

bassplayer



BITE Roxanne

Austrian luthiers Bite have a novel approach to bass-building, driven by the customer. We test out the company's Roxanne P-Bass...

BITE GUITARS
www.bite.guitars

€1200

We've all dreamed of having a custom bass one day, and in today's digitally-managed world, it seems that most bass players with medium-sized budgets can afford one. The first time we heard of an online configurator for a custom bass was by Sandberg – credit where it's due – and now the same concept is available from Bite Guitars, whose website offers you the chance to design a bass with a ton of different materials and sound options. For around €1200, which is approximately £1100 or \$1400, you can nab an instrument like this one, a Precision-style bass with individual artwork. Let's see what we're getting.

Build Quality

The body shape and scale length of this eight-pound, 34" P-Bass are instantly familiar for anyone who has spent time with an average Fender, but the Roxanne is smaller and more manageable than standard Precisions thanks to its slimmed-down design. Its alder body comes with a three-ply scratchplate, a bridge and pickup design that is



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | From £1200 plus VAT and shipping; this varies with design, spec and customer location

Made In | Austria

Colour | Vintage white, glass finish

Body | US alder

Neck | Hard maple, 34" scale

Neck Joint | Bolt-on

Nut Width | 41.9mm

Fingerboard | Hard maple, 20 frets, Graph Tech nut

Pickups | Passive Bite reverse split coil

Controls | Volume, tone

Hardware | Bite tuners, Gotoh bridge

Weight | 3.8 kg / 8.4 lbs

Case/gig bag included | No

Left-hand option available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Friendly, playable design; affordable custom options

Minus | None

Overall | An easy way into a custom bass

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★

VALUE

★★★★★





straight out of the Leo Fender manual, although the gold finish and reverse split-coil design indicate that there's a design ethos behind the old-school engineering. A gold neckplate with your details on it adds a nice touch.

The controls and tuners turn smoothly, the lacquer finish is flawless as far as we can see, and the red wine-spatter artwork doesn't scratch off, no matter how hard we apply a fingernail. We didn't go as far as testing it under backstage conditions, though, so don't blame us when your intoxicated guitarist attacks it with a hammer and the paint comes off. Don't laugh, it happens.

Sounds And Playability

Plug in and this is a Precision by anyone's standards, but with some extra zing, even with the tone rolled fully off, that will be welcome in a band situation. Notably, what it does have in addition is a steely, almost glassy top end that is rather unexpected from a passive P-Bass.

Evidently the thinking behind that reverse split-coil, whereby we are told that moving the E and A coil towards the bridge gives us more top end in lower registers, has some merit after all. Slap playing is eminently suited to this instrument, then, although you'll obviously find it easier on a J-Bass: the Roxanne's neck is chunky, with a grippy finish that is true to the old Precision ethos, so don't expect your fingers to be on their fastest form, shredders. Instead, treat this bass as your own take on the ancient P template that has served us so well over the decades.

CONCLUSION

This is a very player-friendly instrument, although as an example of the Bite approach to luthiery it's really their most basic model – check their website to explore more radical pickup and materials options. As an indicator of their build quality, the Roxanne could hardly be better at this price, so investigate further with our recommendation. ■

Wolfgang Maderthaner of Bite Guitars explains his philosophy...

The price tag of a bass often doesn't mean a lot. Bases costing \$200 can blow your mind, while others for \$4,000 can sound like toys.

"Why's that? Obviously it's not all about production costs. Very often the science of physics is forgotten over the need for marketing. We try to focus on the first, while not neglecting the second. We try to build passive basses with a strong and articulate growl that cuts through the mix, because a high output often comes at the expense of attack.

"Custom basses often require a wait of six to 24 months. We try to do it faster. Also, 'custom' often means prices of \$2,500 or more; we try to make custom basses affordable for an additional group of buyers through digital production. We want to try to do the whole buying process online in one go, too. Online configuration, immediate ordering and direct shipping worldwide means we try to give the customer an easy experience at every step. We try to give the customer a maximum of passive sound options.

"Dark fretboards mostly mean beautiful, hard, tropical woods. We try to do beautiful and hard but leave the tropical wood in the rainforest. After

"We try to build passive basses with a strong and articulate growl that cuts through the mix, because a high output often comes at the expense of attack"

experimenting with every non-tropical rosewood substitution under the sun, we found the perfect wood in thermally treated black locust, which grows abundantly in the Vienna woods.

"We try to make modification after purchase as easy as possible for the customer: he or she can change the pickup configuration, the pickguard, the hardware, even the body or neck. For this purpose our bodies have universal pickup cavity routing, we offer solderless snap connected wiring and we carry all parts in our online shop.

"We invite customers to test their Bite custom bass in the comfort of their home by offering a no-questions-asked 14-day return policy – even on custom-built basses. It's been a year since we made our debut at the Guitar Summit show in Germany, and we haven't had a single return so far." ■

