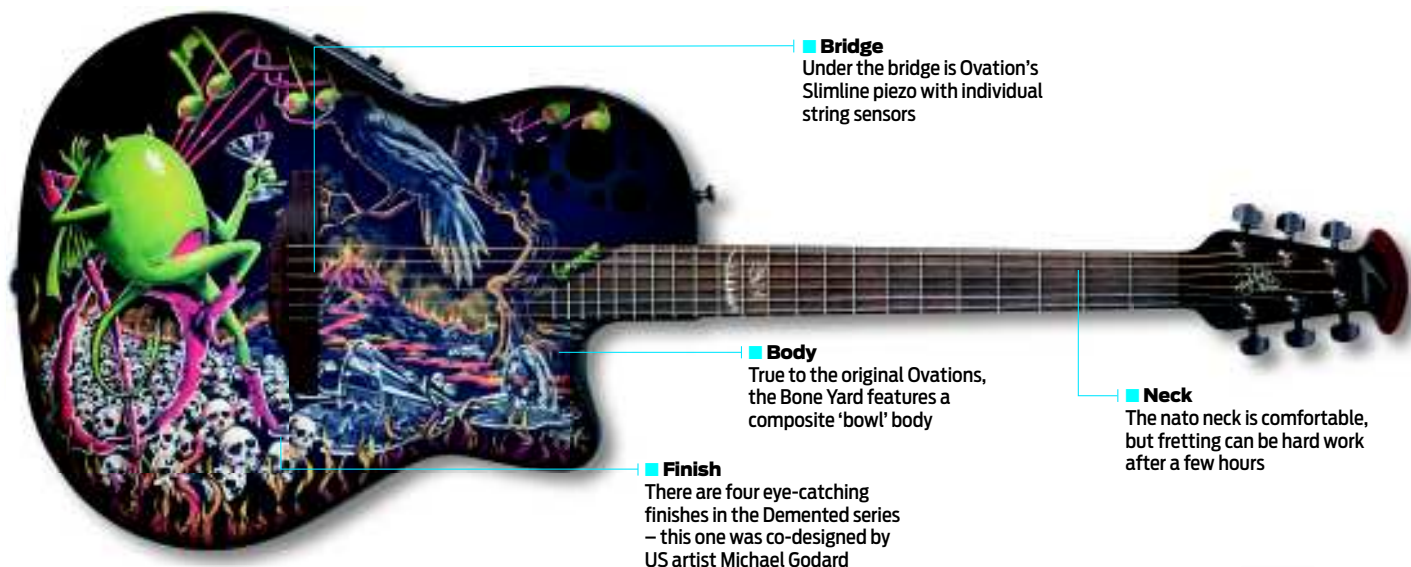


Rocked & Rated





■ **Bridge**
Under the bridge is Ovation's Slimline piezo with individual string sensors

■ **Body**
True to the original Ovatons, the Bone Yard features a composite 'bowl' body

■ **Neck**
The nato neck is comfortable, but fretting can be hard work after a few hours

■ **Finish**
There are four eye-catching finishes in the Demented series – this one was co-designed by US artist Michael Godard

Ovation DJA34 Bone Yard £350

This signature from GN'R's DJ Ashba is cool, but TG has some bones to pick...

Don't get us wrong: we've always got time for a 'textbook' acoustic guitar. But just sometimes, you do find yourself wishing the repetition of all those natural spruce tops would be broken by a model with a graphic of a half-cut olive/devil stripper dancing on a pile of scorched human skulls.

Call off the search. The Ovation DJA34 Bone Yard is part of Ovation's Demented Series, created alongside DJ Ashba (who, despite his initials, is not a vinyl-scratcher but the latest guitarist for Guns N' Roses). It has undeniable visual clout, but its performance could be more contentious, due to the love-it/hate-it bowl body that's been Ovation's calling card since 1966.

Bowlbacks are a breed apart. By equipping the Bone Yard with a mid-depth body and cutaway spruce top, Ovation has improved the 'lap-slide' factor and limited access that used to make this format so infuriating, but it remains a bulky beast that works best on a strap. It's a little frustrating to see cosmetics valued above playability on the rosewood fretboard – the 'tapered' effect means we've

only got a measly 18 frets on the low string – and it has to be said that our review Bone Yard makes fretting notes over a long practice session feel like hard work. This is most likely due to our review guitar's action, but it's worth noting for acoustic first-timers.

Tone is the divisive factor when it comes to Ovatons. First off, don't let the Bone Yard's lack of a central soundhole fool you into thinking it hasn't got power: there's plenty of body space, and a room-filling sonic kick even before the amp gets involved. Bowlback naysayers complain Lyrachord doesn't have the warmth of, say, solid mahogany, and they're right: it's a bit more glassy, a bit more high-endy, altogether less organic than the traditional format. That's not a bad thing, because it gives keen definition to fingerpicked runs that might otherwise turn soupy, but digging in with a pick can push the shimmer too far.

Still, that's what the preamp is there for. The piezo pickup is faithful, but with a three-band EQ, you can sculpt the tone to your taste, ironing out some of the high end and fattening the bass until you've achieved a genuinely mellow voice.

Conclusion: On every level, it's fair to say the Bone Yard isn't for everyone. We think the finish is cool; others may find it embarrassing. We got on pretty well with the physical performance; others might find it a challenge. Similarly, while the raw, jangle-tastic tone appeals to TG, it will sound a little jarring to some ears. But here's the point: once this guitar is plugged in, it will be whatever you want it to be, from a lazy strummer to a brittle Django Reinhardt lead machine. With a price tag of £350, it's certainly worthy of investigation – but given the limited run, you'll need to move fast.

Henry Yates

At a glance

Ovation DJA34 Bone Yard

BODY: Mid-depth cutaway bowl and spruce top
NECK: Nato
Fingerboard: Rosewood with custom Ashba inlays
FRETS: 22
SCALE: 25¼"
ELECTRONICS: OP4BT preamp; 3-band EQ, Gain, Tuner
HARDWARE: Black Nickel
FINISH: Bone Yard [pictured] 3 others available
LEFT-HANDERS: No
CONTACT: Fender GBI 01342 331700
WEB: www.ovationguitars.com

SUMMARY

For: Keen tone, cool finish, unique vibe

Against: It's hefty and not as warm as wood

★★★★☆

TG says... Horses for courses

"PLUGGED IN, THE DJA34 WILL BE WHATEVER YOU WANT IT TO BE, FROM A LAZY STRUMMER TO A BRITTLE LEAD MACHINE"



DJ Ashba's Demented Collection adds attitude to the Ovation line-up