



ELRICK BASS STRINGS

BY BRIAN FOX

OF ALL THE DECISIONS WE MAKE AS BASSISTS, string selection is perhaps the most personal. Of course it's a matter of tone—some sound brighter, others project a stronger fundamental—but the connection we make to our strings is first and foremost a literal one: meat to metal. That's a familiar concept to designer and all-around bass dude Rob Elrick, who's taken a hands-on approach to bass building since 1993. Elrick has always been choosy with woods, electronics, and just about everything else that goes into his basses, so it seems natural that he has now gotten into the string game.

Four years in the making, Elrick Strings is the collaborative effort of Elrick and Les O'Connor, who has worked with DR Strings and Black Diamond, and currently works for Dunlop. The two set out to make strings with a large hexagonal core and thin-wire wrap for a strong fundamental and smooth finger feel. Stainless Steel and Nickel Steel sets are available in three gauges for 4- and 5-string: Medium (.045, .065, .085, .105, .130), Medium-Light (.045, .065, .080, .100, .125), and Big Boy (.050, .070, .090, .110, .130). To test the strings, I grabbed the nearest Jazz Bass and got to picking, plucking, snapping, slapping, and otherwise agitating these critical bits of tone twine.

I'm normally wary of fresh stainless steel strings, which can sound harsh and tinny to my ears, so I was taken aback by Elrick's Stain-

less Steel set, which had a much mellower vibe than most. The tactile benefit of Elrick's design (large core, thin wrap) seemed to play out with these strings, which felt smooth and solid, not tacky or saw-toothed. Noisy finger chatter, normally a danger with stainless strings, was not an issue with the Elricks. Like a stiff drink or a slap in the face, the Stainless Steel set's high tension was bracing—it had me sitting up straight and paying better attention to the notes under my fingers. (Thanks, I needed that!) The strings' high-end bite was viscous yet balanced, with a well-grounded fundamental.

On a 35"-scale 5-string (a Cort/Elrick Josh Paul Signature), the Nickel Steels felt smoother than the stainless strings and had a sound to match, with a meaty midrange, delightful high end, and firm lows. With 36 inches of outer wrap, the taper-wound *B* string sat comfortably and sang sweetly. On a Fender Jazz, the Nickel Steels were great—they were as versatile as the instrument itself and very responsive to the touch, with a killer combination of snap and punch.

You wouldn't put low-octane swill in your Aston Martin, and you shouldn't settle for just any metal under your fingers. Quality parts for good performance can be pricey, but not so with the Elricks, which break down to about six bucks a string. "Investment" may be a scary word these days, but this is one you likely wouldn't regret.

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ELRICK STAINLESS STEEL

Retail \$45 (4-string)

Direct \$24 (4-string)

Pros Smooth and firm finger feel

Cons High string tension could be a turnoff

ELRICK NICKEL STEEL

Retail \$60 (4-string)

Direct \$32 (5-string)

Pros Clear tone

Cons None

Bottom Line Elrick's strings play beautifully and feel great.

Made in U.S.A.

Contact

www.elrick.com/strings

