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SANDBERG • PEDULLA • STEINBERGER • M-AUDIO

Sandberg Basic PM

List \$2,035

Street \$1,750

Pros Robust neo-vintage tone; comfortable profile

Cons Some setup and construction flaws

Contact Distributed in the U.S. by Salwender International, (718) 538-1285
www.salwender.com
www.sandberg-guitars.de



METHODOLOGY

Soundroom Fender TBP-1 preamp, Crest CA 9 power amp, Bergantino HT322 2x10 + 1x12 cab; Eden WT800 World Tour head, Eden D410XLT 4x10 cab; Ampeg SVT Classic and 8x10 cab; Elixir Nanoweb strings

Gigs/rehearsals Ampeg SVT-4PRO and Ampeg BXT-410HL4 4x10; Ampeg PortaBass 250 head and Aguilar GS 112 cab Studio Avalon U5 DI, Apple Power Mac G5, Digidesign Pro Tools HD

SANDBERG Basic PM

BY BRIAN FOX

ESTABLISHED GERMAN LUTHIER SANDBERG GUITARS recently began offering its instruments in America. Putting a modern design spin on such classic basses as the Fender Precision and MusicMan StingRay, Sandberg designed the Basic PM 5-string to be a versatile instrument capable of doing just about anything you'd want a bass to do.

NEO-SOUL

Sandberg stocks its basses with Delano pickups, and the Basic PM pairs a reverse-P neck pickup with an MM-style bridge humbucker, both of which feature massive polepieces. Delano's bridge humbuckers normally have the option of single-coil or dual-coil switching, and I was puzzled to find that option disabled on the Sandberg. Not that the bass was short on versatility—between the pickup blend, onboard EQ, and active and passive switch, I found a solid assortment of classic bass sounds, from thick and round to punchy and focused. In active mode, the Sandberg had a scooped-mid character, which I could intensify or tame using the bass and treble boost/cut knobs. The electronics were dead quiet; cranking the treble gave me loads of zing without a hint of hiss. The Sandberg had an earthy, soulful low end and an articulate *B* string.

In a studio setting, I pulled up the volume knob to switch to passive mode, which gave me a stronger midrange emphasis. The switching was silent, and the two output levels were closely matched with the active EQ flat. The Basic PM jumped through the mix when I played with a pick, and it slathered a thick layer of healthy low end on the track when I played fingerstyle. The 5-string also responded well to slapping,

though the reverse-P neck pickup somewhat limited my popping-hand placement.

TOUGH LOVE

I loved its clear voice and comfortable feel, but the Basic PM presented one or two setup challenges and required more tweaking than I would expect of a bass in its price range. Since the neck pickup height was not set properly, the *D* string was louder than the others. It only took a screwdriver and a bit of patience to fix the problem, but that was time I could have been spending reveling in the Sandberg's thick and juicy tone. When I restrung the bass, I noticed that the friction from tuning had worn grooves into the zero-fret, especially under the *B* string. Though it didn't affect the instrument's sound, it's potentially a problem if you change strings frequently. I had a few other minor construction complaints: Rather than sitting flush against the body, the pearloid pickguard pooched out in the center, and the control cavity cover was wedged in tightly, making it difficult to remove without damaging the bass.

The Sandberg otherwise reeked of high-quality craftsmanship. The fretwork was fantastic, the neck's beautiful dark oil stain and comfortable profile felt great, and the body's groove-y, grain-y texture gave the instrument an Old World feel.

With its classic sounds and fresh styling, the Sandberg Basic PM is like an old soul in a new body. Like any other thing of beauty, it has its share of idiosyncrasies and flaws. But its essence—flexibility, pristine voice, and inspiring mojo—is immutable and timeless. **BP**

SOUNDROOM POLICY

We test products in real-world environments, evaluating them with regard to price and the manufacturer's design intent. Advertising does not influence our product coverage. We invite manufacturers to fact-check product reviews prior to publication, and we print dissenting opinions when applicable. Street prices are approximate.



TECH SPECS

Scale length 34"

Weight 8 lbs, 7 oz

Body Ash

Top Rosewood

Neck Maple

Fingerboard Rosewood

Hardware Sandberg, ETS

Electronics Glockenklang
2-band EQ

Pickups Delano PMVC5

FE/M2 split-coil

humbucker (neck),

MC5 AL dual-coil

humbucker (bridge)

Width at nut 1¹¹/₁₆"

String spacing 1¹/₁₆"

Options Numerous
electronics, wood,
and finish

Other models Basic 4-
string, \$1,874 (list),
\$1,600 (street)

Made in Germany

Gig Bag Included

Warranty One-year parts
and labor

SECOND OPINION

I had a great time with the Sandberg. It's hard to identify which of its many endearing qualities made me feel this way, but I was continually inclined to grab it and noodle throughout its stay. Its has a solid array of rich and throaty sounds, a comfortable body, and enough luxury vibe to make the high cost seem justified. All in all, a totally groovy bass. —JONATHAN HERRERA