange, walnut and white (a lefty model is offered in walnut). The set-neck construction aids sustain but, naturally, requires that you give the bass more loving care than you might a bolt-on solidbody. The rosewood fingerboard has cool shark-fin-like inlays. The wooden floating bridge/tailpiece combination offers minimal adjustment—you can raise one side or the other with the adjuster wheels, and the string saddles can be placed in one of four slots cut to make coarse intonation changes. The tailpiece allows you to use standard-length strings, even though the working scale length of the bass is 30 1/2 inches. The Classic uses two retro-styled humbuckers, with separate volumes, a toggle switch and master tone.

The EEB-1 is modeled after the Ampeg AEB-1, a rare and unusual bass that had a very brief production run. The fretless version, the AUB-1 was most notably played by Bad Company bassist, Boz Burrell. The Ampeg employed a bizarre "mystery" pickup under the bridge; for that matter, the design was problematic, and many of the remaining originals have been modified with more standard equipment. Eastwood has essentially done all that with its remake, using a Fender-style bridge and a single alnico humbucker. The EEB-1 has a mahogany body, maple neck, 34-inch scale, 20-fret rosewood fingerboard, and comes in black or sunburst. The design is minimalist—big *f*-holes that



EASTWOOD CLASSIC 4 AND EEB-1 BASSES

LIST PRICES: Classic 4, \$499.00; EEB-1, \$699.00

MANUFACTURER: Eastwood Guitars, Eastwoodguitars.com

CLASSIC 4

BODY: Maple
NECK: Maple, set neck
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 22
SCALE: 30 1/2 inches
PICKUPS: Two Retro HB
ELECTRONICS: Passive, two volume, one tone
NUT WIDTH: 1 1/2 inches

EEB-1

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 20
SCALE: 34 inches
PICKUPS: One alnico HB
ELECTRONICS: Passive, volume and tone
NUT WIDTH: 1 5/8 inches

go all the way through the body, and Eastwood's own take on the original's upright bass scroll-style headstock.

PERFORMANCE

THE CLASSIC 4 came equipped with roundwound strings, but switching them out for a set of Thomastik Jazz Flats really brought the bass to life, with ideal short-scale, semihollow tone. It's a wide sound, not as punchy and direct as a solidbody, but the bass's full, rounded bottom and articulate mids sit well in the mix. The neck pickup has a deep hollow tone that works very well for blues or country, while the bridge pickup is tight and focused. Together, they create a complex blend that is perfect for playing fingerstyle or with a pick. I have to admit, I was drawn in by its great Sixties rock tone—it made me wish I had the Classic 4 with me on a recent gig with Eric Burdon and the Animals. The geometry is very different, so it may feel strange to solidbody players at first, but it's lightweight and hangs well on the strap. Short-scale basses tend to have a sweet "tubby-ness" that may not work for every gig, but it is truly a classic bass sound that you'll need in order to have a well-rounded arsenal.

Don't let the seeming lack of body mass fool you: the EEB-1 has the tone of a heavyweight. It displays an aggressive punch that sits right in the low midrange. Though it's not as deep as a P-Bass, it has great cutting power. The neck plays smooth and fast, similar to a slightly flatter Precision profile. Its grindy quality makes it a perfect choice for in-your-face rock styles, though I suspect a set of flatwound strings would tame this beast nicely.

THE BOTTOM LINE

EASTWOOD HAS MADE a conscious choice to recreate oddball axes from the past, and the results may well appeal to everyone. Considering the very reasonable price range of these instruments, the build quality is excellent. ●



The Classic 4 is dead sexy, Sixties style, and its retro-style pickups produce classic rock tone.

The EEB-1's see-through body makes clothing mandatory.

CLASSIC 4

PRO	CON
CUSTOM SHOP COOLNESS AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE; UPGRADED MATERIALS AND NITRO FINISH MEAN BETTER TONE	RUSTIC BRIDGE PREVENTS PRECISE ADJUSTMENT

EEB-1

PRO	CON
EYE-CATCHING DESIGN; AGGRESSIVE AND PUNCHY TONE	NONE