

● RAW POWER

Seven Up

A custom bass that's almost impossible to play.

BASSISTS DREAMING OF their ultimate instrument may well find inspiration within the custom catalogue of German bassmeisters Warwick, and the example pictured, the fretless Thumb NT seven-string, is arguably about as custom as it gets. Taken from the company's Masterbuilt range, it's a wonderful piece of work that's as stunning to look at as it is difficult to play, and there's no avoiding the obvious drawback: that whopping fingerboard. It ranges in width from 55mm to 99mm (a Fender Precision fretboard is just 41.3mm at the nut) and is nigh-on impossible to play using conventional fretting-hand techniques unless you possess hands like the Incredible Hulk's.

Common tunings include F# B E A D G C or B E A D G C F, low to high, and the NT's MEC 'soap bar' pickups and active electronics are adept at handling any sonic frequency. A striking grade of swirly bubinga wood has been used for both the body and neck, and the oil finish makes the wood's figuring to almost glow from within. The tuners are capped with buttons fashioned from the same material, and the expansive pearl inlay at the octave is the cherry on the cake. The neck even has illuminated side-dots.

Fretless basses, while certainly challenging to play, provide an arsenal of unmistakable tones, and the NT is no different. Arguably the greatest fretless bass player of them all, Jaco Pastorius, reinvented the art, while Pino Palladino (The Who, John Mayer Trio) lathered his fretless all over Paul Young's best-known 80s hits.

A Warwick bass with this spec will set you back almost £6,200, but the company do offer a raft of options that are closer to the mainstream. As far as the Thumb NT goes, we're not sure whether we should play it or simply hang it on the wall.

More info at warwickbass.com

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GETTY

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Why use seven strings when two will do?

Stig Pedersen, bassist with D.A.D., Denmark's biggest band, is certainly committed to the above minimalist mantra, as for most of his career he's used instruments that have just the E and A strings. A two-string bass requires a narrower neck, of course, and although technical details of his collection of frankly insane instruments are scarce, it's safe to assume that, at around 20mm, the nut of Stig's basses will be closer to half the width of a conventional four-stringer.

Jaws dropped in August when Pedersen unveiled the iPhone bass at Denmark's four-day Smukfest shindig. The body, resembling Apple's ubiquitous smartphone, features a TV screen and a front-facing camera, and it actually streamed live video to social media platforms during the single song he played it on.

Two strings, though? As Stig's tech Troels Bjørn states hubristically – with tongue, we hope, planted firmly in cheek: "Four strings are for pussies."