Bass Frontiers Magazine
- BY PLAYERS, FOR PLAYERS

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Elrick Expat New Jazz Standard 5-String

Review by Roy Vogt

It's a common battle cry with instrument companies: "It's like a Jazz Bass on steroids." This is the genesis of what I call the New York school of bass building; two pickups, bolt on neck, ash body. Enter the Chicago-based luthier Rob Elrick, who has been building high end basses (with the price tags to match) since the 1990s. Rob's basses have tended to lean to the exotic woods end of the spectrum. This is a departure not only in it's wood choices (ash and maple) but also in it's manufacture (not US built or Korean, but built in the Czech Republic to Rob's specifications). The Czech-built Expat New Jazz Standard allows for fine craftsmanship and use of American Bartolini components at a price accessible to most working players.

The first impression of this bass is how light it feels. It is definitely one of the lightest 5 strings I've played in some time, with the action as shipped light to match. This bass was definitely set up for flying, and both rapid fingerstyle and Wooten-esque double-thumping were easily played on the flat maple neck and fingerboard.

The Bartolini circuit (active-passive with volume/pan/treble/middle/bass) was easy to navigate and yielded a variety of tones from Jaco-style finger funk to the scooped mid Slap Monster tones and all points between. Passively, the bass easily dialed in a vintage Motown tone that was appreciated by my bandmates in a 9-piece R&B setting.

The bass' light weight and fine balance was much appreciated on a couple of long gigs and the tonal variety came in handy on a Contemporary Country show and a Contemporary Christian Rock session. In the studio, the bass was dead-quiet and inspired a Chuck Rainey exploration into double stops and Jamerson sub-hooks. The low action made playing very easy, but the bass still had tons of tone and fit well in the tracks. The midrange emphasis that is created by the ash body yields a tone that is elegant without getting lost in the other instruments (not an easy task). The 35" scale yielded a tight-sounding low B string and yet did not feel ungainly.

Overall, my hat's off to Rob Elrick and his company. They have produced an instrument that is in the working player's budget with butter-smooth action, dead-quiet electronics, and feather weight. This could easily be all the bass you would need for any gig. I'm duly impressed.

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Roy Vogt has been on the faculty of the Belmont University School of Music since 1983. He received the Master of Music degree from the University of Miami and the Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Texas. Mr. Vogt worked in a variety of Rock, Funk and Country bands in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area until he joined the Texas fusion band Aurora. Performances with Aurora led to openings for Larry Coryell and the LA Express and key mentoring relationships with Stanley Clarke, Miroslav Vitous and Max Bennett. In 1980, Roy moved to Nashville where he has performed with Allman Brothers' guitarist Dickey Betts, country guitar legend Jerry Reed, and Sweethearts of the Rodeo, John Schneider, Chet Atkins and Stan Lassiter. He was bassist for Engelbert Humperdinck for over a decade. His solo CD Simplicity was released in 2002.

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