



Bass Guitars

by John Falstrom

Intro: As I was growing up and evolving into a full time bassist, I realized the incredible importance of having a versatile and varied collection of bass guitars to play and learn on. Every bass guitar has its own character and gives you new and different aspects to your bass playing. Here are my bass guitar choices (in no particular order):

1. A Standard Long Scale 4 String Solid-Body Electric Bass Guitar - This kind of bass should be perhaps your number 1 bass guitar (unless you have committed to a 5 and/or 6 string bass). The 4 string electric bass guitar, is by far, the most played and heard bass in music since 1951. I really can't add anymore here.
2. A Fretless Solid-Body Electric Bass Guitar - A fretless bass not only sounds slightly different from a fretted bass, it feels different also (the "snap back" of the string off of wood is different from the "snap back" of the string off of the frets). Another huge difference is that you must use your ear (hearing) a lot more when playing a fretless bass.
3. A Semi-Hollow-body Electric Bass Guitar - The semi-hollow-body bass not only sounds louder without an amp (phenomenal for practicing without an amp), but they look and play great. They also sound and play great with a slightly different tone than the solid-body electric bass.
4. An 8 String Electric Bass Guitar - The first thing you notice about an 8 string bass is that it sounds a lot like a regular guitar but with a lower octave note to go along "for the ride". An 8 string bass is perhaps best played with a pick. Owning and playing an 8 string bass "opens the door" to playing strummed and finger-picked chord on any bass guitar.
5. An Electric/Acoustic Bass Guitar - This bass is the obvious choice to play in situations where no amp is available or no amp is wanted - You can feel right "at home" playing an acoustic / electric bass with acoustic guitar players, acoustic piano players, etc. In fact, having this bass can actually get you more opportunity's to play with many more musicians who play acoustic instruments.
6. An Upright Bass - Playing an Upright bass is definitely a lot different than playing a electric type bass guitar. The notes and bass parts are definitely the same for both instruments, but the size, angles, and hand technique is greatly different - What I did to (finally) learn the upright bass was to approach it from the very beginning i.e. I used my "tried and true" practice routine for the electric bass and just repeated it on the upright bass (it works without doubt).
7. An Electric Short Scale Electric Bass - A short scale bass is different in the fact that the neck is 4 inches shorter than a long scale neck (30 inches versus 34 inches). This is by no means that a short scale bass is easier to play. Many short scale bass guitars actually have more frets than a long scale bass (usually 24 frets on a short scale to 20 frets on a long scale). The first thing you'll notice is that the space between the frets is smaller than on a long scale bass guitar - this does not mean it doesn't have the tone of a long scale bass. Short scale basses sound great.
8. A 5 And/Or 6 String Bass Guitar - The 5 and/or 6 string bass guitar obviously gives you lower and higher pitches than a 4 string bass. These basses are quite popular (sometimes "the norm") for certain styles of music.

Summary: Having different options of what bass guitar to play is definitely a fantastic situation every bassist should want to be in...Do it.

John Falstrom, Author of EADG 4

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