

Large Sound Ashbory Bass User's Guide

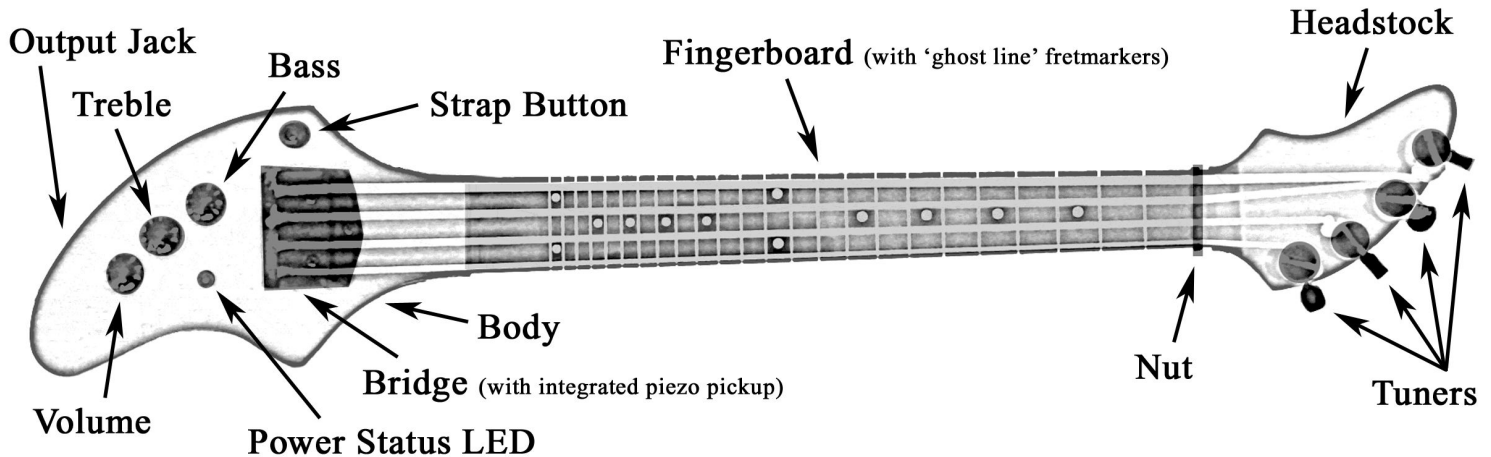
by Brock A. Frazier

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Welcome to the wonderful world of the Ashbory Bass! As you will discover over the following weeks, months, and years of Ashbory playing, it is a very expressive instrument with a full tone. It's also lots of fun to play. Enjoy!

Instrument overview:

Here's a diagram of the Ashbory Bass. Terms such as 'nut' and 'bridge' are standard terms also used for bass guitars.



Strings:

The silicone rubber Ashbory strings are what give the instrument its characteristic tone. If you put your ear to the neck as you play, you'll hear the signature sound resonate through the instrument itself. The Ashbory strings are radically different from the metal strings used on a bass guitar, in composition, tension, and how they create warmth.

- The strings are very low tension, so low that there is no truss rod in the neck of an Ashbory. It doesn't need one.
- The strings are special and perform best when handled with special care.
- Use of a talc powder is not necessary but makes the strings play easier while enhancing tone. Some use baby powder but a SLYDE-RITE bag works especially well, and is included as a bonus with every new Ashbory from Large Sound. Check the gig bag pouch.
- Unlike an upright bass or a bass guitar, a larger percentage of the Ashbory sound comes from the strings themselves.
- The G string likes to snap in the case, as does the D to a lesser degree. To avoid unnecessary string loss, detune the G and D strings prior to putting the Ashbory back in the gig bag.
- Ashbory strings will sound fresh long after a standard electric bass's metal strings have become dull. The downside is they also take longer to stabilize. The G takes about 2-3 weeks to become more stable, whereas in about 3 days electric bass strings are usually pretty stable.
- If the strings are too long, rather than cut the string, tie a knot in the string down from the current one, or undo the current knot and create a newer one past the point where the current one is. If a string breaks at the bridge, it can sometimes be saved by removing the short knot and using or recreating the knot at the end of the string. It is nice to save a string when possible since it spares the stabilization time of a new string as well as the cost and hassle of getting a new set.

Installing new strings:

Due to the unique low tension nature of the Ashbory strings, they are more important to the overall sound of the instrument than the metal strings on a bass guitar. Here's a guide to installing strings for optimal performance.

1. Pre-stretch the strings: The key to better sound and quicker stabilization of the Ashbory strings is to stretch them thoroughly prior to installing them. Stretching the strings is simple, just grab a knot with each hand and pull the ends away from each other. Be assertive with your pulls. If you have a new Ashbory it is a good idea to remove the strings and stretch them out, then reinstall.
2. Guide the strings as you wind them to pitch so the strings leave the tuning pegs towards the bottom. This is important because it creates downward pressure on the nut. Depending on the amount of winds, it may be necessary to detune a string and then retune with the string winding more towards the top then ending more towards the bottom. Strings play, sound, and feel much better with greater down pressure so make the effort when tuning.
3. If there isn't too many winds on the E and A strings, the E may be reverse wound so the string pull is more direct. This is not required, but when feasible it does allow for a better string pull which discourages the E from leaving the nut while playing.

Adjustments:

There are zero adjustment points on the Ashbory. The bridge is non-adjustable. The neck is non-adjustable. Play and enjoy.

Tuning:

Unlike the Guild models, the new Ashbory basses feature far superior geared tuners. These operate just like regular guitar or bass tuners.

- The strings can be tuned to an electronic tuner, reference tones, or to each other just like any other stringed instrument. If you wish to tune the strings to each other, the best way to do so is to play a harmonic on the 5th fret of the lower string and the harmonic on the 7th fret of the higher string and make them match. Using the 'fret' markers on the neck to tune is not advised.
- It is best to have the windings on the strings end with the string leaving the bottom of the tuning peg. The strings are easily guided by holding them down with a finger on the right hand while turning the tuner with the left hand. Try to keep the winds somewhat even on the peg. If necessary, unwind and rewind the string for more evenness. If the strings get excessively long, tie an additional knot as mentioned under the "Strings" section above.

Electronics:

The Ashbory Bass uses a patented piezo transducer pickup system (see <http://www.largesound.com/ashborydoc/patent/us4750397/>) and full-time active (battery powered) electronics to transfer the signature tone of the strings to your amp. Here's what you need to know about the different parts of the system.

- **Output jack:** Not only does the jack function as the output for the Ashbory, but it also serves as the electronics on/off. To avoid unnecessary battery consumption, you'll want to unplug the Ashbory when not in use.
- **Red LED:** This is a status light. When it is on, the active electronics system is in effect.
- **Battery clip:** In the control cavity on the back of the Ashbory is a battery clip which holds the 9 volt battery necessary to power the active electronics system. If the sound of the Ashbory starts to gain static and/or fail, it is likely the battery needs replacement. To access the battery compartment, remove the four screws which hold the plastic electronics cavity cover in place.
- **Volume knob:** The knob closest to the output jack is the volume knob, which controls the amount of signal leaving the instrument.
- **Bass knob:** The knob towards the bridge is the bass control. It is 'notched' at 5. Turn the knob up for bass boost, or down for bass cut.
- **Treble knob:** The center knob is treble control. It is 'notched' at 5. Turn the knob up for treble boost, or down for treble cut.

Playing:

The Ashbory is a unique instrument, not a bass guitar or an upright bass. It responds well to some playing techniques used for both instruments, but not all. Here's some hints and suggestions on playing the Ashbory.

- It's no funk machine. Slapping and popping isn't going to get you the superfly sound you're accustomed to with a bass guitar.
- Standard electric bass 'fingerstyle' playing works well.
- The instrument doesn't reward pick playing as much as it does playing with the fingers. You can adjust the sound of pick playing by changing the position where you pick. Better results seem to come from picking near or over the fingerboard.
- Pulse Tap technique. By muting the strings by the nut with the left hand and striking and holding the notes with the right hand, the Ashbory can create full sounds reminiscent of an analog synth. More information on the Pulse Tap technique can be found at <http://www.largesound.com/ashboryarticle/playing/pulsetap/>.
- Upright-like snaps. Pulling up on the strings with the right hand off the fingerboard and letting them snap down creates a sound similar to 'spanking' the strings on an upright bass.
- Whatever you want to try. Feel free to experiment with different styles and techniques. Play!
- The fret markers are not precise. This isn't a big issue since it is a fretless and one should play by ear anyway. The most common problem is the first fret position which needs to be held closer towards the nut than marked on the fingerboard.

Web Resources:

- **Ashbory – The Official Story** : The official history of the instrument, written by one of the creators. Features prototype pictures and much more. An entertaining read. <http://www.ashelec.demon.co.uk/ashbory>
- **Large Sound:** The largest Ashbory Bass resource on the Internet. FAQs, articles, documents, a message board, and more. <http://www.LargeSound.com>
- **Large Sound Commerce:** All sorts of Ashbory stuff for sale including strings, SLYDE-RITEs, parts, and whole instruments. Bargain prices, and profits support operation of the Large Sound Ashbory web resource. <http://www.LargeSound.com/commerce/>

A Final Note:

Enjoy your new Ashbory! Thank you for supporting the Large Sound Ashbory Bass resources.

Sincerely,

-Brock A. Frazier

Large Sound - "The largest Ashbory Bass resource on the Internet" <http://www.LargeSound.com>

Large Sound Commerce - "World's largest Ashbory Bass-only dealer" <http://www.LargeSound.com/commerce/>