



# Cort Artisan Space 4

Cort's Space program has expanded with a four-string variant and you might want to get onboard

By Simon Arblaster

**THE FACT THAT** headless guitars and basses really hit into their stride back in the ‘80s, and some forty years on, we’re still talking about them as if they’re some alien concept, tells you a lot about their apparent lack of good press. No matter how you skin it, folks don’t much like change, and the sight of a headless axe still causes consternation among the electric guitar and bass-playing ranks.

Many brands have flirted with the headless concept, but not for long. One of the more notable marques to lose its head back in the decade of excess was Cort, who released, not one, not two, but a whole range of headless guitars and basses under the Space moniker. On top of that, it also manufactured headless models for the likes of Kramer and Hohner.

Fast forward to today, and the Korean company has relaunched its Space program, initially with the Space 5, and now we have the newly revealed Space 4 bass guitar on test here in the rather alluring Star Dust Black finish.

## Build quality

While the finish is very easy on the eye, on close inspection, some inconsistencies seem to remind you that we’re dealing with the more affordable end of the market. In a bid to create a binding effect, tape has clearly been used when applying the final coats of paint. There is noticeable bleeding of the paint on my test Space 4, where I can only presume the type of tape used wasn’t strong enough. Anyone who has used masking tape when decorating will know exactly what I mean.

Unfortunately, it does cheapen the Space 4, and I can’t help but feel that they shouldn’t have bothered. While the idea may be stylistically striking, the end result feels too busy. There’s already a lot going with the burl top, I think they should’ve just left it at that.

The matte finish is described as open-pore, which to my eyes is an odd halfway house between solid and open grain. I must admit to not being a huge fan of open-grain finishes, and I find this open-pore style equally as irksome. Although it’s not as noticeable as an open-grain, the open-pore finish isn’t as uniform and for me, the result looks like there are unwanted imperfections, especially in the burl top. I would much prefer a solid matte finish here.

However, there’s something other-worldly about a burl finish. It’s sumptuous and draws in the eye, much like something you’d expect to see from the James Webb Telescope.

The rest of the Space 4’s build leaves far less for debate. All the hardware is solid, and the parts are all aligned perfectly with no discernable issues. It’s also worth mentioning that the setup is of a quality that you’d expect for any guitar, no matter the price. Consistency is something that we’ve become accustomed to from Cort.

One thing I did notice after a few hours of testing was the jack socket becoming loose, leaving a dodgy connection. The problem didn’t immediately go away after tightening the socket nut, which led me to pulling apart all the internal electrics to inspect any dry joints with the soldering, but I couldn’t find anything. Since reassembly, the fault has subsided, for which I’m taking full credit!



## “This bass has got a bit of a Goldilocks vibe going on”

This did allow the perfect opportunity to inspect all the internal electrics, which are very neat and tidy altogether. No rough and hastily routed edges or excessive amounts of wiring here, which is always nice to see. As with practically every active system, the battery compartment is annoyingly snug, making battery removal a slight pain in the rear.

One last thought on the finish concerns the logo. You’ll find this laser-etched “Next Gen” Cort logo located just above the 24th fret on the body, which, for the sake of argument, we’ll call the Strandberg protocol. Of course, where else can it go? It’s headless! My initial gripe is that A) it’s referred to as “Next Gen”, B) I don’t like it all that much, and C) I’d much prefer a decal that can be removed, should one wish. Heck, I’d even swap it out for a sticker of the original logo.

## Playability

The Space 4’s biggest strength is in the playing. The neck feel is very satisfying and is a particular highlight. A combination of the C-shape, 40mm 0-fret (nut) width and 15.75” fretboard radius all add up to what is quite a beefy neck indeed.

Now, I consider myself to have small(ish) hands, but the satin finish of the 7-ply neck really helps to speed things along, and while it feels really wide at the 12th fret to me, I still found it very easy to play. This and a relatively high action invite quite a heavy attack to the strings, but you don’t feel like you’re wrestling with it, quite the opposite. In fact, after a few solid hours of playing, I didn’t feel any more fatigued than normal.

This will, in some part, be down to the headless design as well; it’s much lighter on the wrist than a traditional headed design. It feels equally comfortable with a strap as it does on the knee. Not too heavy or unwieldy and is well-balanced. This bass has got a bit of a Goldilocks vibe going on.

## Sounds

While the material choice, pickup choice, setup and action all add to the sound, it’s perhaps the headless design that really adds to the resonance, more specifically, the move from a standard nut design to a 0-fret, which allows for far greater string resonance

Fun fact about the Bartolini Mk1 pickups: they’re not actually made by Bartolini (licensed to Cort) and aren’t quite as sonically adept as the real thing. That’s not to say that they’re not capable, because for a bass of this price range, they are bang on. Just don’t expect as much power at the lower end of the frequency spectrum.

There’s more sonic range from the blend control than there is from the EQ controls. I find the EQ a bit on the flat side. You can push the mids and highs quite a bit, but not so much the lows, and it tells me that the pickups aren’t able to pump out as much low-end as I’d like.



## musicradar VERDICT



**The Space 4 is a cracking all-rounder of a bass. It’s as perfectly poised at the angrier end of the musical spectrum as it is at the funkier end. Stylistically, the headless thing might not still appeal to some, despite my efforts in the previous sections above, but trust me, this one is well worth a play.**

### PROS

- + Well-balanced design.
- + Fast and playable neck.
- + Tonally resonant.
- + Decent gig bag included.

### CONS

- Some inconsistencies in the finish.
- A bit light in the low-end dept.
- Not a fan of the “next gen” logo on the body.

### SPECS

**MADE:** Korea  
**TYPE:** Four-string electric bass guitar  
**BODY:** Soft maple w/poplar burl top (6mm)  
**NECK:** C-shape, roasted maple, walnut, purple heart & maple 7-ply laminated  
**FINGERBOARD:** Roasted maple  
**FINGERBOARD RADIUS:** 15.75  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 864mm (34”)  
**NUT/WIDTH:** 0 fret, 40mm  
**FRETS:** 24 with 0 fret  
**HARDWARE:** Specially designed Cort headless tuners and bridge  
**STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE:** 19mm  
**ELECTRICS:** Bartolini Mk1 pickup set  
**CONTROLS:** 1 x Volume, 1 x Blend, 3-Band EQ  
**WEIGHT:** 7.67lb/3.48kg  
**OPTIONS:** Space 5 \$799.99/£749/€899  
**LEFT-HANDED OPTIONS:** None  
**FINISHES:** Star Dust Green, Star Dust Black [as reviewed]  
**CASE:** Cort gig bag included

Having the pickup blend set to the middle position and the EQ all the way up seems to deliver the best results, and then rolling off the treble if things get a bit too raucous. The level of mid-punch sounds great when dirtying up your tone with overdrive or distortion.

## Verdict

When it comes to electric bass guitars, losing the head makes so much sense to me. It’s lighter in the hand, more resonant, and easier to transport. Plus, Cort has seen fit to supply a proper gig bag that puts many other big-name brands to shame at this price point.

If I had to pick a weak point with Space 4, it’s probably with the pickups. They’re not as beefy in the low end as a proper set of US-built Bartolini soapbars, but for the money, I shouldn’t grumble and they still work great when driving a bit of gain. The build quality and the rest of the specs more than make up for this in the value stakes.

I instantly loved the neck and action. It felt familiar, easy and relatively fatigue-free, even after a long playing session. The slight shouldering at the end isn’t quite wide enough to be trusted on a lot of stands. For instance, the locking head type from Hercules is too wide here, but the grippy v-shaped design from the likes of Ultimate Support works fine, though I wouldn’t be comfortable wall-mounting it.