



Blackstar Debut Bass 25

Blackstar’s Debut range, now available in bass flavour - does it hit the spot?

BY CONNOR FLYS

▶ **MUCH MORE SO** than electric guitar, bass really isn’t a whole lot of fun without an amplifier. You sit there diligently plucking away, but all it takes is a slight increase in the volume of the TV in the next-but-one room and you lose everything except the sound of your fingers hitting the strings.

All the floor-shaking power and majesty of this most fine of instruments simply isn’t apparent, and you end up feeling a bit underwhelmed by the whole experience.

Trouble is, historically, the entry-level bass amp has struggled to bring much of that power back. It can be a sad and thankless life for the overwhelmed, underpowered beginner’s bass combo, the little speaker farting indecorously as you practice Hysteria.

It’ll allow you to at least hear the notes you’re playing, but a 1x8 combo the size of a box of matches is always going to struggle to transmit the low end needed to make playing bass feel good.

Or is it?

Northampton’s well-respected Blackstar Amplification has sent over a new bass variant of its popular Debut entry-level guitar amp range, and it’s time to see if it hits any different.

Build quality

The bass range consists of the Debut 15 and this Debut 25, but even this bigger model is a compact thing indeed.

It’s light at 18.6lb, but feels satisfyingly well-constructed and solid. The quality of finishing is excellent, and the small row of controls all feel pleasing.

These Debut Bass models appear to be aimed squarely at providing competition for Fender’s two smallest Rumble bass combos, trading blows on feature set and price point; there also seems to be little to choose between the Blackstar and Fender offerings in terms of build quality, even down to the Velcro’d removable grill cloth.

Usability

The control set is simplicity itself, offering nothing you don’t need. There’s a volume control, naturally, and a three-band EQ, and... that’s it. In between, there’s a button triggering an overdrive effect, although with no further controls to adjust that.

Importantly, for a home-oriented amp, there’s also a pair of 3.5mm jacks on the top panel; a

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headphone output, and a line input for music to play along with.

Sounds

Time to fire it up, then. For testing, a good Fender-style bass is as suitable a ‘control’ instrument as you’ll find, so I sat down with my single-pickup, passive, P-alike 1983 Ibanez Roadstar and turned the Blackstar on. Now surely, with such a wee amp, there’s no problem having the volume control around 9 o’clock to begin with? Wrong.

Make no mistake, the Debut 25 is loud – startlingly loud. Surprisingly so for an entry-level practice amp, I immediately had to duck the volume almost all the way back in order not to antagonise my neighbours. This amp could easily be enough for a rehearsal or even, possibly, a small gig. If anything, that volume control might be too much of a hair-trigger for low-level home use.

You might expect a dearth of low-end, but the Blackstar belies its tiny stature and punches out a strong, clean and even tone with a good amount of bass content. The three-band EQ does a solid job of cutting and boosting the right frequencies, and even at higher bass settings there’s no suggestion that the speaker or enclosure are struggling.

Introducing lower notes into the equation, there are no worries either - my five-string Warwick Thumb’s distinctive mid-heavy growl was ably transmitted right down to the lowest notes, while the back pickup of my Yamaha BB punched through with all the power I’d hoped for.

Don’t forget, there’s overdrive to be had as well. Although it’s only a simple circuit without even a level control, it’s well-judged and certainly earns its place; a good general-purpose drive, with enough attitude to satisfy most bassists while practising. It’s not adjustable like an external pedal would be, but it’s great to have access to overdrive without fuss.

musicradar. VERDICT



Blackstar has created something surprising here - a practice amp that might annoy the neighbours a little too much. Its headroom, build quality and tonal power all suggest the Debut Bass 25 has the potential to break out of the bedroom and into louder, more demanding environments.

PROS

- + Sounds great with minimal fuss.
- + Good build quality and portability.
- + Plenty of headroom.

CONS

- The volume is surprisingly difficult to control at practice levels.

SPECS

TYPE: Solid-state bass combo
ORIGIN: China
OUTPUT: 25 watts
SPEAKER: 1x8”
CHANNELS: 1, with switchable overdrive effect
CONTROLS: Volume, Overdrive button, Bass, Middle, Treble
CONNECTIVITY: Instrument input, 3.5mm headphone output, 3.5mm line input
FOOTSWITCH: None
WEIGHT: 8.45kg/18.6lb
DIMENSIONS: 348 x 348 x 251mm

Verdict

In a world where even entry-level amps can be confusing and unintuitive as a result of too much being packed into too small a format, it’s refreshing to use a practice amp that encourages you to stop messing around and... you know, start practising.

That said, the Debut Bass 25 also packs a hell of a punch that you might not be expecting.

It might actually be too difficult to control the volume accurately for quieter home use, but its solid quality, punchy tone and its surprising amount of headroom might make it a secret weapon for rehearsals, or even gigs.

