

The Basso — A Flat-Side Original



Nashville lure maker Wilson Frazier displays his handmade Basso lures, flat-sided baits that have been used by avid anglers and many pros since the '70s.

Photo: Don Wirth

Handmade fishing lures are always in demand by anglers seeking an artificial with a look or action unavailable in a mass-produced lure. These fishermen, as well as an increasing horde of lure collectors, are willing to pay the high price that a hand-carved creation typically demands, as well as endure a long waiting period to get exactly the lure they want.

Nashville, Tenn., music business manager Wilson Frazier has been creating wooden lures by hand in his spare time since 1970. Although he makes a variety of styles, Frazier's flat-sided crankbait, the Basso, has been his biggest success. This unique lure has found its way into the tackleboxes of some extremely high-profile anglers, and must be considered one of the earliest flat-sided designs.

"In the early '70s, I began carving some potbellied crankbaits while living in Memphis, Frazier told BASSMASTER. "The legendary Big O was being carved

world on fire, and pretty soon anybody with a block of wood and a knife started carving fat crankbaits."

Frazier carved a few dozen potbellied lures from a hunk of balsa and sold them to friends. "Then when all I had left was a small piece of half-inch balsa, I decided I'd make a couple of flat-sided baits, just to use up my wood supply," he recalled. "At the time, a flat bait just wasn't in vogue."

A few days after making the flat lures, Frazier fished a tournament on Enid Lake, Miss., and won the event on his newly created flat lure. "Besides bass, I caught white bass, crappie, drum, even a catfish," he says. "I gave some flat baits to my buddies and soon they were catching fish on them, too."

Word-of-mouth spread quickly among the Memphis angling fraternity about the strange, flat crankbait.

Memphis bass pro Bill Dance got

swimming pool to see how e worked. Bill used them at several B.A.S.S. tournaments in the '70s, pretty soon some of the other pros 'em."

The only mass-produced flat lure on the market at the time was the ThinFin. "Everybody and his uncle using potbellied, fat baits like that. The guys buying my Bassos were keeping it under their hats."

Frazier believes flat crankbaits much more subtle as they move in bass territory than are fat ones. "They aren't nearly as attention-getting as big, potbellied lures, but they're realistic," he says. "They're finesse baits, if you can imagine such a thing."

The Basso has been tested on an oscilloscope in a university setting, Frazier indicated. "The lure hits deep in the frequency range of forage fish. I had no way of knowing this when I started carving them, of course; I just thought I'd look good in the water."

Over 50 different styles, including a nine-day period, are required to finish a Basso. The lures feature copper-reinforced fiberglass. Various color patterns are available; Frazier's best sellers over the years have been black shad, chartreuse and red. "My personal favorite is the white Basso in white/silver glitter with eyes," Frazier notes. "You can buy them in yards on baitcasting gear."

Frazier's lures sell for \$15 apiece. "I don't procrastinate until the week before that big tournament to place an order. There's a long, long waiting period—months to a year on some designs."

Bassmasters interested in buying a Basso can order by sending a check along with a description of size and color desired, to Wilson Frazier, Dept. 3064 Lincova Bay Dr., Nashville, Tenn. 37214.