

**Two guitars in familiar styling, but totally hand-made, with interesting electrics and sporting ready worn-in necks.**

**Prices: £2,150 (Dan Huff); £1,850 (Classic)**

Review by Simon Bradley

**L**ess than 12 months ago, British players were mentioning James Tyler guitars in the same breath as Lord Lucan and The Holy Grail, such was their reputation and lack of availability here. Myths abounded about their manufacture, feel

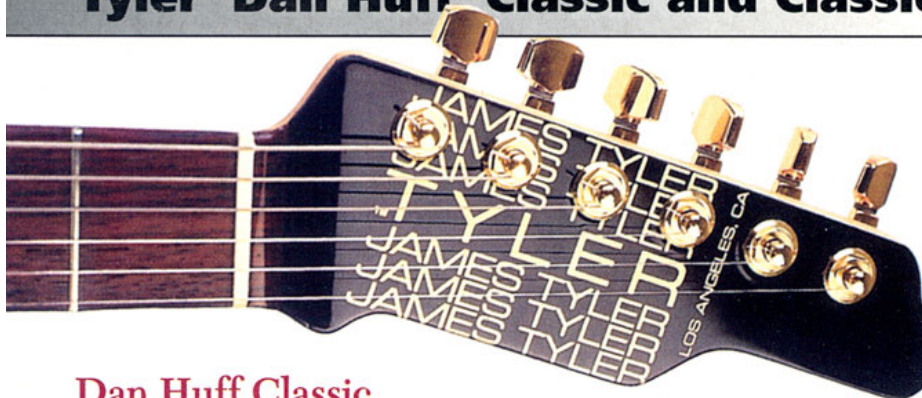
**The mega price is almost insignificant considering the awesome feel and tones provided**

and sound, and the stories of the Tyler factory actually being a shed in the Blue Ridge mountains have had guitarists gasping with wonder. Today, thanks to the efforts of The Home Of Tone, Tylers are now available to one and all, although, with a monthly output of 12 instruments, the waiting list is likely to be around eight months. The guitars' major claim to fame is that absolutely no automation is employed in their manufacture; everything, from the routing, to the shaping, fretting and finishing, is carried out by hand, which certainly proves Mr Tyler's love of his work and goes some way towards justifying their very high price. ▶

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## Tyler 'Dan Huff' Classic and Classic



Eye-catching it is, subtle it ain't!

### Dan Huff Classic Construction

Dan Huff is the guitarist in Giant, an American band with a taste for good songs with great playing, and this particular example of the Tyler that bears his name is the actual guitar Dan uses for his session work. At first glance, the instrument appears to be another hot-rodded Strat but – unsurprisingly for a Tyler – it offers so much more.

The ash body is finished in a thick black lacquer and features contours akin to those of that famous Fender, although there is an extra chamfer behind the guitar's lower horn, just to aid access to the higher frets. The hardware comprises a Wilkinson VS-100 bridge and locking machines, all in gold, including the screws and jack plate. The 4-screw neck plate is positioned on a heel that is at a slight angle to the body, due to the aforementioned chamfer, and is bereft of any logo or serial number.

Things start to get interesting where the electrics are concerned. The pickups are familiar Seymour Duncans; a Jeff Beck humbucker in the bridge complementing two Classic Stacks (single coil sized but true humbuckers nonetheless), all of which are controlled with a master volume and tone pot. Mounted on a 4-ply tortoiseshell scratchplate, Tyler's departure from the norm is the addition of three buttons that run alongside the standard 5-way selector switch; this is for series/parallel operation of each pickup. Add to that a Demeter mid-boost, operated by a smaller knob placed between the two Fender-style controls, and you get some idea of the different tones available from this one guitar.

Be prepared for your jaw to drop to the floor, though, when you first feel the neck. Officially titled 'Ultra Worn-In', it feels a lot like that of the Music Man/Ernie Ball EVH-1, the Van Halen model with the neck shaped to feel as if it had been played for years. The upper and lower edges of the Tyler's rosewood fingerboard have been slightly scalloped between each of the 22 frets and,

coupled with the super-smooth oiled finish of the 59-shape maple neck, is probably the most comfortable I've ever played. With a slight V-profile, there are absolutely no sharp edges at all, the quality of the workmanship being of the highest order.

The headstock has a rather chunky, almost unfinished look to it and, although Tyler's Letraset-crazy logo is a little overpowering, it certainly is distinctive.

### In Use

The switching options available are truly mind boggling and a quick initial flick through some of them proves that this Tyler is one of the most versatile 6-strings on the market. The only instrument I can think of with similar switching is the Guild Brian May, but the latter, much as I worship it, doesn't feel anything like this.

I love the sound of Jeff Beck humbuckers, and with an amp set cleanly the tone is as warm and fulsome as I had hoped; perfectly balanced and toneful in every way. The Classic Stacks – designed for an authentic single coil tone but without the inherent buzz – also sound the business and, with subtle use of the series/parallel buttons, you can obtain virtually any combination and tone you could wish for. The classic 'in-between' tones are especially noteworthy; smoothly crystalline and, with the middle and bridge units switched to parallel, even gives you a worthy Tele-type tone.

The mid-boost is a godsend, and its range is wide enough to qualify as a manual solo boost. It can be a little vicious when using the bridge humbucker, adding almost too much middle, but when used with the neck Stack, you can squeeze out a Gibsony tone that's as full

of cream as a bloated cow. Dirty tones are also well served by the mid-boost, with the Jeff Beck screaming beautifully at full bore, and even the 'single coils', especially the neck unit, sustaining forever.

The trem works perfectly, with no loss of tuning, and the neck, as I have said, almost plays itself.

### Conclusion

The Dan Huff appears to be everything that it has been cracked up to be and, apart from my personal loathing of the tortoiseshell scratchplate (sorry, but I really hate them, especially on black), this Tyler is as near faultless as it is possible to get. The mega price really is almost insignificant when you consider the awesome feel and tones provided by the guitar. I realise that over £2,000 is out of most of our leagues, but if you are a professional player, or a serious semi-pro looking for the ultimate instrument, Dan could well be The Man. ▶

### Spec Check

#### Dan Huff Classic

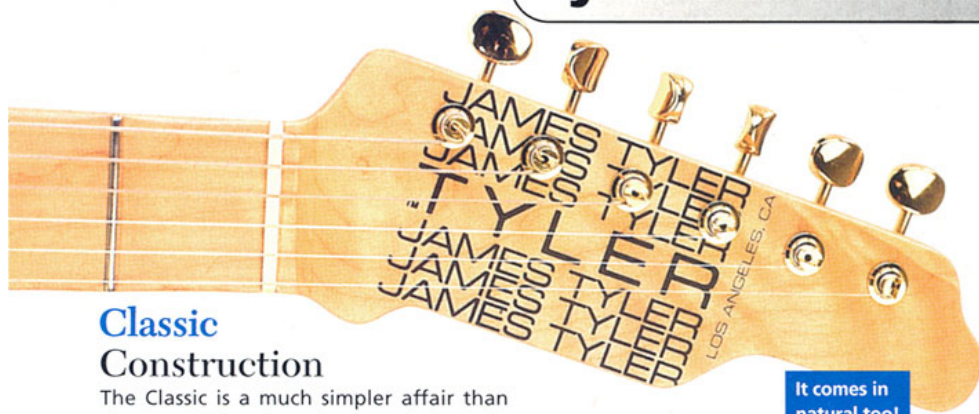
<b>Price:</b>	£2,150
<b>Country of manufacture:</b>	USA
<b>Body:</b>	ash
<b>Neck:</b>	maple, 'Ultra Worn In' 59-shape
<b>Fingerboard:</b>	rosewood
<b>Frets:</b>	22
<b>Pickups:</b>	Seymour Duncan Jeff Beck humbucker, 2 x Seymour Duncan Classic Stacks
<b>Electrics:</b>	master volume and tone, Demeter mid-boost, 5-way selector switch, three series/parallel buttons
<b>Hardware:</b>	gold Wilkinson VS-100, locking machineheads
<b>Case:</b>	black hard case included

**Contact:** The Home Of Tone, PO Box 404, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE5 1YZ. Tel: 0191 267 3175.

The use of tortoiseshell extends to the back-plate



## Tyler 'Dan Huff' Classic and Classic



### Classic Construction

The Classic is a much simpler affair than the Dan Huff and much more obviously in the style of that 'other' instrument. The body is of alder, finished in hand-finished nitro-cellulose, and features the same contours as the Dan, although the electrics are rather different. The scratchplate is single-ply white and sports the traditional three single-coil pickups, one volume pot and two tones layout. The pickups, however, are handwound Lindy Fralins, a maker with almost as much mystique about him as James Tyler himself,

It comes in natural too!

time features a maple fingerboard, complete with the same slight scalloping.

### In Use

The five pickup selections are obviously familiar, although the Lindy Fralins certainly have more poke than many standard single coils. As the tone pots

If you pick one up, the feel of the Classic's neck alone will probably sell it to you

although that 5-way switch is familiar to all. The gold hardware (which adds £120 to the asking price) features Kluson-style heads and a Wilkinson VSV bridge – the tremolo arm for which is a slot-in, rather than a screw-in affair.

The neck is the same 'Ultra Worn In' beauty sported by the Dan Huff, but this

seem to have a wider range than usual, it is therefore straightforward to compensate for the Tyler's initial harshness, especially apparent when using the bridge pickup, but the middle and neck units are nicely mellow, with the in-between settings sounding lovely as always. The trem works perfectly well, and I won't repeat my gushings about the neck – I'll just say that it's as wonderful as that on the Dan Huff.

Note the extra shaping around the neck joint area

### Spec Check

#### Tyler Classic

**Price:** £1,850  
(with gold hardware £1,970)

**Country of manufacture:** USA

**Body:** alder with hand-rubbed nitro-cellulose finish

**Neck:** maple, Ultra Worn In 59 shape

**Fingerboard:** maple

**Frets:** 22

**Hardware:** Wilkinson VSV bridge, Kluson-style machineheads

**Pickups:** 3 x hand wound Lindy Fralin single coils

**Electrics:** 1 x volume pot, 2 x tone pots, 5-way selector switch

**Case:** black hard case included

**Contact:** The Home Of Tone, PO Box 404, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE5 1YZ. Tel: 0191 267 3175.

### Conclusion

If the Dan Huff is aimed at professional and session players, then the Classic could well find itself appealing to players who fancy a high quality guitar of a certain style, but don't necessarily mind a certain word missing from the headstock. With the price for the Classic 3 approaching the £2,000 mark, the Value For Money jury is still out. All I'd say is that, if you pick one up, the feel of the neck alone will probably sell it to you. ■

