

## FIRST PLAY



**DANELECTRO '58  
LONGHORN GUITAR**  
£499

**WHAT IS IT?** The missing Link in Danelectro's archives. It lives at last!



**DANELECTRO '58  
LONGHORN BASS**  
£499

**WHAT IS IT?** The latest generation of the bass The Who's John Entwistle used in the 60s

# Horns of plenty

The latest reissues from retro kings Danelectro include a bass made famous by The Ox and a guitar inspired by one of its weirdest creations

**Words** Ed Mitchell **Photography** Neil Godwin

**A**pparently inspired by the profile of an Ancient Greek harp called a lyre, no less, the original '58 Danelectro Longhorn Series was populated by three instruments. The model #4423 Bass, as reissued here, was accompanied by the #4623 Six-string Bass and the #4123 Guitarlin, a curious beast that pitched both guitar and mandolin sounds over its extended-length 31-fret fingerboard.

The Longhorn Guitarlin achieved a measure of cult status when godfather of punk, Link Wray, was pictured with his in the late 50s. Wray devotee Pete Townshend also employed a Guitarlin on stage with The Who in 1965. The relationship came to an abrupt end when he thrust it without mercy through the front of a Marshall cabinet.

So, while the new '58 Longhorn Bass is a reissue of the original short scale model, our











regular-scale guitar version didn't exist at the time. Let's call it a cut-down Guitarlin, then.

Construction of the bass and guitar is identical with Masonite (we know it as hardboard) panels concealing an internal hardwood frame. Similarities persist with the cosmetic vinyl body tape, vintage-style tuners, well-cut aluminium top nut, 'Coke bottle' headstock, lipstick-cased single-coil pickups and concentric or 'stacked' volume and tone controls. The guitar also features a three-way pickup selector toggle switch. The only grumble here is that the volume and pointy tone knobs on the bass occasionally stick together and have to be gently prised apart, which is annoying.

While the guitar and bass share the anchored bridge that we've come to know and love on a classic Dano, only the four-string features the original-spec wood saddle; the guitar is updated with six height and intonation adjustable saddles. In another departure from the original '58 spec sheet, both instruments' maple necks are secured to their bodies with four large screws. Back in the day, you only got three, set in a straight line.





1. In typical Dano fashion, the Longhorns have concentric or 'stacked' volume and tone controls: the volume is the bottom knob; the tone is on top
2. Lipstick pickups are more versatile than you might think. Jimmy Page famously employed them on Led Zeppelin tunes like *Kashmir*. Dano don't just do surf
3. Both of these instruments are topped with vintage-style tuners on the iconic 'Coke Bottle' headstock that Danelectro first unveiled back in 1955
4. The short-scale Longhorn bass shares the same nut width, shallow D profile neck, and fingerboard radius as its six-string brother, making it easy to play
5. These new models add an extra neck screw compared with the 1958 original
6. The classic Dano anchored bridge is present on both models
7. The pointy tone and volume controls (pictured overleaf) are eye-catching, but can end up stuck together



## Feel & Sounds

The Longhorn body shape isn't all about show. The extended horns provide decent balance when the instruments are hanging from a strap, while the deep cutaways promote good upper fret access, compromised only slightly by the chunky union between the body and neck. Playability is superb with the guitar and bass sharing a shallow D neck profile and a 355mm (14-inch) fingerboard radius. The frets are described as medium in the sales literature, but in reality feel a mere junk-food binge away from fat, which makes for fluid string bending, particularly on the guitar.

Danelectro versatility was righteously sealed when Jimmy Page used a double-cut 3021 model on Led Zep's *Kashmir*. Digging in, the brash bridge pickup works great with vintage fuzz. Think Link, Stooges, Jack White and *Psychotic Reaction*. As ever, it's the 'in-series, both pickups engaged' position that unleashes a Dano guitar's fattest tone; imagine a humbucker with the clarity of a single coil. It sounds superb with overdrive for old-school hard-rock riffs like Jimmy's yet back off the filth and it sounds a bit like a fat



## If you want to hear a Dano at its rockabilly best, listen to the wonderful Rick Miller

Telecaster, just right for pedal-steel licks and rockabilly stuff. If you want to hear a Dano at its rockabilly best, listen to the wonderful Rick Miller of American band Southern Culture On The Skids. Finally, the neck position is sweet run clean but really comes alive with some overdrive and upper neck blues licks.

The Longhorn bass shares the inherent brightness of its six-string brother, enhanced further by its round wound strings. Vintage buffs would be advised to dampen down the brightness with a set of flatwounds. The Longhorn doesn't quite match the bottom end thump of a P-Bass but it'll handle any situation you throw at it. John Entwistle of The Who famously beat his way through three Longhorn basses trying to record his solo on *My Generation*. As it happens, adding some gain to the bridge pickup gets pretty damn close to his later *Quadrophenia* sound.

### Verdict

Vintage geeks such as the aforementioned Mr Miller will tell you that the new Danos don't have the mojo of the original US-built pawnshop prizes. But in terms of the Far East-sourced reissue years (circa 1998 to present), Danelectro is producing its best instruments right now. The '58 Longhorn guitar and bass score big points on price, playability and tonal versatility. They're built to last. Just don't loan them to Mr Townshend. **G**



### DANELECTRO '58 LONGHORN GUITAR

**PRICE:** £499  
**ORIGIN:** Korea  
**TYPE:** Twin-cutaway, semi-hollow electric guitar  
**BODY:** Masonite with hardwood frame  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 635mm (25")  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Aluminium/42mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood, 355mm (14") radius  
**FRETS:** 21, medium  
**HARDWARE:** Chrome six-saddle hardtail bridge and vintage-style tuners  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 56mm  
**ELECTRICS:** 2x lipstick single-coil pickups, 2x concentric volume and tone controls, 3-way pickup selector toggle switch  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.6/5.7  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** There are plenty of other Dano six-strings including the '63, the '67, the classic '59M and '59MJ, the 12-string '59 and f-holed 12-String (all £499)  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**FINISHES:** Copperburst (as reviewed)

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8/10

**PROS** 'WTF looks' wrapped around a seriously great playing neck and an inspiring range of tones. The adventurous will love this thing!

**CONS** The way it looks will alienate some, but that's about it



### DANELECTRO '58 LONGHORN BASS

**PRICE:** £499  
**ORIGIN:** Korea  
**TYPE:** Twin-cutaway, semi-hollow electric bass  
**BODY:** Masonite with hardwood frame  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 756mm (29.75")  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Aluminium/42mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood, 355mm (14") radius  
**FRETS:** 24, medium  
**HARDWARE:** Chrome hardtail bridge with rosewood saddle and vintage-style tuners  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 50.8mm  
**ELECTRICS:** 2x lipstick single-coil pickups, 2x concentric volume and tone controls  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.6/5.7  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** The other current Dano bass is the '56 Single Cut Bass (£499). Also check the '56 Baritone Guitar at the same price  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**FINISHES:** Black (as reviewed) and Copperburst

8/10

**PROS** Infectious playability, a tone for every occasion, and the keen pricing make this a real contender for image-conscious bassists

**CONS** The stacked control knobs have a habit of sticking together