



# Danelectro Longhorn guitar, baritone & bass

**£439 each**

After last year's successful re-launch of the '56 Pro, Danelectro's next move is to re-introduce this horny threesome... by Chris Vinnicombe



Back in issue 264 we were pleased to see the return of Danelectro electric guitars after a brief production hiatus. Rather than a straight reissue, last year's '56 Pro featured a number of hardware upgrades that improved the basic performance and reliability of the instrument immeasurably. Admittedly we're not talking PRS-style manufacturing values here, but for \$299 the '56 Pro displayed a great balance between gig-friendly reliability and the slightly clunky idiosyncrasies that are part of the Dano charm.

This year Danelectro has turned its attention to one of the, er, maddest guitar designs ever: the Longhorn. Back in Summer 2000, we looked at the previous incarnations of the Longhorn, which came in the none-more-unhinged form of a 31-fret Guitarlín reissue, along with a bass model that preserved the original single rosewood bridge saddle – a design which doesn't allow for precise intonation adjustments. This time around, Danelectro gives us a more traditional complement of 21 medium frets, a bass with individual bridge saddles and a baritone guitar, one of the company's trailblazing designs which was the brainchild of Duane Eddy back in 1958. No left-handers are available, although the symmetrical lyre-shaped body outline and central strap button placement are leftie friendly should you wish to flip the guitar around Jimi-style.

All three guitars share common features idiosyncratic to Danelectro, such as the arguably wear-prone aluminium nuts and transparent plastic scratchplates secured by just a pair of screws. This results in the scratchplates of all three instruments flapping around and coming away from the body a little, but on the plus side it allows for plenty of picks to be stowed around the edges when it comes to gigging the things.

Body construction on all three Longhorns is identical to the updated '56 Pro, with a laminate frame capped with Masonite (hardboard) top and back. In our review of the '56 Pro, we found accessing the guitar's electronics to be fiddly on account of a Formica back panel being secured by a single screw into a floating piece of hardboard. This time around a chromed metal panel is used, fastened with a pair of screws, with better results. But as the panel itself isn't countersunk in any way, we worry that its edges might tear or snap your stage wear when the Longhorns are strapped on. That said, the distressed look is in this season and torn threads can only increase your Danelectro-toting indie kudos.

### Longhorn guitar

Resplendent in a two-tone Blackburst paint job that fades to light grey at the centre, the Longhorn guitar's hue at distance is somewhat reminiscent of Gibson's late 1970s Silverburst finish, albeit without the metallic paint. Initial impressions when picking it up are of a guitar with an almost three-quarter like feel, as the combination of those elongated horns and the deep bridge placement makes this a very compact electric indeed. Having said that, the Gibson-like scale length – unusually paired here with just 21, rather than 22 frets – lends the Longhorn a deceptively bend-friendly string tension. The '56 Pro may have had a longer, more typically Fender-like, scale length, but the dimensions of Longhorn's gloss-black painted neck are virtually identical to its predecessor: a plump 'D'-shape that fills the palm nicely.

Again, like the '56 Pro, the headstock shape is a non-symmetrical variation on the classic 'Coke Bottle' outline, which echoed the single cutaway outline of the '56 Pro nicely but doesn't quite complement the symmetry of the



A trio of Danelectro Alnico Lipstick pickups fuel the Longhorn guitar's tone

LONGHORN GUITAR	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

■ **WE LIKED** Vital hardware upgrades don't detract from cool, quirky vibe

■ **WE DISLIKED** Body outline will always polarise opinion; price, compared to '56 Pro

Longhorn design in the same way. Six sealed chrome Gotoh-a-likes anchor the strings at the headstock, while at the bridge end intonation woes are averted to a large degree by the presence of six individually adjustable bridge saddles. Surely only the staunchest Danelectro purists will lament the passing of the one-piece rosewood saddle alternative. Electronics-wise, a trio of Danelectro's new hotter Alnico Lipstick single-coils and a five-way pickup selector promise more sonic versatility than the '56 Pro.

### Longhorn Bass

Legend has it that John Entwistle intended to use a Danelectro Longhorn bass in the studio on The Who classic →

## The rivals

### LONGHORN GUITAR

Eastwood Ichiban	\$599
Schecter Banshee	£349
Reverend Slingshot Custom	\$1,129

If you like your electrics wild and weird, Eastwoods ([www.myrareguitars.com](http://www.myrareguitars.com)) range from recreations of vintage oddities to original models like the Ichiban, which combines the features of several examples of pawnshop euro trash to über-cool effect. Schecter's Banshee is a sexy looking guitar indeed, rather like a hot-rodded Fender Telecaster and Mustang hybrid. Finally the Reverend Slingshot Custom ([www.reverendguitars.com](http://www.reverendguitars.com)) features three P-90s on a semi-hollow 'high resonance' phenolic laminate body

DANELECTRO LONGHORN GUITAR, BARITONE & BASS £439 EACH

ELECTRICS/BASS  GUITARIST INTERACTIVE



**DANELECTRO LONGHORN GUITAR**

**PRICE:** £439  
**ORIGIN:** Korea  
**TYPE:** Double-cutaway small-bodied semi  
**BODY:** Masonite and laminate semi-hollow  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 628mm (24.75-inches)  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Aluminium/42mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**FRETS:** 21, medium  
**HARDWARE:** Chrome sealed tuners, chrome hardtail bridge with adjustable saddles  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 55mm  
**ELECTRICS:** Three Danelectro Lipstick single-coils, five-way blade pickup selector switch, master volume and master tone controls  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.7/6.0  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**FINISHES:** Blackburst (as reviewed), Beatnik burgundy  
**JHS**  
**01132 865381**  
**www.danelectro.com**

**DANELECTRO LONGHORN BARITONE**

As Longhorn Guitar, except...  
**TYPE:** Double-cutaway small-bodied semi baritone  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 52mm  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 762mm (30-inches)  
**FRETS:** 24, medium  
**ELECTRICS:** Two Danelectro Lipstick single-coils, master volume, master tone, three-way toggle  
**FINISHES:** Gold only

**DANELECTRO LONGHORN BASS**

As Longhorn Baritone, except...  
**TYPE:** Double-cutaway short-scale passive bass  
**FINISHES:** Blueburst only

→ My Generation, but broke several before switching to a Fender Jazz bass for what must be one of the most iconic moments in electric bass guitar history. Despite this bridesmaid status, it's easy to see why Longhorn basses have been popular instruments for decades because playing the thing is such a straight-ahead and infectious experience. If you are a guitarist who finds a full-scale bass rather unwieldy, the Longhorn's 762mm (30-inch) scale proves to be incredibly player-friendly; a fast two-octave neck and exceptional fret access meaning that you'll be whizzing around comfortably.

Happily, the newest Longhorn seems a more robust creature than those that caused Entwistle such consternation. After all, even the reissue in 2000 still featured the one-piece rosewood bridge arrangement. This time around, individual saddles help steady the ship in terms of intonation, but although they look suitably neat, the small guitar-sized tuners are something of a worry. In use, they seemed to pack the required muscle to keep everything tight, but long term they may not be the best solution, with the gear ratio better suited to the tension of much lower gauge strings.

**Longhorn baritone**

Take the Longhorn bass, change the nut and bridge, fit six strings and tune them from B to B, and hey presto, you've got the Longhorn baritone – the proportions are all otherwise identical. Where there's an almost toy-like feel to the standard Longhorn six-string, the Baritone's longer scale and heavier string gauge add girth to the feel and sustain to the guitar's acoustic response, making it feel like an altogether beefier proposition. In terms of balance, it's a little neck heavy, but in all honesty a Danelectro Longhorn is never going to excel in this area; a unique guitar such as this will inevitably require some concessions in practical terms.

**SOUNDS:** We're guessing that not many players strap on a Danelectro with the expectation of a sumptuous blues tone or warm jazz. Jon Spencer Blues Explosion in spades, maybe, but that's obviously a different kettle of fish altogether. Beginning with the Longhorn guitar and a clean amp tone, we are presented with a range of →

**LONGHORN BARITONE TEST RESULTS**

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

■ **WE LIKED** A baritone that isn't just a metal machine; cool gold finish...

■ **WE DISLIKED** ...but a choice of more finishes would be nice! Neck heavy



**The natural brash twang of the twin Lipstick pickups means the baritone is an effective all-rounder for everything from surf runs to moody post-rock arpeggios**



→ bright, biting clean voices perfect for sixties-influenced pop. Although the addition of a five-way pickup selector might hint at a certain Stratocaster-like character, the combination of a shorter scale length than the twangier '56 Pro and series 'in-between' positions makes for a different animal indeed. The addition of the middle Lipstick single-coil gives access to one of the most pleasing sounds in the Danelectro catalogue. Recalling the sound of a single pickup double-cutaway Dano as wielded by a certain Mr Page, the middle position on the five-way blade selector is a percussive, bright-yet-full voice which works very well indeed for rhythm guitar across a broad range of musical genres, with the possible exception of death metal.

Wind up the gain and the Longhorn's naturally short decay and brashness make it perfect for garage rock riffing played with bags of attitude and right-hand aggression. The Lipstick pickups tend to respond best either to AC30-style grit or fuzzy dirtbox distortion, rather than the dirty channel of a modern high-gain amplifier. If you can make a Longhorn work with a Dual Rectifier on full tilt, then by all means do, but the two are not natural bedfellows.

Moving on to the bass, there's a warmth and depth to the neck pickup tone that may be unexpected, but in any case the standard of modern bass amplification is such these days that any deficit in this area can usually be offset with judicious equalisation. Flip to the middle and bridge selections and it is immediately clear that this is the bass for the job if you want your sound

LONGHORN BASS	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

- **WE LIKED** Iconic Blueburst finish; great punk tone; surprising depth; player-friendly
- **WE DISLIKED** Guitar-sized tuners look the part but don't inspire confidence


## Wind up the gain and the Longhorn's naturally short decay and brashness make it perfect for garage rock riffing

to cut through. Although not quite in Rickenbacker territory, there's a satisfying bite when you add a little drive that, played hard, transports you back 30 years to the phlegm-splattered heyday of English punk.

Many players' first instinct when encountering a baritone electric is to pile on the preamp distortion and chug out those metal riffs, but there's much more than that to be explored here. Unlike many humbucker-loaded modern baritones that are voiced for deep riffing, the natural brash twang of the twin Lipstick pickups means that it is an effective all-rounder for everything from surf runs to moody post-rock arpeggios. One of the strange effects of playing the same shapes a fourth lower is that even rather mundane chord changes and riffs are given extra weight and sound altogether more interesting for it. Treated to a dose of amp drive, the Lipstick pickups contribute to a sound that's clearly more scuzz-rock and grunge than nu-metal; try the neck pickup and a fuzz pedal for obscenely raunchy riffs on the low B string.

### Verdict

The key to success with these new Danelectro Longhorns is expectation. For instance, if you are a bassist who

mainly plays slap or dub, then the Longhorn probably isn't going to become your main gigging instrument without a dramatic ideological shift taking place. Ultimately, all three instruments are a success as they retain many of the quirks of the original Longhorns, while upgrades where it counts contribute to their feeling much more solid and gig-ready. The retail price of £439 across the board does seem a touch excessive considering that the '56 Pro came in at a shade under £300, but arguably the quirks and unique characteristics of Danelectro guitars renders conventional notions of value for money redundant; you are buying into an aesthetic as much as anything. In a climate where originality is something of a thorny issue among guitar manufacturers, it's a timely reintroduction of one of the bravest and most striking visual statements in the history of electric guitar production. 

### Danelectro Longhorn guitar

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

### Danelectro Longhorn baritone

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

### Danelectro Longhorn bass

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

## The rivals

LONGHORN BARITONE	
OLP MM5 Baritone	£199
Fender Jaguar Bass VI Custom	£599
Gretsch Electromatic Jet Baritone	£349

**Fender's Japanese baritone Jaguar began life as the curiously named Bottom Master with a built in fuzz circuit. Sadly neither the fuzz circuit nor the name(!) made the journey from the land of the rising sun, but the Jaguar Baritone, or Bass VI Custom as it is now known, is a seriously cool instrument. A rockabilly baritone with a Bigsby: the Gretsch Electromatics capture plenty of the look and character for a fraction of the price of a fully-fledged model. OLP's MM5 Baritone is a mean twin humbucker hardtail if you fancy something that's a little more 'rock', and a snip at just under £200**

### LONGHORN BASS

Epiphone EB-0	£256
Fender Mustang Bass	£499.99

Jerry Jones Neptune Longhorn	\$950
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If you love the Longhorn look but want a high-end feel then Nashville's Jerry Jones can be found at [www.jerryjonesguitars.com](http://www.jerryjonesguitars.com); there are a plethora of finish options too. Fender's Mustang bass makes a welcome return for 2006 and is one of the coolest looking, and most popular, short scale basses of all time. Finally, for that Jackson Five/Jack Bruce vibe and a whole lot more, check out the Epiphone EB-0



The Longhorn bass may well appeal to six-stringers with its short scale