

## BASS PLAYER - NOVEMBER 2010

The Combustion sounded precise and focused, with a solid host of well-textured tones. Its EMG preamp was clean and crystalline, with extensive top-register response and immediacy in the lows. Compared to the more expensive Canadian basses, it gives up nothing in terms sonic sophistication, and is an excellent initial foray into the fanned-fret universe. The first time you dig into that 37"-long B string, it's addictive.

The ABZ was less bright and authoritative than the Combustion, and not surprisingly, blessed with a more traditional sonic palette. As always, I am a big proponent of passive tone controls, and never found myself missing EQ. The rotary pickup selector substantially changes the bass's character, from dark and wooly with the neck soloed, strong with the humbuckers in series, scoopy and sizzly in parallel, and burpy and midrangey with the bridge soloed. The FD-3 pickups, designed to combine the best qualities of both J- and P-style pickups seems well suited to the passive bass.

The gorgeous ABII is the sexpot of the bunch. Not only in its stunning looks, but with its sultry sound. It's always good to play a semi-hollow instrument that actually sounds that way-the tone's air and resonance is clearly perceptible, regardless of pickup selection, EQ setting or active/passive status. The added depth this lends the tone is inspiring, provoking a sensitive attack that uses the bass's beautiful note envelope to best affect. The ABII's rotary pickup switch results in much the same tone-zones as the ABZ, but the ABII is more burnished on the whole, with a bit more texture and sweetness. Its B string is ridiculously huge and clear, with extraordinary pitch definition way down to the available-via-Hipshot Xtender A.