

ERIC STEWART'S '59 JUNIOR

Guitar & Bass

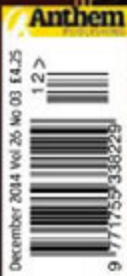
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REVIEWED
APRIL
25/07

There are very few people who deserve a place at the very top table of bass design – the game-changers, the designers and the inspired individuals whose innovations became globally accepted as standard – but Ned Steinberger is definitely one of them. The man who gave us that iconic, headless and wood-free wonder the L-2 is once again exploring the solidbody bass guitar. While the L-2's minimal form gave traditionalists an easy target, the Radius is a different kettle of fish. It's still headless, sure, but the sleek, curvaceous, double-cutaway maple body has a sumptuous flamed maple top that gives it a new high-end classiness. The three pickup settings and Polar piezo combinations are going to give a lot of variation, and it's especially interesting to combine each magnetic setting with its piezo blend version.

In twin pickup mode the Radius is big and brash with a solid bottom end, a slightly snarly midrange and highs that are bright and zingy. If a little high-mid biased. Blending in the Polar pickup sanitises the sound; the definition is still excellent but now the tone has lost the zingy high-mid sheen – a nicely even, controlled setting for pop exploits. NS took plenty of time in putting the CR5 together, and not a single millisecond has been wasted. It's a wonderful instrument that manages to look cooler than a headless bass has any right to, and the piezo/magnetic mixture produces effectively three basses: a bit of an animal with the magnetics, more polite and refined when blended, or earthy and thudding in piezo mode. The neck isn't super-slim but it's very comfortable and contributes to the feeling of a bass that demands to be played, while the self-clamping tuning system is fantastic. Of course, the £2000-plus price tag is up in the professional echelon, but we think it's worth every penny.

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