



# SIMS & CITY

FOR OVER A DECADE, MARTIN SIMS' CUSTOM CREATIONS HAVE BEEN TURNING HEADS. WE GET THE SCOOP ON HIS LATEST PROJECT, THE ENFIELD BASS

From illuminated fretboard inlays and control knobs to headstock mounted lasers and custom resprays, the innovations on offer at the Sims Custom Shop have gained global recognition, with artists such as Prince, John Paul Jones and Steve Vai getting in on the act.

Martin Sims' latest venture, the Enfield bass, is a brand new design aimed at pro players, incorporating an exciting new pickup system. We caught up with the man pulling the strings at the Sims Custom Shop to find out just what went into this intriguing design...

**How does the Super 8 pickup differ from other coil-splitting systems?**

"First of all, it has eight coils that are all split-able, but the real difference is that you can split them horizontally, not just vertically. Most split-coil designs are just single-coils with a large magnet split vertically to give you a split P-Bass type arrangement. It's the same principle as that, but taken to a whole new level. With the Super 8 you can switch from true split-coil to hum-cancelling parallel coils to single-coil, all in one package."

**Did you encounter any problems while designing the pickup?**

"When I first started out, everyone told me that it couldn't be done. You just couldn't have those three modes because of various different phasing issues. In the end, I went to John East, who is a very meticulous guy, and we got a prototype made up. We made up the switch and the splitting arrangement, but it was out of phase. So we rearranged the switch and tried it in another position, but it was still out of phase. This went on and on until, after a lot of R&D and a lot of head scratching, we finally came up with it. The only problem was that the split-coil and the single-coil had a lot more hum than the humbucker. So we went back to work on the pickup, we north/south-ed the magnets and this time all of the switching worked in all the positions, with no increase in gain."

**Where did the idea of using coloured LEDs come from?**

"LEDs and me go back a hell of a long way! The idea here is that it's far easier to remember a colour than it is a position. If you can think in terms of red, green and blue it's just so much easier. If it was down to positions, my worry was that people would get as lost as I have in the past with basses that have got switches all over the front. If it's done with colours it makes things a whole lot easier, especially in a live environment. If you know that you're just going for 'red/blue' on this number, it's a much more human way of overcoming a confusing situation. That's why you only have two switches, one for either side of the pickup. With that and the pan pot you are done."

**What inspired the body shape and the headstock design?**

"I wanted the design to be born out of function. I didn't want to say, 'This is how I want it to look and now let's make it a playable instrument'. I wanted to include the various points that you would need to make this a workable instrument and then join the dots. If you take any of the really iconic shapes, most of them have been born out of necessity, which is what I wanted to do. There are a hundred and one little features that have gone in there, but there would be no point in having any of those things if the bass didn't something at the core of it that was going to bring something completely new to the market."

**How did you go about getting the project off the ground?**

"We went out and made 10 basses. They are basically the same instrument with the same pickup, the same electronics, the same hardware and everything else, but there are some cosmetic differences that come from the Sims Custom Shop. If I didn't think that other people would get it and it was just me in some kind of fantasy world, I would have stopped the project in its tracks. But thankfully the response has been 100 percent positive."

Getting that kind of feedback and finding that people really understood it was a real revelation to me. That has now spurred us into thinking, 'Let's take it to the next level and get it more and more out there in the playing environment'."

**Can you tell us where the Enfield name comes from?**

"That was from my dad. His business was in offshore powerboats in the '70s. The name of that company was Enfield Marine and I always remember those times fondly. I wanted it to have a British feel and a British look and 'Enfield' does, for me, encapsulate the British engineering side of it. Along with that, my Dad was a big Horatio Nelson fan. So although he made those boats for people like Marlboro Cigarettes, the one thing that he maintained was an emblem of a cannon as a homage to the British naval fleet of Nelson's time, so that's where the cannon logo came from."

**What does the future hold for Enfield basses?**

"This is a long-term project for me. We have been immensely busy with the Custom Shop, with the Spray Shop and with the LEDs, so it wasn't designed strictly as a commercial venture. It was there as a private project of my own and fortunately I've been able to indulge myself a bit. I have had so much joy from knowing that the idea actually works. I am not trying to say that this is the bass that's going to beat all other basses. I'm just saying this is the Enfield bass – it is what it is. It's there as an instrument for a working musician because it addresses a lot of the problems that pro musicians have. We've worked really hard on the details, and that's why it's taken so long – honing it down and honing it down until we finally thought we had come up with something that was worth putting out into the market place." GB

For more information, head to [www.enfieldguitars.com](http://www.enfieldguitars.com) or [www.simscustom.com](http://www.simscustom.com)