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TYLER

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113 ELECTRO HARMONIX FLANGER HOAX



80 KUSTOM '36 COUPE

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INTRO

"A FANTASTIC CHRISTMAS AND ALL THE BEST FOR THE NEW YEAR"

Greetings folks and welcome to the issue. By the time you read this, Christmas fever should be in full swing. Your bank accounts and credit cards will doubtless take a hammering, as will your stomach, your liver and quite probably your wits.

Lucky, then, that we have something to keep us sane, in the form our beloved six strings. So, what better excuse to buy a new addition to the family than jolly old festive spirit? Guitars are better quality and less expensive than they've ever been, right across the board. Not only that, but the sheer variation in styles, shapes and price points means you're spoiled for choice. Washburn, Epiphone and Tyler line up this month in our pages, offering brilliant electric guitars from £229 to £2,299, while we have pro-standard tube amps from Traynor, Kustom and Bad Cat spanning £677 - £2,999.

If your budget is already overstretched, however, why not check out our 12 Days Of Axe-Must

feature on p119? From a plectrum that helps you learn, to a funky two-watt all-valve head, there's a stocking filler here for everyone.

I should also mention John 5 and Joe Perry, both of whom are interviewed this month. I'm always fascinated to read other guitar players' perspectives on and attitudes to their instruments and music. Indeed, you've probably noticed that we're steadily upping the artist and other feature content in GB - I'd be grateful to know what you think about that.

Meantime, here's wishing you a fantastic Christmas and all the best for the New Year. My resolution, as it is every year, is to eat less, drink less and play more. Ah well, one out of three ain't bad...

Cheers!

Mick



Mick Taylor, Editor
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California Hotrod

A REFRESHINGLY IRREVERENT TAKE ON LEO'S FINEST, TYLER'S STUDIO ELITE HD IS BIG, BOLD AND IN YER FACE. BENEATH ITS EXTROVERT PERSONA, HOWEVER, PAUL ALCANTARA DISCOVERS A SUBTLE AND VERSATILE GUITAR...

GBINFO



TYLER STUDIO ELITE HD

PRICE: £2299 as reviewed (standard SE HD with solid colour or candy finish £1999)

BUILT IN: USA

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25 1/2 inches)

NUT WIDTH: 41mm (1 5/8 inches)

BODY: Hollow alder

NECK: Maple, bolt on

FINGERBOARD: Maple, 254mm radius (10-inches)

FRETS: Dunlop 6100

PICKUPS: Modified Seymour Duncan TB-4 JB Trembucker, 2 x DiMarzio 2.2 Virtual Vintage single coils

CONTROLS: Master tone and volume, 3-way selector switch, mid-boost function

BRIDGE: Wilkinson VS 50V vibrato (based on VS-100 but here with steel saddles & steel block

MACHINEHEADS: Locking chrome Sperzels

WEIGHT: 2.7kg (6lbs)

CASE: Hard case included

FINISHES: See website for available options

LEFT HANDERS: No

CONTACT:

Guitar Guitar Newcastle

PHONE: 0191 261 1568

WEB: guitarguitar.co.uk (also tylorguitars.co.uk)

... Tyler guitars are handmade at a small facility in Van Nuys, California, and production figures total around about 20 instruments per month. Every guitar is custom built to a specific order, with all the woodwork and finishing done in house. Jim Tyler looks after the final assembly process, so that every instrument bearing the Tyler name passes through his hands before shipping.

The series/parallel switching, lead/rhythm circuit and sculpted neck heel joint are all Tyler innovations, and in 1987, Jim decided to combine all of these features in one guitar. The result was the Studio Elite, an instrument that has evolved from the guitars that Jim modified for LA session players including Mike Landau, Dann Huff, Dean Parks and Steve Lukather.

"For years, I had been hot-rodding guitars for well known studio musicians, professional players and famous rock guitar people," Jim tells us. "And I thought it was time to make a guitar with all the good stuff."

BODY AND NECK

While other manufacturers struggle to find a suitable variation on the classic Strat headstock (which is now a protected Fender trademark), Jim Tyler has neatly sidestepped the issue by substituting a design of his own that owes little – cosmetically at least – to that of the original. With its large Letraset-style logo and band-sawed profile, the uncompromising result is

unlikely to draw a muted response. Love it or loath it, you can be certain that a Tyler will never be mistaken for a guitar from any other company.

Though Jim is clearly his own man when it comes to cosmetics and hardware, the feel of the Studio Elite HD's one-piece maple neck is strictly old school. Close your eyes, and you could be cradling a late-'50s Fender; the sexy satin finish and rolled-over fingerboard edges contributing to the guitar's friendly, played-in feel. Deep and round at the 12th fret, there's just a hint of a soft and very comfy V as the neck approaches the nut.

The fingerboard is a separate slab of maple with a 10-inch radius, which, together with the chunky Dunlop 6100 frets, feels very modern, and assures easy string bending while not alienating those who prefer the Fender-like feel, however faint it may be.

The set up and fret job are uniformly superb, and the guitar feels every inch the hot LA session cat's axe that it was originally designed to be.

Though the Studio HD is usually a solidbody, the review guitar has been custom ordered with a hollow body. Unlike the chambered bodies offered by other manufacturers, which feature a series of routings below a separate top, Tyler favours a construction method whereby the body is literally sliced in half, with both the upper and lower sections hollowed out to leave a 1/4-inch thick wall. Alder – a traditional wood choice when it comes to Strats – is used here, and the result is an extremely lightweight guitar

with a full and resonant primary tone.

The body outline remains close to that of a Fender Stratocaster, though both cutaways – particularly that on the treble side – have been dramatically deepened, while the area around the heel is dressed away extensively in an effort to further improve access to the upper reaches of the fingerboard.

As a result, the shape of the laminated moto (mother of toilet seat) pickguard has been redrawn; eliminating the area that would normally extend up over the lower body horn, and consequently helping to reduce the visual similarity between the Tyler and a Fender Strat.

The high-quality, evenly-applied finish, dubbed 'candy cherry red shmeat', is not for the faint hearted. Let's face it, if you can live with that headstock, you're unlikely to be intimidated by a wacky paintjob! Numerous finish options are on offer, ranging from the relatively safe - black, white, →



TYLER STUDIO ELITE HD

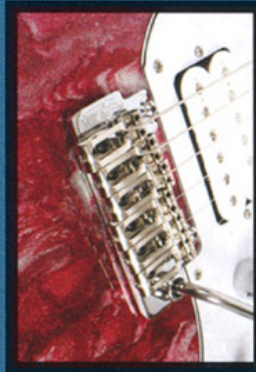


BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

THE ULTIMATE TREM SYSTEM?

■ Designed by Trevor Wilkinson and manufactured by Gotoh, the VS50-V vibrato unit is essentially an updated version of the earlier VS-100, which has been fitted with the steel saddles and inertia block already found on the vintage-style Wilkinson VSV.

The result combines the smooth action and accurate return to pitch of a modern two-point fulcrum system, but also benefits from the superior tone characteristics and resonance of a traditional, vintage-style tremolo



■ DiMarzio and Seymour Duncan supply the pickups

red and sunburst – through a whole range of metallic and transparent candy colors, and on to the twilight zone of ‘shmears’, ‘psychedelic vomit’, ‘fresh vomit’ and ‘burning water’! (See www.tylerguitars.com for more.)

HARDWARE AND PARTS

Sperzel locking tuners are always reliable, and staggered string posts (the post serving string one is significantly shorter than that serving string six) provide appropriate downward pressure at the nut to negate the use of string trees. Tightening a knurled knob at the rear of the tuner clamps down on the string end, thus keeping string wraps to an absolute minimum, as well as providing a means to super-fast mid-gig string changes.

The Trevor Wilkinson designed Gotoh vibrato-bridge is a non-locking, two-point fulcrum system, set up to float above the guitar’s front surface. Allowing around a semitone of up-bend, it has a smooth, precise feel, and very impressive tuning stability,

returning efficiently to pitch even after vigorous dive-bombing.

The pickups are an unusual but highly effective blend, comprising DiMarzio Virtual Vintage single coil pickups at the neck and middle

are relatively straightforward: master tone and volume – complete with chromed Tele-style knobs – a three-way selector switch, plus a push/push button that kicks in a battery powered mid boost circuit (a custom option). The battery compartment is located at the rear of the body, and the mid-boost level is set using a small black plastic knob that sits between the tone and volume controls.

SOUNDS

Reflecting the section of the market at which the guitar is aimed, the Studio Elite HD arrived fitted with a set of 10 to 46 strings, and is set up with a medium height action – an arrangement more likely to appeal more to experienced players than to novices.

The combination of alder, a maple bolt-on neck and a 25 1/2-inch scale delivers plenty of Fender-style snap and punch, while the guitar’s hollow body yields a little more acoustic volume and resonance than usual. 🇺🇸



■ The ‘shmear’ finish is definitely distinctive – be remembered wherever you go

positions, accompanied by the ever popular and highly effective Seymour Duncan TB-4 JB Trembucker (modified to Tyler’s specs) set in the bridge. This guitar is designed to offer a lot of great sounds with a minimum of fuss, and the electronics



GUITAR BUYER CATCHES UP WITH JIM TYLER...

THE MAN HIMSELF



■ **GUITAR BUYER:** How did you get started as a guitar builder?

Jim Tyler: “I started out as a repairman, and had a successful repair shop here in Los Angeles for many years.”

Were the modifications that you’ve made to the basic Fender template – the angled heel, additional contouring, and mid boost – the result of input from customers?

“No, most were ideas I had that I thought were improvements over the basic Fender designs, based on what I thought players needed. Back in the early 1980s I had a hard time getting people to try some of the ideas!”

You’re well known for your off-the-wall finishes. Are these the result of a happy accident or design?

“All of the finishes now are by design. They have grown out of the original Psychedelic Vomit, which started as a joke that guitar player

Mike Landau (completely brilliant veteran LA session ace — Ed.) and I were having on the world. Unfortunately, the world took it seriously... [See box on p16]

Tyler is a pretty small outfit. Do you have any ambition to take the PRS route, or are you happy remaining with a situation that allows you to maintain hands-on involvement?

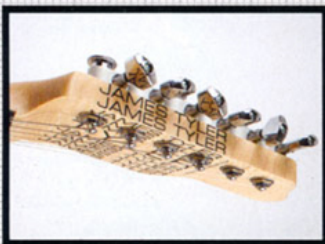
“I would like it to be bigger than it is now. I’m not sure how big, but I am expanding production and investing in more machines and equipment. We will be having new guitar models and moving into related areas of guitar production in the next few years.”

Your guitars display a sense of humour that’s missing from much of the industry. I get the impression that building guitars is still fun for you...

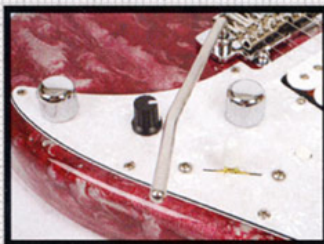
“Fun? FUN? Who told you I’m having fun? I’ll break their legs!!!”

DETAILS

A STUNNING PLAYER, WITH UNIQUE LOOKS TO MATCH. PRICEY, BUT RIGHTLY SO



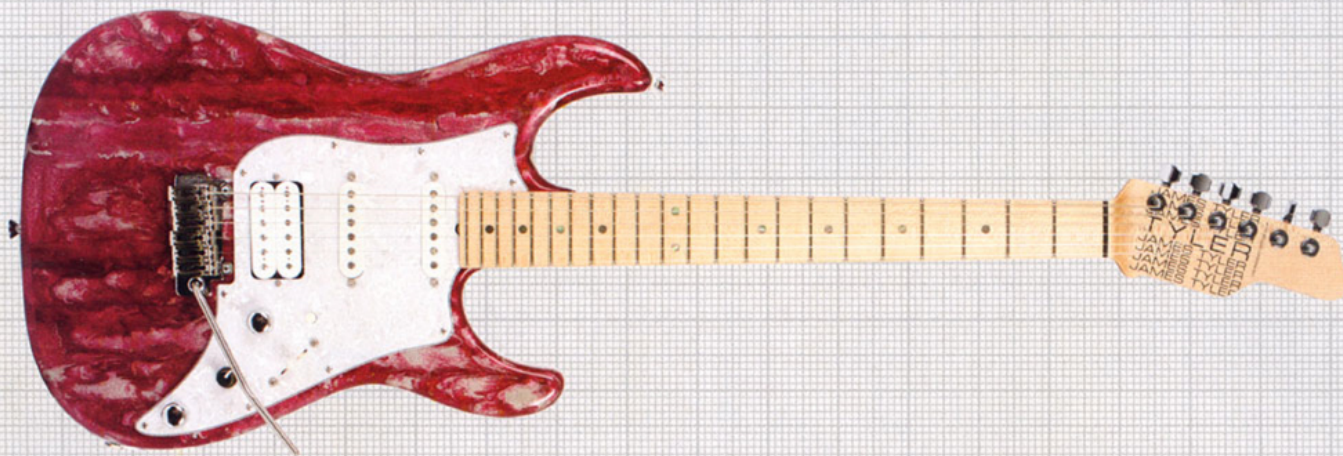
■ There can be no accusations of copying when it comes to headstock design!



■ An active circuit in the trembucker provides even more versatility



■ Truss rod adjustment is easily accessible



GBOPINION

TYLER STUDIO ELITE HD

GOLD STARS

- ★ Bold cosmetics
- ★ Top class tones
- ★ Beautiful build quality

BLACK MARKS

- Too stylised for some?

IDEAL FOR...

Anyone after a top quality vintage-style axe with modern features

Played through an early '60s Fender Super, the Studio Elite HD offers up most of the classic Strat tones, but with more polish and sheen than you would expect from a vintage-style guitar. Think Andersons or Suhrs, and you're in the correct sonic ballpark, though to my ear the Tyler possesses a little more low-end girth and thud than either of the aforementioned brands.

The alnico II-equipped Virtual Vintage 2.2 single-coil pickups are a far cry from the over-wound DiMarzio

pickups of yore, offering a reasonably convincing approximation of a vintage Stratocaster tone. Moreover, the pickups are hum canceling, so that your performance won't be plagued by the irritating noise that afflict conventional single-coils when placed in close proximity to stage lighting and other electrical equipment.

By contrast, the Duncan TB-4 rocks out when the amp is cranked, delivering just the right blend of sustain and distortion. Back off the volume, and the pickup cleans up nicely with a sound that is warm, fat and sweet, blending well with the less powerful single coils to create a cohesive-sounding and usable package.

Engaging the mid-boost circuit creates a dramatic leap in volume, and while judicious use of the associated mid-level control enables you to tame it somewhat, I personally find the effect a little too '80s' sounding, preferring the sound of the guitar in passive mode for more classic/vintage tones. However, if you needed to cut through a synth pad for example, the boost setting would undoubtedly prove useful. That said, the 'bucker alone should be powerful enough to cope with virtually anything your playing may ask of it.

GBCONCLUSION

CUSTOM BUSS FOR SERIOUS MONEY, BUT MONEY WELL SPENT

■ **The peghead could well be the deciding factor for you with the Tyler: sad but true.**

Personally, I like it – it's typical of Jim Tyler's bold approach to guitar design, yet there will undoubtedly be those who'll back away in horror. Whatever your aesthetic preferences though, there's no doubting the Studio Elite HD is a simply superb, highly versatile instrument that's ideally suited to players who need to cover a lot of tonal ground. Expensive it may be, but the Tyler is still good value when compared with some of the competition. A cracking guitar, no question. **GB**

SHMEAR TEST

JIM TYLER ON THE ROOTS OF HIS UNIQUE FINISHES...

■ "One day in the early '90s, I was in my shop and had just ruined a metallic turquoise paint job. While I was stripping the turquoise off, Michael Landau walked in and it all went downhill from there!

"I started it when I joked that purple with the turquoise would look pretty hideous, but then Mike suggested some red and black, and we both started coming up with really ugly things to do to that poor guitar body. Finally I suggested that once it was done I could cut off the arm contour and leave it bare wood. I had no

idea what I was starting. It was just a joke that Landau and I were going to play on you. The problem is, you all took it seriously. Now I'm cutting arm contours off perfectly good Candy Apple Red paint jobs for people so they can have bare arm contours. Enough!"



■ Burning water with bare arm contour, anyone?

GBRATINGS

TYLER STUDIO ELITE HD

BODY & NECK	★★★★
HARDWARE & PARTS	★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★
SOUNDS	★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★☆☆
GBVERDICT	★★★★