

ALL THAT JAZZ

G&L JB Rustic Series bass

* BY ED FRIEDLAND

UPON FIRST GLANCE, you might think the G&L JB is just another Jazz bass clone, but keep in mind that Leo Fender invented the Jazz bass and founded G&L, making the JB a legitimate heir to the throne—a “brother from another mother,” you might say. Although the Jazz bass itself is 50 years old, G&L introduced the JB model in 2009 and its similar-but-different predecessor, the JB2, around 2000.

Now G&L has entered the relic game with its Rustic Series instruments. The JB Rustic illustrates what can be done to make a new instrument look like an old friend. While it may seem odd to issue a relic of an instrument that’s technically been on the market for only a year, let’s face it—it’s a Jazz bass, and we’re used to seeing them well worn. G&L’s relic team does an excellent job of faking the age with a subtle, but very thorough, approach. And underneath the finish, it’s a top-notch example of a classic J Bass.

FEATURES

THE JB RUSTIC has a two-piece ash body covered in a light nitrocellulose lacquer. The finish checking, dings and scratches are all dead-on, but not overdone. The quarter-sawn hard rock maple neck has a glossy vintage tint that nails the look of aged lacquer. The nut is the standard 1 1/2-inch J Bass width, and the rosewood board (maple is an option) has a 12-inch radius, also known in G&L parlance as the “#8” neck. The tuners are G&L “Ultra-Lite” models, with tapered aluminum string posts. One noticeable difference between the JB and its Fender-built cousin is the heavy-duty G&L Saddle Lock bridge with chrome-plated brass saddles. It’s a big chunk of metal, and the locking mechanism compacts the saddles to create a unified mass, which many players believe contributes to sustain and note clarity.

The bridge and tuners also receive the rustic touch, with pitting and tarnish that would typically take decades to develop. The neck joins the body with four countersunk bolts, an elegant approach that creates a

rock-solid joint. Topping things off are two G&L Vintage Alnico single-coil pickups in ’60s J Bass position, with the traditional volume/volume/tone control set.

The result is a classic specimen of perhaps the most popular bass guitar in the world. Aside from the bridge, the immediately recognizable G&L headstock is the only detail that gives away the instrument’s origins.

PERFORMANCE

IN HAND, THE JB is a familiar friend, with the sound, look and feel of the archetypal J Bass. Playing it unplugged, I could feel the wood vibration against my rib cage, and that vibration transfers into note clarity, definition and sustain. It’s commonly believed that a thin nitro finish lets the wood breathe, and this particular instrument poses a solid case for that argument. The JB neck profile is slightly chunkier and more rounded than most Fenders. I find it sits in the hand very comfortably, especially if you like to sling the bass low and grip the neck like an awesome rocker dude. If you prefer a skinny neck profile, the JB might feel too thick for you, but the extra wood makes for a very stiff and solid neck, which is another factor that contributes to great tone.

Tonally, the JB offers no big surprises, and that’s what makes it great. The neck pickup delivers wide, pumping fatness; the bridge pickup offers tight, burpy articulation; and combining them produces depth and definition. You can tailor it with the passive tone control to hear bright, clanging high end, or roll off the treble for a velvety smoothness. Slapping on the JB really activates the resonant body, giving the notes great depth and integrity, while fingerstyle gives you a wide range of dynamics. This bass responds beautifully to subtle changes in right-hand technique.

THE BOTTOM LINE

IF YOU’RE A fan of the classic J Bass, the G&L JB Rustic is a no-brainer. It has a street price in the \$2,400 range, which is not cheap, but the build quality, timeless features and intoxicating finish work make it well worth the cost. **SC**



SPECS

LIST PRICE: \$3,433.00
MANUFACTURER: G&L Guitars, glguitars.com
BODY: Two-piece ash
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE: 34 inches
FRETS: 20
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 12-inch radius
PICKUPS: G&L Vintage Alnico single-coil
CONTROLS: Volume, volume, tone



Subtle relic finishing gives the Rustic an authentic played-in vibe.

The massive Saddle Lock bridge aids sustain and clarity.



+PRO	-CON
MODERN BUILD QUALITY WITH VINTAGE ESTHETIC	NONE