





# Enfield Guitars 4-string Bass

**Ever thought how useful** a bass with split-coil, single-coil and humbucking pickups would be? Throw in a well-crafted high-end instrument with looks to die for and what have you got? **Something like this perhaps?**

**F**or many, the name Martin Sims conjures up thoughts of effervescent LED systems and custom spray jobs amongst other things. As a bass player himself, Martin is never shy to try and solve problems he himself has encountered as a player, which is how the SimS LED business came to fruition. The bass for review here began life as a personal project for Martin spawned very much out of a “what if” moment and despite almost scrapping the project several times due to technical issues, we finally have one of the first fruits from the Enfield Guitars stable. Whilst bristling with features it is the unusual pickup design that receives most attention. The multiple-coil system took a lot of time and effort to perfect but with John East on board, a solution has been found which could prove to be the answer to the requirements of a lot of players encompassing the three most popular pickup formats. Having spoken to Martin, he was quick to point out that this bass isn’t the bass to end all basses nor is it all basses to all people but rather a solution to the problem that proves it can be done.

## Build And Features

Leaving the pickup and switching to one side, the instrument itself is a joy to behold. The swamp ash body keeps the weight down (and in addition is

weight relieved and tonally tweaked, which can be developed further by ticking the Thinline option box that adds further chambering and a neat f-hole styled front appearance) whilst the spalted sycamore top, cultivated from a fallen tree in Martin’s road, is droolworthy in the extreme. The five-bolt secured birdseye maple neck has a satin finish and sports a 1957 Telecaster-inspired soft ‘V’ neck profile, an intentionally prominent neck-line runs down the centre of the neck which offers alleged structural benefits.

The glossed headstock has been unusually sculpted with the macassar ebony fingerboard running past the neck to form a point from where the headstock drops away in a bevelled fashion. A one-piece maple neck is available should you prefer it. The Enfield name adorns the headstock and the cannon motif is included across the top as a solid metal emblem. Hipshot Ultralite machineheads have been fitted, as has a string guide above the nut for the A and D strings. Strangely, the twenty-five fret neck has no front-facing position markers, only the side dot markers offer any guidance as to your location on the neck. The truss rod is accessed from the body end of the neck should you need to make any adjustments.

The body isn’t especially large or wide yet despite the contouring and

sculpting in various areas, its depth makes it feel larger and ‘chunkier’ than it is although the weight and overall balance don’t appear to be affected to any great degree. The bridge is bolted on from the rear of the bass and appears to be well up to the job, allowing action and intonation adjustments to be made although string spacing alterations are not possible. A Neutrik locking jack socket is located on the side of the bass and sits alongside a balanced XLR output

of the Enfield is fundamentally right based on the sum of its parts.

So, to the pickups and electronics. Without doubt, it’s a large pickup, effectively two four-coil pickups in one housing which is curved with the same radius as the fingerboard, which should make string-to-pickup sensitivity as equal as possible. The pickup as a whole unit can be raised and lowered using four screws, two on either side whilst each magnet pole can be adjusted up and down using an

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Allen key to achieve different outputs from each coil should you wish to. The *Bass* and *Treble* controls also have board-mounted edge wheel adjusters should you wish to alter the shelving curve of either EQ control. These are easily accessed, as is the battery, due to the control plate being magnet attached. The control cavity is very tidy and well shielded. Each half of the pickup can be switched to become a split-coil, a single-coil or a hum-cancelling parallel humbucker and using the two *Coil-Selector* switches (originally



## Enfield Guitars

**Price:** £2,650 (hardcase included)  
**Made In:** UK  
**Colour:** Natural  
**Body:** Swamp ash with spalted sycamore top  
**Neck:** Birdseye maple  
**Fingerboard:** Macassar ebony  
**Pickups:** Enfield "Super 8"  
**Electronics:** Enfield 3-band EQ with mid-sweep (designed by John East)  
**Controls:** Front pickup 3-position coil selector, back pickup 3-position coil selector, volume, balance/passive tone (stacked, pull up to activate), bass (boost only +18dB)/treble (boost/cut +/-18dB) (stacked), mid (boost/cut +/-12dB)/frequency-sweep (stacked)  
**Nut Width:** 42mm  
**Neck:** Join Bolt-on, five-bolt attachment  
**Scale Length:** 34-inch  
**Frets:** 25  
**Weight:** 4.2kg

## Contact Details

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## What We Think

**Plus:** A unique instrument with a worthy pedigree. The tonal variety is vast, the electronics are excellent and the instrument in its own right is of a very high calibre.

**Minus:** It's not everything to all players with limited customisation regarding the mechanics of the instrument.

**Overall:** A very interesting development in the world of bass guitars that could prove to be a real godsend for many players. Look out for further developments.

### BGM RATING OUT OF FIVE

<b>BUILD QUALITY</b>	★★★★★
<b>SOUND QUALITY</b>	★★★★★
<b>VALUE FOR MONEY</b>	★★★★★



Backplate held in position by magnets



Central string tree sits on extended fingerboard

there were going to be three) with the balance control centred, it is possible to achieve nine different combinations. Turning the balance control fully towards the bridge or neck results in a further six settings. The coil-selector switches have their own LED indicators that are coloured red in the down position, green in the middle position and blue in the up position. With both switches set to the same colour, red results in two split-coils (i.e. two Precision-style pickups), green indicates single-coil status (i.e. two Jazz-style pickups) and blue produces humbucker characteristics (i.e. two StingRay-style pickups). Used in conjunction with the 3-band EQ and *Mid-Sweep* control, there is vast potential for different tonal colours, sounds and textures to be explored. Pulling the top section of the balance control upwards, which also functions as a passive tone control, accesses the passive mode.

Having played the bass for a few hours, I pretty quickly worked out that the best way to use the switching system was to think in terms of LED colour rather than coil configuration. As each coil has an identifiable sound of its own, it's quite easy to determine which coils are being used at any given time and it's actually a lot of fun playing around with the various combinations. As with any instrument, once you get used to the physical attributes of the bass, the technicalities just require some experimentation. I suspect the neck profile won't be to everyone's liking as it feels quite

different to a lot of instruments which tend to opt for the regular 'C' shaped neck profile but I liked it as it made the neck feel very stable and rigid. Despite the extensive body contouring and thick body depth, the instrument sits very nicely against the player and comfort and playability have obviously been high priorities on the Enfield agenda. One minor niggle was that although the fret ends were well dressed, the actual fingerboard timber needed some extra 'rolling' at the edges as to my hands the edges felt too sharp.

With so many sounds to call on, your brain starts to apply the options to specific bass sounds and how best to employ the inherent characteristics of each coil. For example, you may choose to play a song with a Precision-like rounded tone yet when reaching a section that might need more bite, you can quickly call on the edge that a set of single-coil pickups would provide or the power that a humbucker would offer. If you wanted to call on each pickup quickly, you could set each half of the Enfield's pickup to be a specific pickup and then just use the balance control to shift between the two. There are so many possibilities that it's only through using the bass over time that you will really appreciate its full capabilities. So I did just that and soon I realised that the sounds were both exceptionally convincing and this bass isn't modelling another bass, it is a bass in its own right using the physical nature of the pickup coils for a variety of tonal options. I advise judicious use

of the EQ as there really is a powerful circuit employed here and although it's tempting to turn everything up, most of the time you don't need to as the pickup combinations offer different responses anyway.

## Conclusions

Martin Sims mentioned that his original idea was to build a bass to be used in a band context and to my mind, this is where this instrument can really perform to its maximum potential. If you consider that a brand new Precision, Jazz and StingRay could set you back more than the cost of this bass, it's no surprise that this bass offers value for money, not to mention that it plays as well as any of those three basses, if not better. Unfortunately, the Enfield bass is only cosmetically customisable so if you want to change any of the physical mechanics of the bass, such as the neck profile, you will be disappointed as the bass is what it is with its own identity and characteristics. Readers in the US and Canada may be interested to know that distributors are now lined up in those territories and with 5-string 6-string models also available at marginally increased prices, the future looks positive for the Enfield range. It's not cheap but you get what you pay for in terms of quality and flexibility so if you fancy something a bit different, I can highly recommend giving the Enfield a workout.

**Mike Brooks**