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TRAVELING IN STYLE

Strobel Rambler Travel Bass

As a rule, travel guitars and basses are intended to help one keep up their chops while on the road for work or vacation. But Florida-based Strobel Guitars strives for something a bit more on the professional end of the spectrum—a travel bass that easily breaks down to fit into carry-on luggage, yet giggable for a working musician.

Our test Rambler bass featured a light swamp ash body with the upgraded toasted amber flame maple top and back, 34"-scale bolt-on maple neck with rosewood fretboard, Schaller 3D-4 roller bridge, custom Schaller die-cast tuners, and a Schaller PBX P-style split humbucker with master Volume and Tone controls.

Strobel utilizes their proprietary detachable StringKeeper end block and four countersunk thumbwheels at the neck/body joint to make breaking down super-easy. Simply loosen the strings a couple of turns, unscrew the StringKeeper block with one thumb wheel, unscrew the four neck thumbwheels, and pop off the neck—no tools needed. Strobel even designed a StringCatcher channel into the body right above the strap button so you can safely wrap the strings around the body for travel without damaging the finish.

The Ramblers neck is technically 28.5" scale, but with 34" fret spacing (as if it were capo'd at the third fret) and tuned to the standard E-A-D-G. This allows for a shorter neck that fits into a carry-on, a more familiar full-scale fret spacing, and better balance when it is strapped on. Speaking of, the Rambler's neck has a nice old-school feel with a substantial D profile, rounded fretboard edge, and well-dressed and leveled frets. The shorter neck makes for slightly less string tension than a standard bass, but Strobel gives it heavier strings, so there's a negligible difference in feel.

We checked out the Rambler through a TC Electronics BG250-208 dual 8" combo bass amp. The Rambler has that unmistakable P-Bass thump with super-round

low-end and clear midrange. The mix of swamp ash and maple adds to the bass' clarity and punch. Considering the lack of mass and weight, the Rambler offers a surprising amount of sustain, due in part to the tight neck joint and very solid mechanical fasteners.

The Strobel Rambler is much more than a convenient, compact way to take your bass with you when you are traveling—it is a high-quality, stage-worthy instrument that just happens to fit into that ol' Samsonite. — *Phil Feser VG*

Price: \$1,599 (direct)
Info: www.strobelguitars.com

