

# BASS MUSICIAN MAGAZINE

[LATEST ISSUE](#) | [GEAR REVIEWS](#) | [CD REVIEWS](#) | [WORDS TO GIG BY](#)[about](#) | [staff](#) | [previous issues](#) | [contact](#) | [submit](#) | [advertise](#)

## Gear Reviews

[Mesa Boogie M6 Carbine](#)[Mesa Boogie Powerhouse 212](#)[Roscoe Guitars Century Standard 5](#)[Essential Sound Products Musicord Pro Power Cord](#)[BEE Basses: Graphite Neck for 5 String Bass](#)[Lakland Skyline Darryl Jones 4 String Jazz Bass](#)[Markbass F1 Bass Head](#)[Markbass Traveler 102p](#)[Fodera Victor Wooten Monarch Classic Bass](#)[Ashdown Mark King Signature Bass Amplifier](#)[Fodera NYC 5 Bass](#)[AccuGroove Tri 15-L Bass Cabinet](#)[DR's Two New Strings for Bass: Hi-Beam Flats; and Jonas Helborg Signature Series](#)[Joe Barden's New J-Style Bass Pickup](#)[Maloney Stringed Instruments \(MSI\) Tribal Bass](#)[Rio Grande Bass Pickups](#)[Delano Pickups](#)

## Bass Musician Magazine: Bass Gear Reviews

Interested in having your gear reviewed? [Drop us a line.](#)

### Markbass F1 Bass Head, 5/30/2008



[Review by Jake Wolf](#)

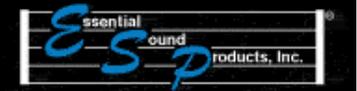
Italy's Markbass has most certainly made a splash recently with their impressive line of quality bass amps and cabs. They currently offer ten different bass heads, which range from their economical and toneful LittleMark 250 all the way to the state of the art computerized tube head, the classic 300. Now to be fair, and in the spirit of full disclosure, I will say that I've been using their Little Mark II head for the last year or so and have been extremely happy with it. Incredibly lightweight and loud are one thing, but as is the case with most of the new wave of pint-sized heads- light, loud, AND economically competitive certainly indicate the dawn of a new era for bass amplification. Markbass's F1 seems to be riding the crest of this wave, combining diminutive size, a full feature set, serious volume capability, and rich tone all at a very competitive price point.

The F1 is small. I mean really small. Its smaller and lighter than most laptops. Lets put it this way: you could easily misplace it in a stack of hardcover books. You can tell that a lot of research/design went into this guy, from its intuitively laid out compact front panel, to its full featured rear panel. They really did manage to fit the kitchen sink into this thing. It feels remarkably solid, and the fit and finish is excellent. The knobs feel smooth and quite sturdy with nice resistance, the jacks feel very snug. The power switch, although counterintuitive to most amps (down = on, up = off) is solid and seems built to last. It has a single fan that runs almost silently on the left side that cools the class D power section, which barely got hot in my gig testing. Everything was mounted sturdily and securely to the chassis, including the 1/2" rubber feet screwed into the bottom ( I was glad not to see those cheesy stick on feet, but nice removable screw-fastened ones instead).

The front panel feels familiar to me, it's the same basic layout as my Little Mark II. The 4 band eq boasts well thought out frequency points with dual midrange controls. Although it

## SPONSORS

VICTOR WOOTEN'S GROOVE WORKSHOP  
The new double-DVD is now in stores!  
WOOTEN MUSIC



BassBooks.com



AccuGroove

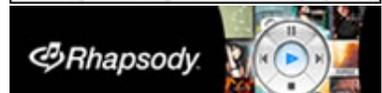


SELL YOUR music tunecORE  
(not your soul)

Download on iTunes

GARY WILLIS  
ACTUAL FICTION

musiciansfriend.com  
World's Largest Music Gear Company



[Kot Basses Signature Singlecut 5 String](#)

[Carvin BB75 PF Bunny Brunel Signature 5-String Fretless](#)

[Aguilar Agro Preamp](#)

[Ibanez Gary Willis Signature Model](#)

[BEE Bass 7-String Graphite Neck Fretless](#)

[F Bass Alain Caron Fretless 6 String](#)

[Hevos 800D](#)

[Basslab Soul IV](#)

doesn't have any parametric style controls, I was able to successfully alter the tone to fit my needs with a variety of basses using the basic 4 band eq. The real money, in my eyes is the VPF and VLE knobs. The VPF (variable pass filter) is your basic contour type control, in a nutshell scooping mids and boosting lows and highs. I usually don't like these "contour" type knobs, and opt to leave them in the off or flat position, as I feel they make the tone less natural, more clanky, and more boomy resulting in a less focused seat in the bands mix. Markbass won me over with their VPF though, it actually works (imagine that!). Perhaps its because the flat tone of the F1 is a little more mid-centric than other amps I've encountered, making it a great starting place for a variable mid contour knob.

The VLE (vintage loudspeaker emulator) is another useful feature, cutting highs and adding mids to give the amp a little more grunt and vintage type muscle when needed. It worked beautifully with a flawound equipped jazz bass on a motown/R&B gig. It successfully tamed the high frequencies without sounding muffled or losing focus. The back panel features everything you would expect on a high quality amp head: A tuner out, a 1/4" effects loop, a balanced XLR DI with a ground lift switch, and 2 speaker outputs. The speaker connects dual function speakon 1/4" jacks, allowing you to use any combination of speakon or 1/4" cables.

I played two gigs with the F1. One was with a medium volume blues band and one with a latin jazz trio at a restaurant gig. In both cases, the F1 performed superbly. Compared to my LMII, it sounded more forward and assertive, especially in the upper mids. It was more transparent, and was "quicker" to my ears, that is, had a faster response. Never harsh, it still had a touch of that sweetness I love about my LM, but was very transparent and clear. With my Lakland Darryl Jones jazz, which also has a strong midrange presence, I was easily able to sweeten up the sound and remove any unwanted honk with minimal eq and a touch of the VPF filter. At the latin jazz trio gig, playing my Fbass six string, the F1 sang with nice presence and warmth, and I got more than a couple comments from people on how my tone was more clear and natural than usual. Needless to say, basically standing on top of my amp in a cramped restaurant corner, I take tonal compliments and criticisms from the audience seriously, since they're the ones getting an honest earful of my rig! I loved how small it was, it fit snugly into the front pocket of my undercover gig bag, although, it didn't feel too safe there. I would feel better having it in some sort of dedicated padded bag or case. Markbass offers a padded bag as well as rack ears for the F1,

Gripes? What can I nitpick about here? OK, I wish the controls on the front were a tad easier to read. The text is small and the font is not the clearest, but the bright yellow makes it legible enough. I would like to see it be a little easier to read on a dark stage. I can't find anything to complain too much about with this guy, it does many things well.

I'm one of those guys who used to haul a 65 pound rack around in my precocious and resilient youth because that was "my tone" and everything else seemed an unacceptable compromise. Sure it sounded great, and still does, but gigging 3-4 nights a week, it gets pretty darn old hauling that boat anchor in and out of clubs. The new paradigm shift towards light, loud, great sounding heads means that we tone junkies don't need to kill our backs to get our fab tone anymore. And at around \$800, it certainly gives some stiff competition to some amps costing upwards of twice as much. Its definitely worth a listen, the F1 in my opinion sets a new standard for what's reasonable to expect from a bass amp.

---

Interested in having your gear reviewed? [Drop us a line.](#)

---

Enjoy what you read at Bass Musician Magazine?  
Consider making a donation today via Paypal...  
Your contribution would be greatly appreciated!

Bass Musician Magazine, an [Online Bass Magazine](#) and [Community](#)  
Designed For Bass Players and Bass Professionals

[JOIN](#) | [LOGIN](#) | [COMMUNITY](#) | [BASS MAGAZINE](#) | [GEAR REVIEWS](#) | [CD REVIEWS](#)

[about](#) | [staff](#) | [previous issues](#) | [contact](#) | [submit](#) | [advertise](#)

**Publisher**  
[V.I.E., LLC: Thrive Online](#)

**Bass Musician Magazine [For the Evolving Bassist]**

©2007-2008 V.I.E., LLC. All rights reserved.