

CLOVER XP15.5 XPRESSION

ELECTRIC BASS GUITAR

You may not have heard of 'em, but you'll have heard 'em. By Chris Peridis

THE Clover bass company was established over 20 years ago (approx 1986) in Germany by Reinhard Jedanzik. After suffering endless problems with pick-up suppliers Reinhard decided to build his own, which would eventually lead to the establishment of Delano pick-ups – the pick-ups used in Clovers to this day. Clover became renowned for its pioneering work using carbon fibre composites in bass construction, with most of these earlier models now considered classics. Now based in Munich, former Clover employee Joerg Neugebauer took over the company in 2005 and, being a family business, his father is also heavily involved. Clover are one of the main pioneers of the European bass market. The carbon composite side of the business is no longer being pursued, but the development of all new models (in timber) is ongoing. After a trip to Germany, bass builder Tom Koenig of Konig BassworX in Canberra saw a product that he knew the Australian market would go crazy over, so he started importing the basses, along with Delano pickups and ETS hardware. Currently playing Clover basses is internationally renowned funkster Paul Turner of Jamiroquai fame, along with many extremely talented and well respected European session players.

I LOVE THE SMELL OF MAHOGANY AND WALNUT IN THE MORNING

When first opening the case of the Clover XP15.5 Xpression Bass, you are greeted by a beautifully crafted two piece mahogany body with a rich American walnut top that is sure to tickle all you "natural wood finish" nuts. Upon closer inspection, one notices that it is a sandwich-glued body with a quartersawn, bolt-on Canadian hard rock maple neck... Well, that's if you've studied carpentry your entire life! To the rest of us, it's a damn fine-looking bass. So how does it play? I'm happy to inform you that my experiences with this bass only improved with time. The Xpression positions extremely comfortably, both standing and sitting, with a lightweight feel to it (though by no means in the derogatory sense).

Starting out playing "acoustically", you can instantly hear the rich natural, woody tone and sense that this bass has been made solidly, with no expenses spared on quality woods and components. A feature I especially appreciated, nestled amongst the 24 medium frets, was that the mother-of-pearl inlays sit between the low B and E strings, and then after the 12th fret between the G and D strings for soloing, as apposed to the centre of the fretboard. It's not 100 percent necessary, but it's a clever and welcome addition nonetheless.

LET'S CRANK THIS PUPPY



With a single Delano JMVC- FE custom 'J-style' pick-up on the neck and Delano MC-FE humbucker on the bridge, this bass is capable of any sound, from traditional stylings, to slapping, hard rock and everything in between. The three-band active electronics with ultra-low noise only opens the tonal spectrum further. What's that? You prefer passive basses? No problems. Pull the volume knob up and the active pre-amp is bypassed. Let's take a look at the Delano pick ups. In a word, "Wow." It's been a while since I have been truly blown away by such exceptional tone, and at any volume no less! The Delanos made the strings sing. Even the low B had a magically tight, crisp, punchy sound, with absolutely no drop-out or hiss. For players who prefer a more C-shaped neck, the Xpression's flatter style may take a little getting used to, but it will be something that scale runners and slappers

take a liking to quickly. The only players that might suffer will be the harder, heavier players who sling their bass at the knees. But then if your bass is around your knees and you're using a pick, you're not really a bass player are you? You're just a rhythm guitarist with super heavy strings! [Boom-tish...]

THE BOTTOM LINE

At \$3395, this is not a bass to just practise on, it's a bass to be thrashed! Give it hell and show it no mercy, because not only will it keep coming back for more, it will love every single minute of it! This is superbly crafted instrument, looks, feels and sounds amazing, and is a big reason why so many pros in Europe are playing Clover. Mark my words. It's only a matter of time before the big guns in Australia and the US cotton on to this too.

SPECS

- Made Germany
- Price \$3395
- Body Two-piece mahogany
- Top American walnut
- Neck Quartersawn, bolt-on Canadian hard rock maple
- Fingering Rosewood
- Scale 34"
- Frets 24 (medium)
- Pick-Ups Delano JMVC-FE custom 'J'-style, Delano MC-FE humbucker
- Controls Volume (pull-pot for passive operation) balance, bass, mid, treble, coil-splitter

CONTACT

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WHAT WE RECKON

PROS

- ▲ Well-built, and great sound
- ▲ Brilliant pick-ups, dynamic controls
- ▲ Fantastic for all styles

CONS

- ▼ Neck finish may snag on new instrument. May take time to get used to, but you WILL get used to it

