

THE GREAT BRITISH BASS LOUNGE

◊ LOWERING THE TONE ◊



WELCOME TO THE GBBL NEWSLETTER

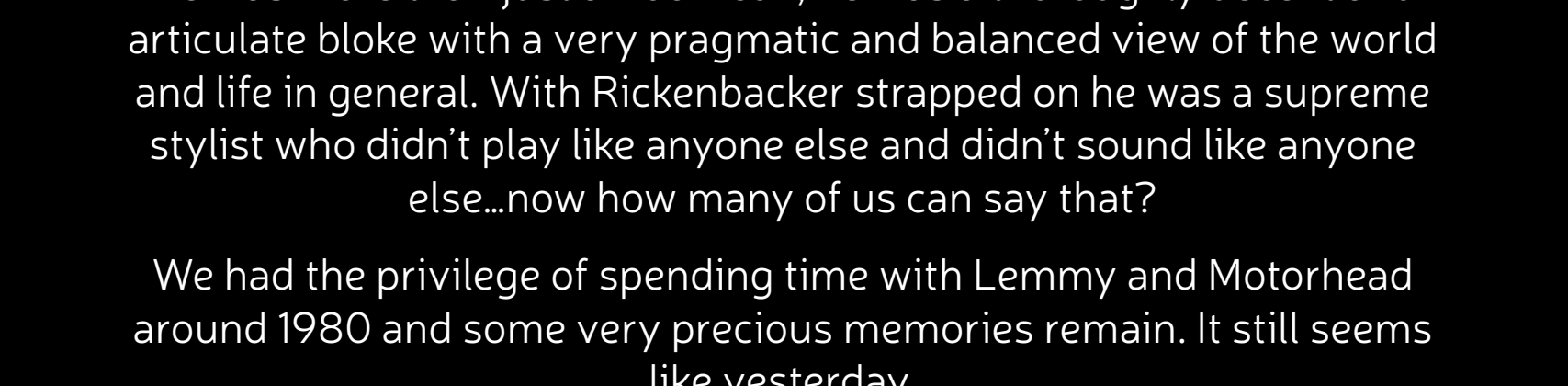
WINTER 2016

**Greetings boys and girls, its been a while.... where did 2015 go?
Wishing you all a very happy, peaceful and healthy new year.**

Those of you who follow us on Facebook or read the news bulletins we put on the website will have been following some of the activity over the previous months, others will have become a little disconnected and for that we apologise.

Musical Instrument retailing seems to have picked up a bit through 2015 but we're constantly hearing that the high-street MI retailers are struggling to sell bass guitars. This isn't a surprise given the ever growing number of sites where people can buy/sell/exchange preowned gear or simply order online. Its difficult for a business, with its overheads and VAT, to compete with the preowned market where 'bottom line price' is often King and where there is no 'service' involved.

We've therefore been pushed to focus more on new product and especially 'harder to find' premium brands (whether it be basses, amps or accessories) that aren't widely available in the UK or certainly in the North.



WE SALUTE YOU...

Before we go any further we'd like to remember, with great fondness, our 'main man', Lemmy who passed away on 28th December 2015, four days after his 70th birthday.

He was more than just a Rock icon, he was a thoroughly decent and articulate bloke with a very pragmatic and balanced view of the world and life in general. With Rickenbacker strapped on he was a supreme stylist who didn't play like anyone else and didn't sound like anyone else...now how many of us can say that?

We had the privilege of spending time with Lemmy and Motorhead around 1980 and some very precious memories remain. It still seems like yesterday.

Thanks for the music and the memories.

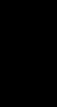
RIP Lemmy x



A FEW KEY HEADLINES

FROM 2015

New brand arrivals include Rickenbacker, Hartke, Tech 21, MXR, Ampeg, Cort, NS-Design, Jim Dunlop, Elixir, Mesa-Boogie and Warwick.



A 6 month long advertising campaign is taking place in Bass Player Magazine in the USA/Canada to try and reach a wider audience, especially for our British Basses.



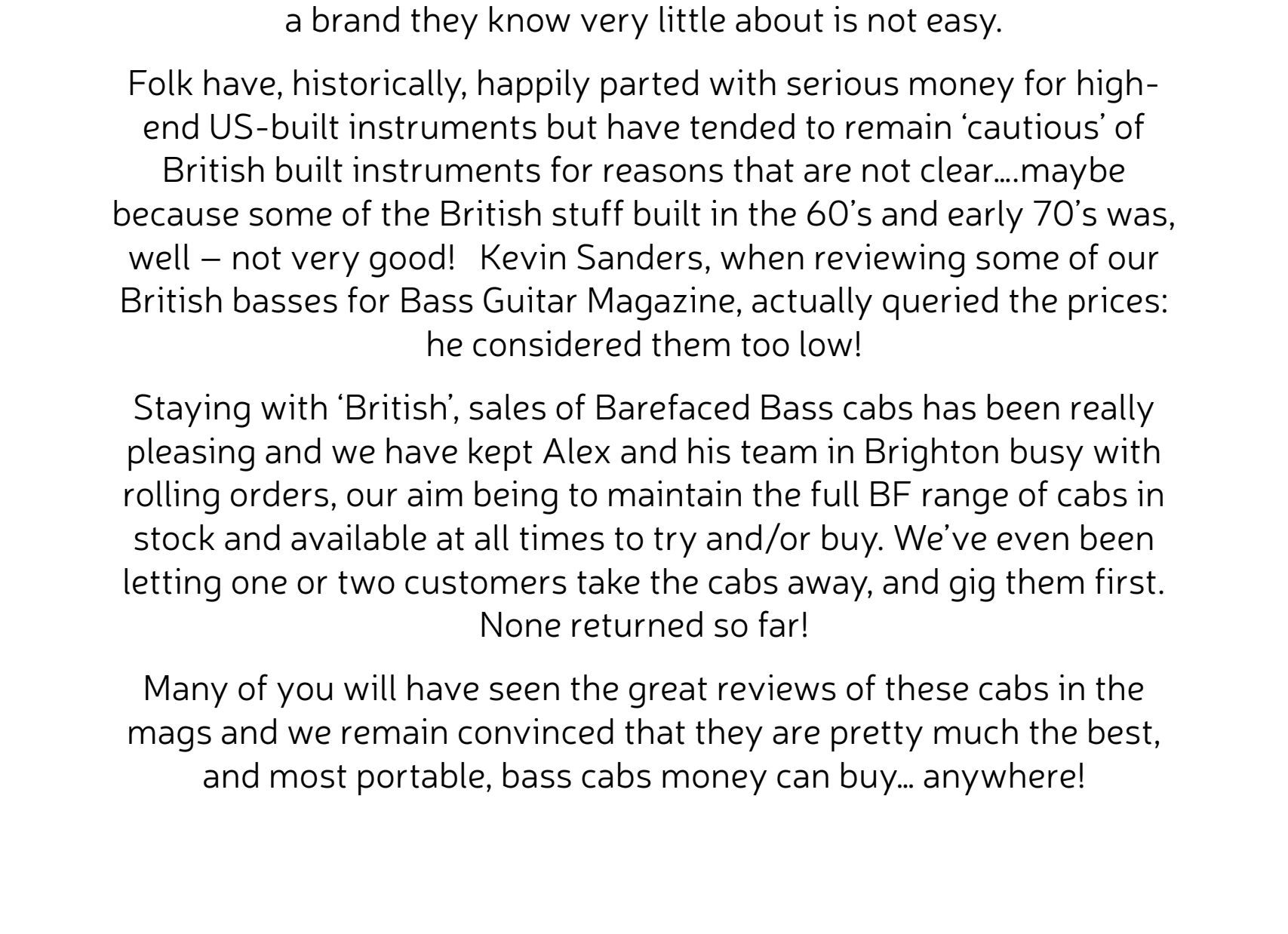
Sales are evenly split between those from our 'shop' and 'remote' sales to other parts of the UK, Europe and beyond.



UK sales are split approximately 70%/30% (South/North respectively) of the Midlands.



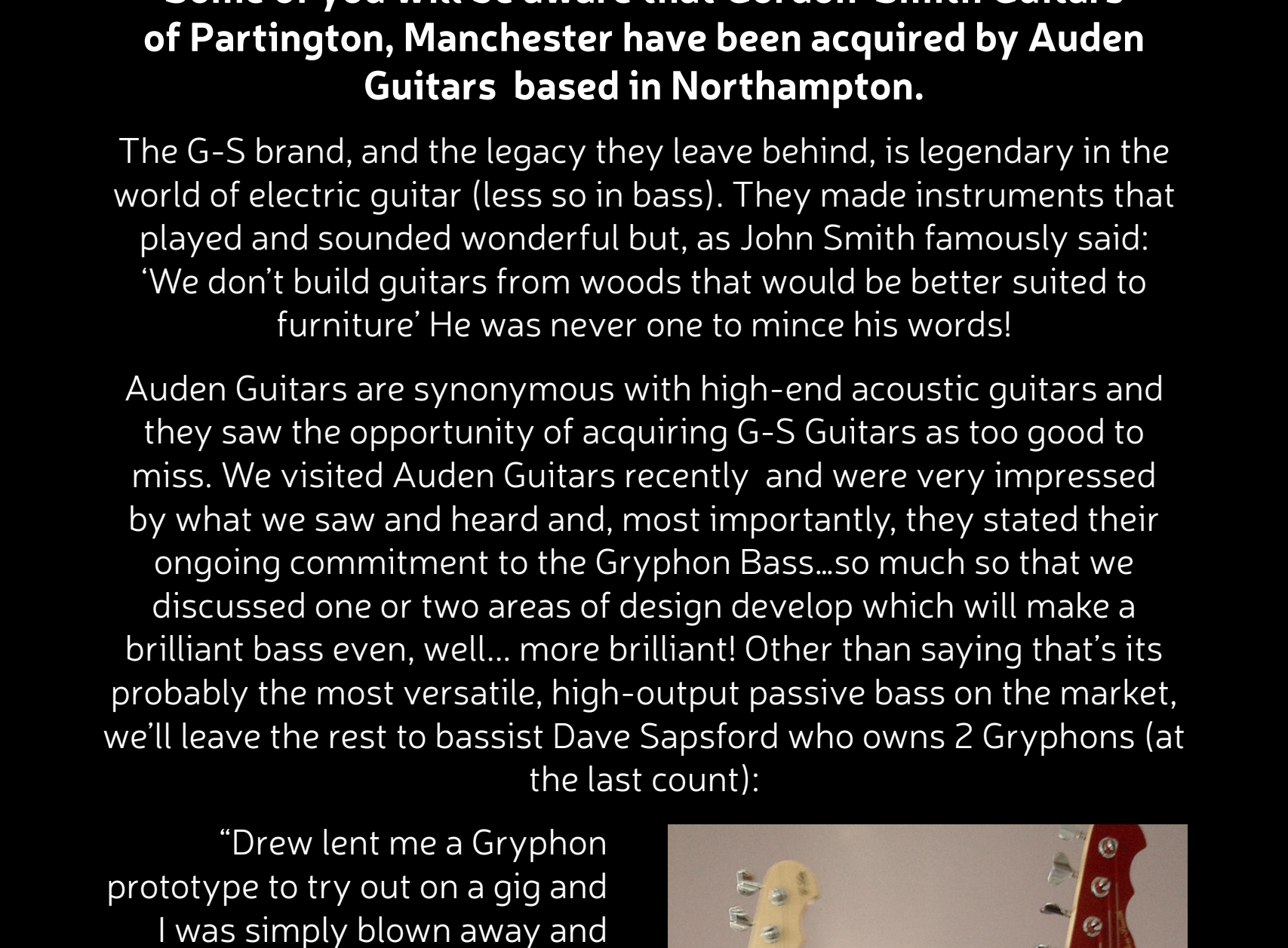
Guitar/Bass/Trade shows: We no longer exhibit at 'open' shows. The returns for the cost and effort simply aren't there and the show 'environment' isn't our thing. We still love meeting you guys one at a time over a coffee!



GBBL OFFERS

Our 'offers' portal is on the homepage of the GBBL website.

These tend to be 'Clearance' offers from time to time or 'Time Limited offers' running on selected products. The homepage also includes **news** items and the **latest products** to arrive.



OUR BRITISH BRANDS

Our core mission is still a 'work in progress' but players finally seem to be becoming 'switched on' to British bass guitar brands.

Of course Overwater has been a household name for over 3 decades but names like ACG, Alpher, Everson & Anaconda have had to be nurtured and persuasively presented to a largely unaware Bass Community. Superb magazine reviews have helped of course but shifting perceptions and persuading folk to part with a lot of dosh on a brand they know very little about is not easy.

Folk have, historically, happily parted with serious money for high-end US-built instruments but have tended to remain 'cautious' of British built instruments for reasons that are not clear...maybe because some of the British stuff built in the 60's and early 70's was, well – not very good! Kevin Sanders, when reviewing some of our British basses for Bass Guitar Magazine, actually queried the prices: he considered them too low!

Staying with 'British', sales of Barefaced Bass cabs has been really pleasing and we have kept Alex and his team in Brighton busy with rolling orders, our aim being to maintain the full BF range of cabs in stock and available at all times to try and/or buy. We've even been letting one or two customers take the cabs away, and gig them first. None returned so far!

Many of you will have seen the great reviews of these cabs in the mags and we remain convinced that they are pretty much the best, and most portable, bass cabs money can buy... anywhere!

GORDON - SMITH GUITARS & THE GRYPHON BASS ?

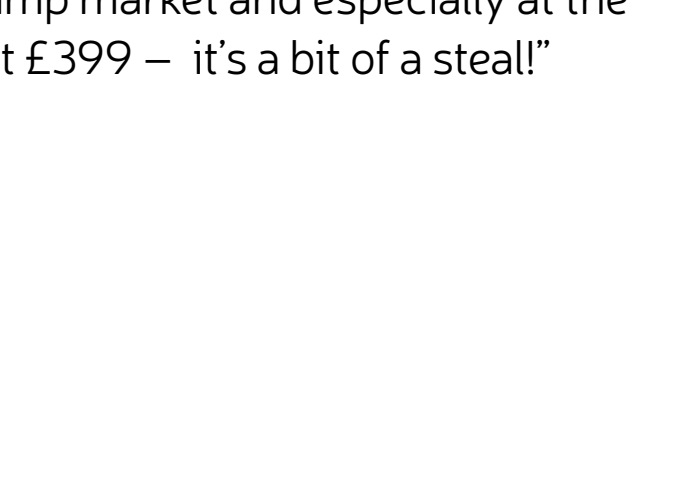
Some of you will be aware that Gordon-Smith Guitars of Partington, Manchester have been acquired by Auden Guitars based in Northampton.

The G-S brand, and the legacy they leave behind, is legendary in the world of electric guitar (less so in bass). They made instruments that played and sounded wonderful but, as John Smith famously said: 'We don't build guitars from woods that would be better suited to furniture' He was never one to mince his words!

Auden Guitars are synonymous with high-end acoustic guitars and they saw the opportunity of acquiring G-S Guitars as too good to miss. We visited Auden Guitars recently and were very impressed by what we saw and heard and, most importantly, they stated their ongoing commitment to the Gryphon Bass...so much so that we discussed one or two areas of design develop which will make a brilliant bass even, well... more brilliant! Other than saying that's its probably the most versatile, high-output passive bass on the market, we'll leave the rest to bassist Dave Sapsford who owns 2 Gryphons (at the last count):

"Drew lent me a Gryphon prototype to try out on a gig and I was simply blown away and bought it. Shortly afterwards G-S released the fully developed version and I acquired a Dakota Red one with rosewood fingerboard.

"The great thing about these basses is the amazingly powerful and articulate passive humbucking pickups which, frankly, leave all the active basses I'd previously played, standing. Add to this the clever switching which allows each humbucker to be split into 2 distinct single coil modes and I have all the classic bass tones at my fingertips – Fender P, Fender J, RIC and the Gibson earth tremor!).



Dave Sapsford with his Gryphons

"I play my Gryphons through a Genz-Benz Streamliner amp into Barefaced cabs. The Gryphons build quality is outstanding and the price, for a hand-built British instrument of this quality, is frankly difficult to believe."

Rod Hearn from East Sussex now owns the very last Gryphon to be built in Partington, Manchester:

"The Gryphon arrived safe and sound earlier today. I've just had 30 very enjoyable minutes playing it and am VERY pleased with its feel and tone. You are right – it's lovely to play and has so much variety and power but the tone is special. It is very comfortable to play, with a smooth, fast neck. It will not be coming back to you!"

GEAR REVIEWS

From time to time we're going to hear from customers who give us feedback by email. These are the customers' own words...

Markbass Standard 104HF (4x10) cab, 4 ohm.

(Peter Gales, Leeds, Nov 2014).

Gigged the cab last night and I have to say that I was delighted with its performance and tone – the guitarist noticed the difference straight away. I never got on with neo-drivers before but, as the review in 'Bass Player' says: 'these are a different animal and sound much more like traditional ceramic speakers'.

The lighter weight is also a big plus... I got it off stage and into the car on my own without any assistance – brilliant! ...and I'm even getting used to the yellow cones!

Tech 21 VTB-500 bass head.

(Pro-bassist Callum Williams tried the new Tech 21 rig in the showroom, Nov 2015).



The coupling of a critically acclaimed SansAmp pedal and Class D lightweight poweramp is long overdue. As with the SansAmp bass driver pedals, the VTB's scope for tone shaping is wide, however unlike other tube simulators, the tones are pretty accurate – there is a lot on tap here.

The amp represents a great choice and at its price point is a real contender in the lightweight bass amp market and especially at the special promo offer price of just £399 – it's a bit of a steal!"

BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE

If you're not familiar with this publication you're missing out.

BGM is the only 'bass dedicated' mag in the UK and we work closely with Joel McIver, the Editor, and his team who publish news bulletins on our behalf as well as periodic reviews of our basses and amps. In turn, we support the mag by using it as an advertising platform.

We had a visit recently from Ellen O'Reilly who played a number of basses which will appear 'on review' in future editions of BGM. Ellen is a pro- bassist and has a tuition column in the magazine. What must it be like to be talented and good looking all at the same time?... we can only imagine!



SANDBERG

WORKSHOP VISIT, NOV '15

In late November we visited Holger Stonjek and his Sandberg business in Northern Germany and were mightily impressed.

Sandberg are 30 years old in 2016 and will be launching a Limited Edition 30th Anniversary bass at the NAMM show in January – we were privileged to see the show models in 4 and 5 string formats as well as a 'sneak look' at the artwork for the impending new brochure.

Sandberg build some of the best 'real world' basses on the planet and their prices are fantastic for hand-built instruments. If you haven't yet had a play on their 'configurator' then give it a go, its great fun. Literally configure the bass of your dreams... and then ask us for a price of course!

We also stock the Sandberg Electra Series of basses. The Electra TT was given the accolade of 'best bass under £1000' by Guitar & Bass Magazine in their bass gear review at the end of 2014. These basses are designed and built in Germany from components sourced from the best manufacturers in Korea.

Relic'ing might not be your thing but four out of ten Sandbergs that get built are relic'd to some degree. We watched the relic'ing guys in action and it's a highly skilful, very time-absorbing process with frighteningly authentic results. Take your own Sandberg factory tour on the video link here.



Here's a picture of the completed Custom Thinline 5 string fretless... a work of art we're sure you agree. Not only does it have a slimmed down body but its chambered as well for extra lightness. The top is Cocobolo on a maple body. This one's just about to go to a gentleman called Nely in Minnesota, USA.



MANCHESTER BASS EVENT

2016

A number of customers and suppliers have suggested that we might hold some kind of 'Bass Day' in/around Manchester.

We've given this some thought and plan to do something in September/October 2016. This would be run in conjunction with a number of our bass and amp builders/suppliers but we hesitate at using the word 'Show'...we'd start on a modest scale and see what interest it created. If we were sufficiently encouraged it could be something that could be developed into something a little bigger the year after and so on.

What would you like to see/happen at a 'Bass Day'? let us have your suggestions and maybe we can tailor it around our customers.

Remember – these things only work if they are well supported.

PART EXCHANGES

Offering PX/trade-ins is an important way of doing business with customers.

It maintains our pre-owned stock and is often the difference between a customer being able, or not being able, to own the amp or bass they want.

However, we have decided that **we will no longer be taking in pre-owned amplification.** The second hand amp market is saturated and is very unstable price wise which makes achieving firm resale prices difficult and risky. We've also experienced some after-sale problems with amps which we've had to rectify at our expense given that we've been offering a 3 month warranty.

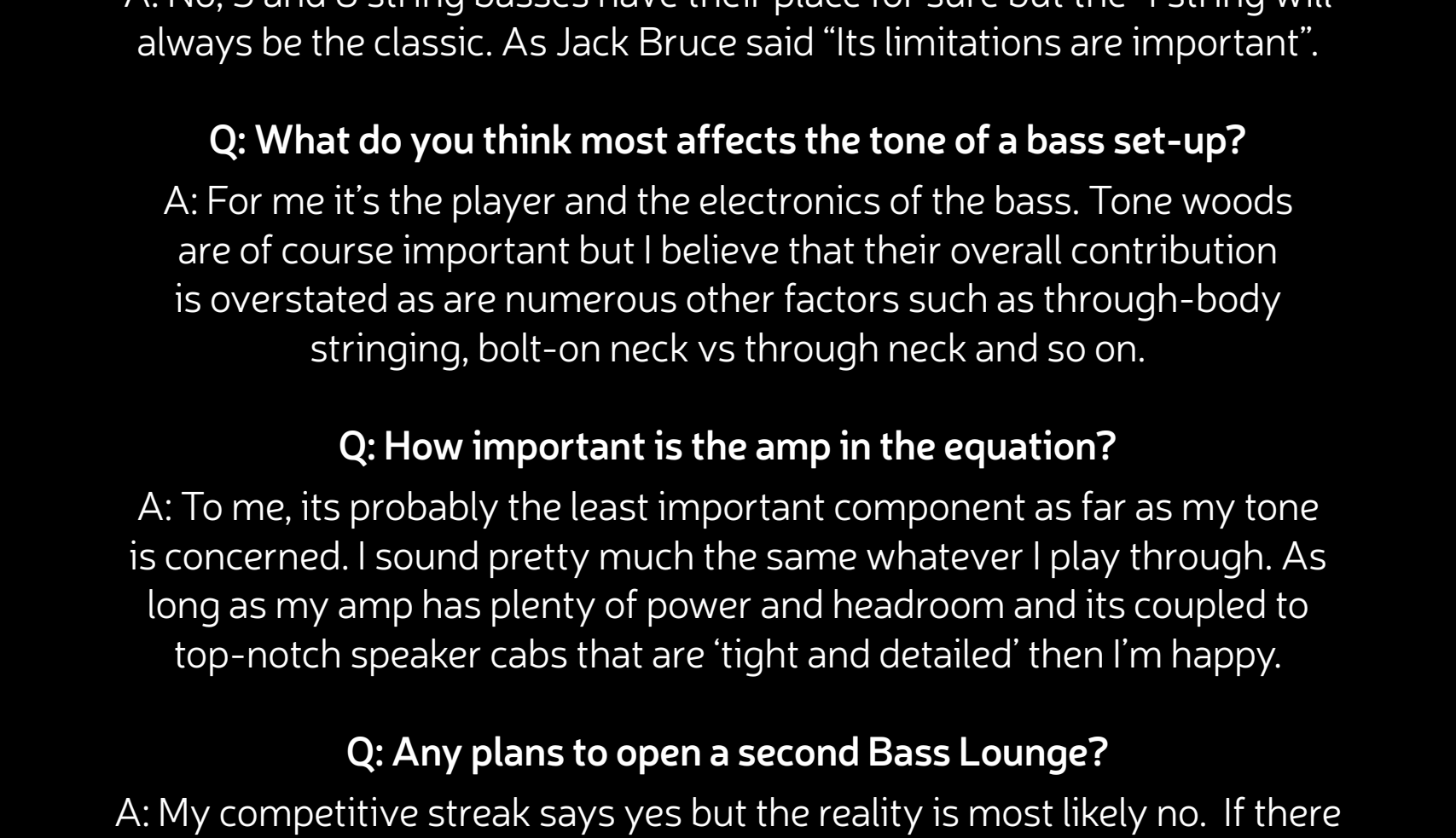
We still very much welcome PX deals on basses depending upon brand, model and condition... and, as always, we offer 'firm and fair' PX/trade prices.

MOFFAT BASS BASH

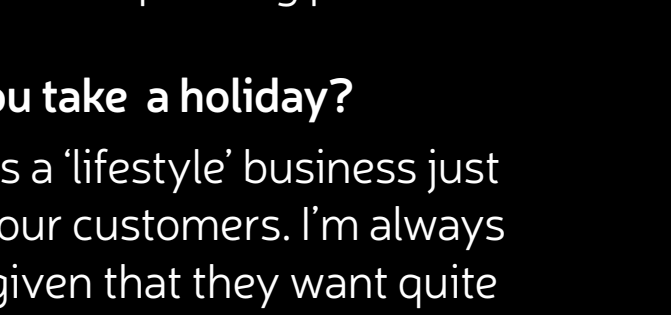
19TH/20TH MARCH 2016

The MBB is an event run by Alan Cringean of AC Guitars (ACG). Held in Moffat in Scotland (approx 45 mins North of Carlisle) the event is an annual coming together of ACG devotees and bass enthusiasts generally.

Saturday evening is a 'beers and curry' social and Sunday is the main event day with an extensive display of folks ACG (and other) basses plus there's a house band in the main theatre which, by arrangement, you can get up and play bass with... just name your song.



Pic courtesy of Moffat Bass Bash



A CHAT WITH...

DREW

Quite a few customers seem interested in what I'm up to as a bass player, what gear do I use?, do I play in a band and what sort of stuff do I play?. Here are a few of the questions I recall being asked:

Q: Running a bass business you must spend most of your time playing bass?

A: No, I actually play very little bass these days. I somehow manage to keep my chops up and generate sufficient ideas and bass parts to take into the recording studio.

Q: What about your band?

A: My Band is New England, formed in 1983. We had a 28 year lay-off and reformed in 2014 with the sole purpose of writing and recording original melodic rock material. There are whispers of one or two gigs but I'm not sure. We've put some material on SoundCloud which includes stuff from the early 80's (that was then) and a few current day pieces (this is now) with more stuff to follow.

Q: How do you decide what gear to use given what you do?

A: Difficult as I have so many wonderful basses and amps at my disposal. I have been a long time devotee of Rickenbacker basses so my modern day 4003 mapleglo' apes the 4001 I used back in the early '80s. I use Barefaced cabs and pretty well any good, powerful lightweight bass amp.

Q: I'm surprised to discover you're not a 'gearhead'?

A: No, never have been. A bass is simply a tool on which to make music. Sure, they have to work for me but I've never obsessed over a bass on and above what it looks like. I can pretty well play anything but it has to look right and feel right. My RIC just ticks all the boxes.

Q: Do you play anything other than a 4 string, fretted bass?

A: No, 5 and 6 string basses have their place for sure but the 4 string will always be the classic. As Jack Bruce said "Its limitations are important".

Q: What do you think most affects the tone of a bass set-up?

A: For me it's the player and the electronics of the bass. Tone woods are of course important but I believe that their overall contribution is overstated as are numerous other factors such as through-body stringing, bolt-on neck vs through neck and so on.

Q: How important is the amp in the equation?

A: To me, its probably the least important component as far as my tone is concerned. I sound pretty much the same whatever I play through. As long as my amp has plenty of power and headroom and its coupled to top-notch speaker cabs that are 'tight and detailed' then I'm happy.

Q: Any plans to open a second Bass Lounge?

A: My competitive streak says yes but the reality is most likely no. If there was a GBBL 2 it would be in/around London which is where the mass of the bass/music community is and where the real spending power is.

Q: As a one man business how do you take a holiday?

A: Simple, I take quite a few holidays. GBBL is a 'lifestyle' business just as playing bass/music is a lifestyle thing for our customers. I'm always contactable when I'm away and most folks, given that they want quite specific things from us, are happy to wait a little.

Q: Any plans to retire sometime soon?

A: My family and friends think I'm mad doing this but I do it because I love it. Music and Bass is my passion plus, I still have a very active mind and loads of energy which I need to channel into something. I don't do beaches and pools!

Q: Do you wish you'd done this much earlier in life?

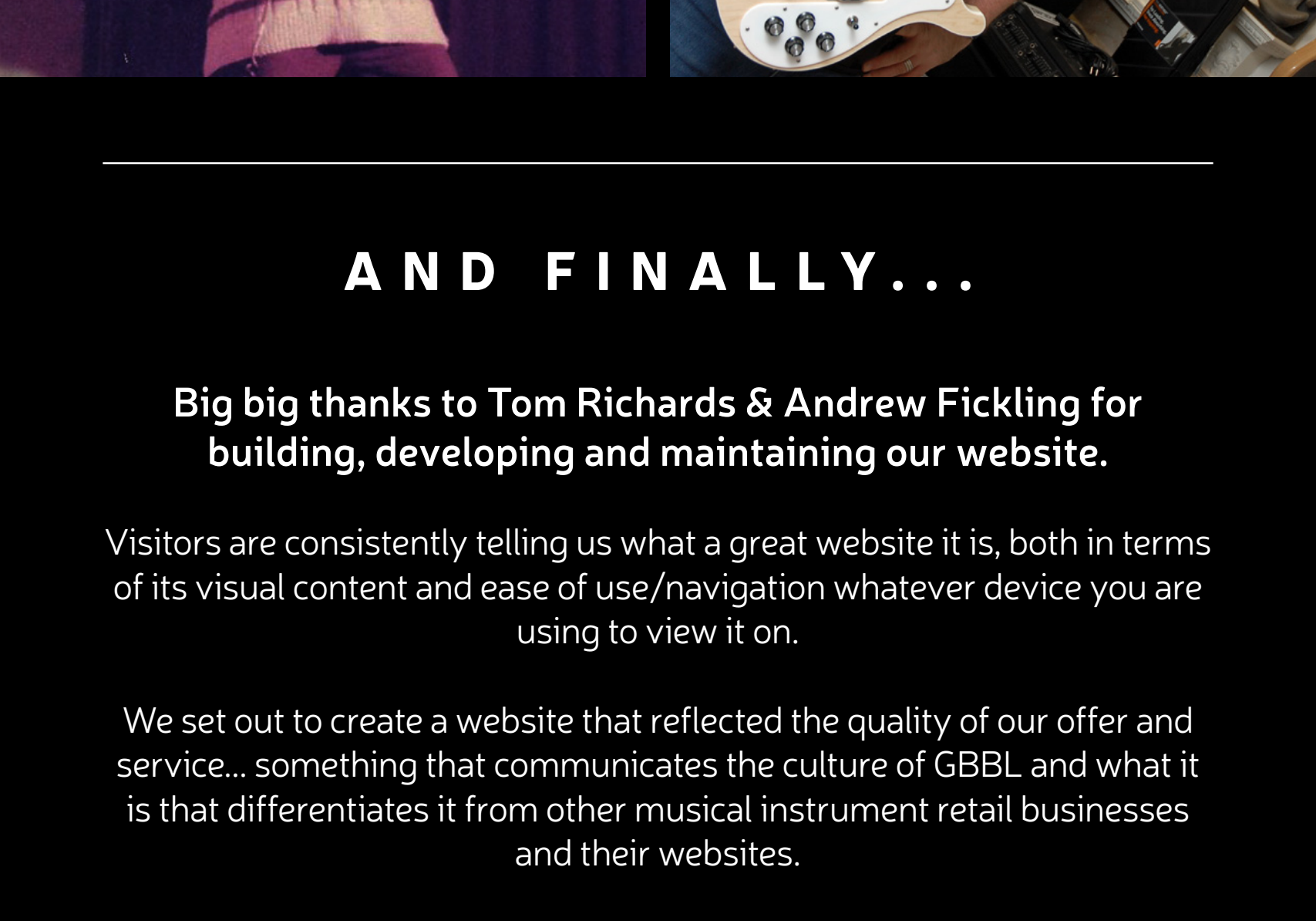
A: No. Selling basses is not a career... it ticks over, that's all. It's an indulgence!

Q: You seem to be the only MI retailer who operates on a 'by appointment' basis?

A: Probably, yes. It means that I can focus upon one customer, and his/her needs, at once. Plus, we don't get timewasters. Almost everyone who visits is in the market to buy if we can meet his/her needs. We get nothing other than really nice people coming here and we've made many friends.

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Contact Drew or have a listen to New England on Soundcloud:



AND FINALLY...

Big big thanks to Tom Richards & Andrew Fickling for building, developing and maintaining our website.

Visitors are consistently telling us what a great website it is, both in terms of its visual content and ease of use/navigation whatever device you are using to view it on.

We set out to create a website that reflected the quality of our offer and service... something that communicates the culture of GBBL and what it is that differentiates it from other musical instrument retail businesses and their websites.

We prefer to invite you into our 'Gallery' (isn't a bass guitar a piece of art after all?) as opposed to a mere 'shop' and we try and avoid retail jargon, retail cliches and fads. We are first and foremost musicians here not retailers, and we like to think that we interact with 'musicians' as opposed to 'punters' and 'consumers' as customers are known in retail circles!

Of course, nothing's ever perfect, so feel free to comment about your experience (positive or negative) of using the GBBL website. You know us... we always listen!



THANK YOU FOR READING!

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