

# Aristides O50

## Bass perfection in Arium

**A bass guitar is made of wood and that's that. Yet, there've always been guitar builders who perceive the matter differently. Ampeg built its Babybass from a type of insulation foam. Wandré and Kramer put all their faith into aluminum, Dan Armstrong in Perspex, James Trussart in rusty metal and Ned Steinberger made his L2-bass tennis rackets from graphite epoxy. Was this a success? Actually, it was. The Babybass is a given in salsa and the Steinberger has been a gimmick for some time. On the other hand, Kramer's necks were very sensitive to temperature, and one shouldn't thump a Wandré neck into anything. In spite of this, there are plenty reasons to explore the use of other materials. After all, proper wood is expensive, vulnerable and may disappoint you after a couple of years. In some cases, wood is even environmentally protected. Wood just sounds so good... At Amsterdam guitar builders Aristides, they use 'Arium'**

### Business Class

A couple of years ago, one Aristides Poort acquired some fame in The Netherlands with his 'Catalyst' guitars and bass guitars. I once tried one out and it didn't excite me much. I couldn't hear the wood. However, Jan Akkerman regularly played his signature model. The brand practically vanished until last year, when the corporate programme Business Class—led by an investment advisor which was accompanied by guitar legend Adrian Vandenberg—called upon investors. There was a guitar brand to invest in. Apparently, this call was heard, for now the brand Aristides has been launched, with a guitar 'OIO' and a bass 'O50'.

### Arium versus wood

When I went to collect my guitar at the Aristides workshop, one important difference from all other guitar builders I had visited was most apparent: no wood. And an enormous aluminum spray template for the guitars. It may seem simple: make a mould, pour a polyester substance into it and hurrah, there's your guitar. Well, no. Unless, that is, you are willing to settle for the type of thing you get with the Guitar Hero video game. On the contrary, the Aristides is a product of intense cooperation efforts with the Technical University in Delft. The result is a material which approaches the features and quality of genuine wood to a maximum extent: Arium. Success? The first thing I did when



I held the O50 was knock on it. And what did I hear? A knock on wood!

### First impressions

The O50 is a bass guitar made out of a single piece. Neck and body are shaped from one mould and seem indestructible to the senses. Its appearance is unique, the design is well considered. Still, the final judgement is up to you. The 'spoiler' adds a little something to the matted black exterior. The bass doesn't need the air cooler, though the upper spoiler

reflects the shape of the lower one, which has a function because that's where you plug in. The fretboard is of rosewood, a fine choice on a bass neck. The balance is outright perfect, so is the accessibility of high notes. The neck of this five string feels familiar and trusted, is easy to play and the finishing and tuning are perfect. Even unplugged, this bass has a lot of 'tone' and this is the greatest difference from all the other bass guitars that aren't manufactured out of wood. Those have no 'tone' whatsoever. Amplified, the Aristides is a real beast. Once touched, it'll never cease on its own. This means: a perfect build, perfect resonance. Every single note is as strong as can be. No wolf tones, no 'holdbacks' or 'faders'. Straight ahead from a low B till the G at the top of the neck. All this with a beautiful, modern and balanced low, middle and high.



### So what does it do?

The tone control also works perfectly. Tune up from a flat as you please, fine-tune sharp or flat exactly within the margins you seek. This has all been thought about. There's a true bypass-push/pull switch, something all active bass guitars ought to have. Special attention was given to an extra device: the slap contour switch. I must say that I wouldn't even use it for slap work because it works perfectly without the device. The switch can however give a single bridge pick up the power to provide a rock band with a mighty base all on its own. Behind the (sturdy) back cover, the bass guitar is fairly hollow, also avoiding it becoming too heavy. There's room for a midi kit. A minor inconvenience is that one must unscrew ten screws to replace the nine volt battery in the back. Nonetheless, it's a perfectly built instrument with good features. To me, it hardly matters anymore whether it's made out of Arium or pizza crust. The Aristides O50 is a top notch bass guitar. As may well be expected of an instrument which costs € 3,450. Now let's put it to the final test, off to the stage.

### Aristides live

Although the O50 is featured with 'regular' jazz bass quarter-pounders and though I've listened to these pick-ups on other bass guitars, the Aristides doesn't behave like a jazz bass. There's a punch and a growl, it's all there, still I just can't seem to place these sound characteristics. That's also because each note 'stands' on its own as easily as another. You needn't really put hard work into your tones. As strange as it may sound, sometimes the wolfish whims of a neck are what give an instrument its charm. Does this bass lose points due to its perfection? Nonsense! For this bass is a monster on stage. Every note survives the mix. The low B-string is near unstoppable and clear as a bell on every note. Moderation is a must, active fine tuning is as good as needless. Not entirely needless, for at the 'bottom' of a tone, a touch of extra layer

gives an edge to the basis. I was struck at how happy my Boss Octave seems to be with this bass: it follows even a low G flawlessly. Slapping sounds clear and modern. The tone of a good Precision bass is approachable with the pickup. The grunt of the bridge is truly fantastic, also in combination with the push/pull switch. I don't believe there's any other bass that doubles the melody of a sneering guitar this well. Joining in with Rammstein means: bring this bass! Without, however, characterising this instrument as a heavy metal bass. Because, frankly, it can do anything. Even though I wouldn't bring it along to a blues gig or a Motown moment.

### Is perfection any fun?

But how much fun is a perfect bass guitar? Isn't the charm of a 1970's play-in-the-wind Fender exactly that every note needs to be fought for? Doesn't a short scale-hollow body fill up the room so roundly because every note creates an upright wave in the body? Indeed. Nevertheless, a bass that can provide the perfect (even round a low B) foundation to an entire band is a basic any professional bass player should carry along. This bass has it, and it makes the Aristides O50 one of the finest bass guitars around. Fortunately, because its price sets a few expectations. Nonetheless, the chance that you can still play your bass after accidentally driving your car over it, is absolutely greatest with an Aristides. Pricey, but definitely worth a try!

Model	O50	Body & neck from a single piece, cast from Arium.
Fretboard		Rosewood with pearl-shell colour inlay, radius of 10" at the nut to 16" at the 22 <sup>nd</sup> fret.
Nut		Graph Tech
Frets		Dunlop
Tuning mechanics		Hipshot Ultralight
Halsbreite:		1.85" (47 mm) at the nut to 2.65" (65 mm) at the 12 <sup>th</sup> fret.
Neck profile		C-shape, 0.87" (22 mm) at the nut to 0.98" (25 mm) at the 12 <sup>th</sup> fret.
Scale length		34" (863,6mm)
Weight		9.26 Lb (4.2 kg)
Pickups		Seymour Duncan quarter pounders (bass lines)
Tuning		2-band active tuning, 2 push/pull pots (1 slap contour, 1 true bypass)
Bridge		ABM Aluminum Bridge
Strap locks		Schaller
Varnish		Matted black
Case		Custom moulded heavy duty case
Accessories		Carry-strap with Aristides O50 logo
Special		Micro chip with serial number moulded into body
Price		€ 3,450.-