



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £3,395

Made In | New Zealand

Colour | Natural

Body | Salusalu with North American walnut top

Neck | Mairi and aircraft graded laminates, 34" scale

Neck Joint | Full through-body neck and core

Nut Width | 42mm

Fingerboard | New Zealand black mairi

Frets | 24

Pickups | Non-specific humbucker

Electronics | Passive

Controls | Volume, passive bass roll-off, passive treble roll-off, midrange setting (10 options with push/pull and bypass)

Hardware | Stainless steel Tomm Stanley™ Tuning System, black mairi bridge

Weight | 3.8 kg

Case/gig bag included | Lite-flite case and extra strings

Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Ergonomically different, but everything works, with a varied tonal palette

Minus | The price will always limit its appeal, and resale value may be limited

Overall | An interesting instrument that does things differently but never to the detriment of the instrument. If passive basses are your thing, test one soon!

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE



Photography by Eddie

STONEFIELD

1-4C

A marriage of exotic timbers, invention and ingenuity, this four-string from Stonefield has much going for it on paper. Mike Brooks gets up close and personal

Stonefield Musical Instrument Company
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It's a few months since we met Tomm Stanley at the London Bass Guitar Show, where he unveiled his Stonefield creation. We looked at a Slimline five-string model back in *BGM* 130, and here for our delectation is a four-string model featuring classic string spacing. There's no disputing the distinctive nature of these instruments. The five-string threw us some enjoyable curveballs – does the four-string model offer more of the same?

Build Quality

The rounded body curves, sculpted cutaways and combination of Fijian salusalu wood, walnut and southern hemisphere through-neck



timber laminates create a visually pleasing combination. For lovers of natural, organic-looking and -sounding instruments, the 1-4C posts its colours to the mast in no uncertain terms. Despite the lack of any contouring to the front or back of the body, the bass is reasonably comfortable to wear and the weight distribution is excellent. At 3.8 kilos, and with reduced weight due to the tuning system being located at the bridge, it never feels as though you are working against the instrument.

Many aspects of this bass may appear to be radical. Timber has been used for the floating bridge as a counterpoint over which the strings pass, as on an acoustic instrument, while the tuning system – which recently acquired an official US patent as the Tomm Stanley™ Tuning System – is a superb piece of engineering. It has been designed by Tomm himself, using materials and components that will never rust during the instrument's lifetime: this goes for all the metalwork on the instrument. The bridge utilises stainless steel, brass and anodised aluminium, and a titanium option is also available that reduces the overall instrument weight by 112 grams at a cost of £40 per string.

The neck is sizeable but comfortable, with a 42mm nut width and a full C-shaped profile: the 19mm string spacing makes it a very easy neck to play and navigate. There are no front facing position markers but white dots have been used on the side of the neck, so visually it's a clean bass when viewed from the front, the warm timber hues creating an impressive aesthetic. Water-based lacquers have been used to protect the timbers, and the body has had two coats of Danish oil finish applied, followed by a single coat of teak oil.

Sounds And Playability

The four-control system incorporating volume, bass roll-off, treble roll-off and the 10-setting midrange control (using a push/pull control with five settings in each position and an additional bypass setting) give the player serious flexibility to shape the tone, so don't expect a selection of mundane passive tones. There really are some impressive 'bass colours' available here. Unsurprisingly, in an acoustic context, the instrument resonates and sustains in an impressive fashion: vibrancy is definitely what this bass is all about.

Plugging in, the smooth, rounded tones that were evident with the five-string are here again, supplemented with an added spring in their step, maybe due to less timber in the construction. The woody character still stands out but a throaty, upper-mid bite can also be heard, especially in the upper register. Fingerstyle playing takes some of the attack away, but switch to playing with a pick and that initial bite on the string stands out clearly.

Although the bass appears quite chunky, the playing experience is very comfortable after an initial period of adjustment and the natural character of the instrument is incredibly pleasing. The bass and treble roll-offs work well to offer some light and shade to your tone: the increase

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and decrease are gradual, not on and off like some passive tone controls we could mention. Finding settings with the mid-control that work for you is a process of experimentation, but the differences between each setting are clear and obvious – and thankfully, never harsh or extreme.

Conclusion

As a new product on the block, and with visuals that deviate from the norm, a Stonefield bass requires something of a leap of faith – but if you make that leap, you will be rewarded with a highly enjoyable instrument. Pricing was a topic for discussion in March, and the Brexit effect didn't help matters for an instrument manufactured in New Zealand, but Tomm informs us that a new range of cost-conscious instruments are in progress as we speak. Nevertheless, the 1-4C is a fine instrument in its own right and if you put one through its paces, you'll realise why these basses were one of the talking points at this year's LBGS. ■