



YAMAHA TRB 1004J £925
BASS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP SOWELS

Yamaha TRB 1004J £925

Top-end features combined with Far Eastern build makes for a serious sub-£1,000 contender *by Roger Newell*

Yamaha is perhaps the most modest of giants in the bass guitar world. Its top-end models are firmly encased in the hands of four-five- and six-string legends including Billy Sheehan, Nathan East and John Patitucci, while its more affordable instruments offer a quality:cost ratio that's hard to ignore. Here, Yamaha is tackling that tricky around-a-grand price point with the TRB 1004J, built in Indonesia, and presented beautifully with its pro-oriented feature set.

With a quilted maple top, matching headstock and a black coachline circumnavigating the body, there's no evidence of any cost-cutting here – as we'd expect from Yamaha. It's almost the opposite: the boring-sounding 'caramel brown' colour description seems at odds with the sumptuousness

of the slightly reddish lustre finish. It's very well constructed, with a laminated five-ply maple neck, rosewood fingerboard and six bolts securing neck to body – this is

clearly built to manage the rigours of life on the road.

With a minimal headstock and extended upper body horn, even with the extended scale length it's a very nicely

balanced bass indeed. The controls are inserted from the rear of the bass's body, so there's no need for a scratchplate, thus showing off the glorious maple top perfectly. The oversized soapbar pickups, meanwhile, give finger players great anchor points for your thumb.

Sounds

Having two identical Alnico-loaded pickups and a three-band active EQ means there's a huge variety of sound options available. It naturally plays



A five-piece neck secured with six recessed bolts – no stability issues here

The Rivals

Cheaper, but not fully active, **Spector's Legend 4 Custom** (£720) uses the Special EMG B30 RevS three-band active tone circuit with EMG-HZ passive humbuckers.

Fender's Active Jazz Bass (£730) is the original, but updated with two dual-coil ceramic Noiseless Jazz Bass pickups. For more money, **Music Man's Stingray Double Humbucker** (£1,595) has a two-band active preamp and an ash body.





right into the hands of modern-minded bassists who are looking for solid sounds that are rich in tone right across the full range, low to high. But it's not just sweetness and light here – this is also one very throaty beast that excels in funky punch and blended hollow mixed pickup heaven.

The three EQ bands are well chosen, which means you're in little danger of excessive bottom-end or glass-shattering treble; instead we have good control of the most usable part

of the tonal spectrum. Each tone control, and indeed the balance control, has a handy centre detent so you can easily feel where your tones and pickups are set.


Warm silky and subtle tones give way to brash and exciting as you gradually take the controls from cut to boost. Or for tight, compressed sounds that emphasise the funk element, try cutting the mid and pushing the bass and treble – nice in the studio rather than onstage where the mid-range

plays such an important part in the overall distribution and projection of your sound.

But don't think this is light on simple bass tone – it most certainly isn't. Wind the bass control to full and select just the neck pickup and there's plenty of bottom-end on tap, but if you even add just a touch of the bridge pickup the character swings back to that classic hollow dual-pickup edge. In short there's plenty here for modern or old-school players to enjoy.

Verdict

Yamaha makes superb quality twin-pickup basses with that funky element, but the top models are out of reach for most of us in terms of price. This TRB has been introduced to change that and its 35-inch scale – increased depth and clarity over the more standard 34-inches – and generous string spacing make it a delightful bass to play and hear: it's a winner all round.

The blinging looks and active electronics aren't aimed at classic Fender Jazz and P-Bass fans, yet its knock-out performance should tempt some old school players to at least try the delights of the up-specced bass world. 

Its knock-out performance should tempt some old-school players to try the delights of the up-specced world



The active circuitry offers a broad and satisfying tonal palette

Yamaha TRB 1004J

PRICE: £925

ORIGIN: Indonesia

TYPE: Twin-cutaway, solidbody, four-string, passive

BODY: Alder with quilted maple top

NECK: Five-ply maple and mahogany, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 889mm (35-inch)

NUT/WIDTH: 40mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, pearl oval inlays

FRETS: 24, medium

HARDWARE: Burnished chrome solid brass bridge, sealed-gear tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 20mm average (centres)

ELECTRICS: Two Alnico V hum-cancelling pickups, volume, pan pot, Q-Mix three-band EQ with bass, mid and treble

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 4/8.8

OPTIONS: TRB1005J five-string (£925)

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Caramel Brown (as reviewed), black, translucent black, natural

Yamaha

01908 366700

www.yamaha-music.co.uk

The Bottom Line

We like: Good looks; great playability; tight, funky sounds

We dislike: Very little

Guitarist says: The TRB 1004J looks and sounds like a quality Yamaha bass and although it's by no means cheap, it's price is very tempting. Well built and roadworthy, with an extra touch of style – just the job!

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★