

DANELECTRO DANO '63 GUITAR, BARITONE, SHORT & LONG SCALE BASS £199, £249, £249 & £249
ELECTRICS & BASSES





Danelectro Dano '63 series

£199, £249, £249 & £249

Four new models all based on the stylings of a single six-string released - you guessed it - in 1963, albeit with revamped electrics and hardware *by Simon Bradley & Roger Newell*

What we want to know

1 How close are these reissues to the originals?

They're not really reissues at all. The Dano '63 guitar is based on the Silvertone model 1457L, but it's been updated and there was never a baritone version or a short or long scale bass.

2 Those cutaways look very tight - are they too small for modern styles?

It depends what you want to do. For the same reason that Steve Vai doesn't ply his trade on a '59 Pro, shredders are hardly likely to plump for a Dano. This is about rock'n'roll and roots-derived music - you only get 19 frets on the guitar!

3 So who are they for?

Danelectro guitars have had a high retro-cool factor since the brand's revival in the 1990s. They're very affordable too, so are equally likely to show up in a new guitar pop band, or played down your local by a seasoned tone hound.

In the modern marketplace, dominated increasingly by online entities and click-of-a-button purchasing, it can be difficult to imagine a time when our heart's desires weren't immediately available via the internet. But back in the 'good old days' of the burgeoning market that was sixties America, enormous department stores had retail pretty much sewn up and, for buying just about everything the family needed for a reasonably comfortable and modern life, you'd visit one of these emporiums and acquire away.

A Fender Telecaster or Stratocaster, or a Gibson Les Paul, were likely to be out of the price range of the vast majority of working grunts, so you'd be drawn to the specific lines your favourite department store would be stocking in an attempt to prize you away from your hard-earned cash.

In 1963, a man called Joe Fisher, who was a buyer for the enormous Sears, Roebuck and Co department stores (the head company also produced a highly successful mail-order catalogue that had first appeared in 1894) instigated a deal that saw Danelectro manufacture models under the Silvertone brand for exclusive sale via those stores.

Silvertone guitars (and other appliances - Silvertone hearing aid anyone?) had already been available in the late fifties, but what made the new breed different was the inclusion, at Fisher's insistence, of an amplifier within the instrument's case that would enable the guitar - a Dano-made Silvertone 1448L and the dual pickup 1457L - to be sold as a package: the 'All In One Electric Guitar Outfit'. The new Danelectro Dano '63 guitar is based on that latter model, with the Baritone and Bass (long and short scale) also using the same body styling.

"Yes, this is based on the Silvertone model, made by Danelectro beginning in 1963," confirms Danelectro's Steve Ridinger. "I have seen some pics of George Harrison in his Travelling Wilburys days, and even Mick Jagger, playing this model.

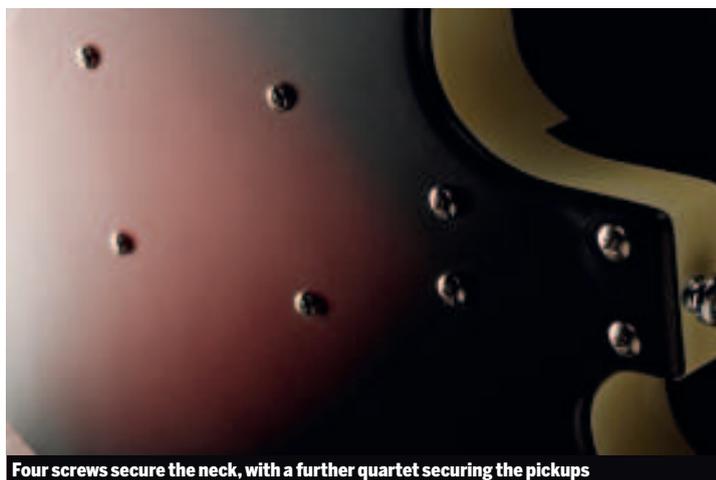
"Our research showed this was one of the most loved and sought after guitars ever made by

Danelectro," he continues. "Perhaps it was because of the timing: The Beatles hit big in the US in 1963 and guitar sales tripled the following year. The Sears catalogue was in every home, so teens of that era were all pretty much familiar with the guitar. Not only that, but because of the big quantity that were made, so many survived over the years that younger players of today have also become familiar with the guitar."

So how do these new models differ from the original '63s, if at all? "One thing we did in the past year was to re-engineer the pickup to make it closer to the originals," Steve tells us. "We selected a different Alnico material for the magnet, spec'd a different wire, and even enlarged the tube to accommodate more turns on the coil. Our engineer used to work for Seymour Duncan, so he was pretty good at replicating the design of the old pickups. We really like the tone of these latest pickups."

The 1448L guitar bundle featured a three-watt amp, while the 1457L boasted a whopping five-watt. Both were all-valve and, as we've stated, mounted directly into the rather large hard case: the latter even offered a tremolo effect. Sadly, these new guitars are provided as is - there's no amp-cum-case to be found. "We thought about doing the 'amp in case', but we just haven't got round to that yet," laughs Steve. "It was brilliant!"

Upping the gain to a modest bluesy overdrive proves that the '63 can hold its own here too, and using the neck pickup for rhythm works very well indeed >



Four screws secure the neck, with a further quartet securing the pickups

Dano '63 Guitar

Back in 1963, prices started at around \$67.95 and, in order to get the price as low as possible without overly compromising stability, tone and performance, the Silvertones were built just like Danelectros with painted masonite (hardboard) front and back and an internal poplar lattice edged with vinyl. This construction has held Danelectro guitars in good stead ever since and here the top-mounted hardware – by which we mean both pickups and bridge – are stabilised by multi-ply blocks arranged within the cavity.

There are a number of differences though, not least with the controls. Here the pickups are controlled by single volume and tone pots, but the originals were provided with dual-concentric pots that provided independent control over volume and tone for each lipstick pickup.

“About the concentric pots, we will probably bring these back soon on another model,” comments Steve Ridinger. “We pretty much just continued with the pots and wiring we’d used for

the Pro model we did last year.” (Guitarist reviewed the '59 Pro back in issue 295.)

As well as the pickup upgrade, the bridge has also been redesigned. Gone is the rather unstable chromed metal and wooden-saddled bridge of yore to be replaced by a heftier plate combined with six adjustable saddles. These, along with the pickup covers themselves, are fashioned from zero-gloss nickel and look very cool indeed.

Finally the headstock, which is now a slightly modified version of the aesthetically pleasing three-a-side ‘coke bottle’ design originally employed in the late fifties. The little nick out of the treble side at the end is the main change.

Sounds - Guitar

As all Dano fans know, when combined the pickups are linked in series (unlike a Telecaster’s pickups which are combined in parallel). So, in the central position of the three-way pickup selector switch the output is boosted to offer a very different voice to that of the solo lipsticks. The lone bridge pickup offers a

The [Baritone’s] bass response is phenomenal compared to the guitar and with the two pickups selected in series, the tone through a clean amp is very full indeed

nicely hollow and glassy tone when used cleanly, and we can certainly agree that the '63s sound even better than the '59 Pro we still have in our testing room.

Upping the gain to a modest bluesy overdrive proves that the '63 can hold its own here too, and using the neck pickup for rhythm works very well indeed. Flick to the centre position for solos and other parts that require prominence.

At high gain yet with low volume, the tone is very full and could, at a pinch, form an effective bed for a rock track or two. At gigging volumes, the guitar becomes much more difficult to control but the sound – brash, toppy and full by degrees – may well appeal to many indie or brat punk players.

Dano '63 Baritone

From the outset it’s worth pointing out that the body of this equally cool Baritone is of exactly the same dimensions and construction as that of the guitar, and while the Sears catalogue didn’t feature a baritone such as this, it’s great to see it here.

“Danelectro, of course, invented the baritone,” says Steve, proudly referring to the UB-2 ‘six-string bass’ that had appeared in 1957. “And there is something about the baritone register and the lipstick pickups that seem like a great combination. While they did not

[originally] make it in this body style, there’s a good demand for a moderately priced baritone.”

Although the UB-2 appeared in the late fifties it was designed to be tuned an octave lower than a guitar, not the A-A or B-B (a 5th or a 4th lower) of the modern baritone. But it was soon to be seen in the hands of some very notable players. Duane Eddy’s *Because They’re Young* is a good example of the six-string bass ‘baritone’. The '63 Baritone is tuned B, E, A, D, F#, B. The 29.5-inch scale is easier to get to grips with than you may think (a modern long-scale bass is 34-inch) and fretting an open E chord while seated is no stretch.

Sounds - Baritone

No player should underestimate the sheer shot in the arm even the merest strum of a baritone can give you. Hitherto worn out clichés are revitalised, while more complex passages, whether melodic finger-style or riffs, can take you to new heights – or should that be lows?

The bass response is phenomenal compared to the guitar and with the two pickups selected in series, the tone through a clean amp is very full indeed. However, the treble side is also well represented, ultimately resulting in an impressively balanced tone that’s a joy to play around with. Dust off those jazz



chords and revel in the impact the voicings have: a spot of slow phaser tops the entire experience off to a tee.

Adding more gain adds bite but at high volumes the extraneous noise tends to be far too noticeable for most practical applications. As there are plenty of solidbody modern baritones intended for metal use out there, there's probably not much need to use this in that genre.

As the fingerboard possesses the same width as that of the guitar, the Bari's playability isn't compromised in any way, and even acoustically there's plenty of rounded output. We haven't had so much fun in ages!

Dano '63 Basses

When Danelectro first introduced this body design it was actually considered to be one of the more conventional looking models to come off the production line. But while the background to the guitar is somewhat unusual, this particular shape has never found its way to the bass side of the street until now. This may seem somewhat perplexing as it certainly adapts to bass proportions exceptionally well but, of course, we must remember that during the original introduction of the guitar, Danelectro was still experiencing great success with its infamous Longhorn and Shorthorn bass models so probably felt little need to offer anything new. These new instruments may offer less visual impact than those super cool 'horned' models, but in today's market they're refreshingly retro, especially the short scale version.

The fifties were the formative years of the bass guitar, and although Fender had introduced the 34-inch long scale bass at the

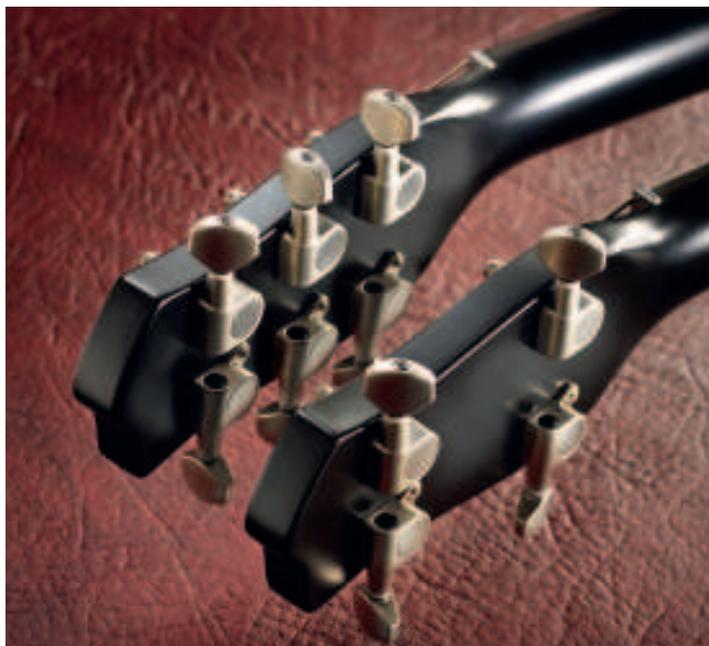
turn of the decade, its main rival, Gibson, decided that its early bass designs would have a shorter scale length (30.5-inch). In the UK at that time just about every available bass guitar (predominantly from Hofner and Framus) was produced with a short scale and for many offered a perfectly acceptable playing experience; even Fender eventually conceded when it introduced the diminutive 30-inch scale Mustang bass in the mid-sixties. For a long time most of these smaller basses fell out of fashion and actually became something of a rarity, but there is currently an upturn in interest and this latest Danelectro short scale bass offering will be very well received.

The important and aesthetic aspects associated with any Danelectro bass have been beautifully retained here, but like

the guitars they are offered with two very important upgrades: the enclosed tuners and the adjustable bridge. With guitar-sized pegs, tuning on those early models was always a concern but, although the look has been effectively retained on today's instruments, we're pleased to report that tuning can now be handled with ease. Also the overall continuity between the guitar, the baritone and the basses is quite amazing, for although these basses have a block under the bridge plate and a beefier frame, all that really changes is the length of the neck!

Sounds - Basses

Choosing between long or short scale models here is purely a matter of playing preference and style as there is relatively little difference in the general sound of these two instruments. Slap players will probably find the long



Same peghead, same tuners, regardless of model. The Zero Gloss finish looks great, too

The Rivals

Dano '63 Guitar

Check such retro lovelies as the **Eastwood Sidejack** (£399), **DiPinto Mach IV** (£449) or **Italia Imola Standard** (£379) for starters, or click to Ebay and delve into the murky depths.

Dano '63 Baritone

The now deleted **ESP LTD VB-300** or **Yamaha Drop 6 RGX** models are well-worth tracking down, as will be the new for 2008 **PRS SE Mike Mushok Baritone** (£599). The cherry on the Baritone cake has to be the **Gretsch Spectra Sonic C Melody G6144** (£1,599.)

Dano '63 Bass (Short Scale)

The **Epiphone EB-3** (£295), with its classic SG shape, also provides vintage looks but with more thud than twang. **Hofner's Contemporary Violin Bass** (£450) still looks stunning, sounds amazing and is lightweight. But if you want a **Fender Mustang** (£500) then it's twice the outlay of the Dano!

Dano '63 Bass (Long Scale)

Squier's Standard Jazz Bass (£220) offers good choice of colours and loads of appeal. For an alternative try the **Vintage Icon Series V4 bass** (£249), with distressed sunburst finish. For similar novelty factor the **Daisy Rock Stardust Elite Bass** (£435), with pearloid top and Violet Burst finish, is a good alternative with 32-inch scale.





scale version more sympathetic to their needs, while others may be drawn to its 24-fret complement, but it will always be the distinctive and powerful sound and the light weight that attracts potential purchasers. There's always been a pleasing rawness associated with Danelectro basses and it's well founded as that distinctive growl is always waiting to be unleashed. The traditional aluminium nut plays a part in producing this distinctive open-string twang but there's another important element: the series linkage of the twin pickups. Unlike most passive basses these Danos actually experience a gain in volume when using both pickups simultaneously. It's a huge bonus and it's this tonal imprint most

players will naturally seek out.

With such a definitive sound and being so light in weight, both bass models are a real delight to play, and although the neck is painted black it's as smooth as the proverbial baby's bum. Apart from their sound we still love the look of those lipstick pickups too – still unique to this day.

Verdict

Yet more very cool and affordable Danelectro instruments with which to whet your whistle. All four are very affordable and, as long as you accept certain practical restrictions applicable to each, the improved electrics make the instruments especially attractive over previous models.

With such a great choice of retro

colours available for the guitar, baritone and long scale bass, players are bound to feel short changed with just three finishes to choose from on the fourth option. Anyone wanting the short scale should rightly feel insulted – especially if you don't like the albeit quite classic red 'burst. However, with such distinctive looks, a unique playing experience and a definitive sound, either bass offers a worthwhile punt. For this outlay both models should be considered as a real bargain.

All in all we'd probably recommend the Baritone most highly – there is something about the combined sound and feel that makes it extremely inspiring – although we're not suggesting that the remaining trio are in any way inferior. In fact, this quartet is so affordable it's not beyond the realms of possibility that you may well walk out of your local stockist clutching the entire set! Stranger things have happened... 📺

With such a definitive sound and being so light in weight, both bass models are a real delight to play



Modern Dano bridges are thankfully adjustable for both height and intonation

The Bottom Line

Dano '63 Guitar

We like: Vintage vibe; improved pickups and bridge array; wide range of cool colours

We dislike: It's hardly refined, but that's the point! 19 frets is a no-no for modern playing styles

Guitarist says: An affordable twang-monster with acres of modern-retro kitsch cool.

Dano '63 Baritone

We like: Stunning and inspiring quality of tone; easy to play with endless possibilities

We dislike: Doesn't really cut the mustard in modern high-gain circles

Guitarist says: There's a place for a baritone in every player's collection and, at this price, you'd be missing out if you didn't consider this one.

Dano '63 Bass (Short Scale)

We like: Diminutive size and weight; dirty and powerful sounds

We dislike: Lack of lefties; no colour choices

Guitarist says: What you see is what you get and that's plenty – a nice slice of retro.

Dano '63 Bass (Long Scale)

We like: Unique looks and killer sounds

We dislike: Still not enough finish options

Guitarist says: A very affordable, passive long-scale bass with a unique retro appearance. This one is hard to put down.



Danelectro Dano '63 Guitar

PRICE: £199
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Double-cut semi-solid electric
BODY: Masonite top and back, plywood frame, semi-hollow
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Aluminium/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 356mm (14-inch radius)
FRETS: 19, medium
HARDWARE: Hardtail bridge with adjustable saddles, enclosed tuners – 'zero gloss' nickel-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 56mm
ELECTRICS: Two lipstick-style Alnico single-coils, volume and tone pots, three-way toggle pickup selector switch
WEIGHT (kg/lbs): 2.81/6.2
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: Other available Dano guitars include the Danelectro Pro (£199), the 56 Pro (£299), the 59 Pro (£199, also available as 12-string at £399) and the Longhorn guitar (£439)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Keen green (as reviewed), aqua, black, burgundy, tangerine, peach, red burst, and gold
JHS 0113 286 5381
www.danelectro.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Danelectro Dano '63 Baritone

PRICE: £249
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Double-cut semi-solid baritone electric
BODY: Masonite top and back, plywood frame, semi-hollow
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 754mm (29.7-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Aluminium/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 356mm (14-inch radius)
FRETS: 22, medium
HARDWARE: Hardtail bridge with adjustable saddles, enclosed tuners – 'zero gloss' nickel-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 56mm
ELECTRICS: Two lipstick-style Alnico single-coils, volume and tone pots, three-way toggle pickup selector switch
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.9/6.4
OPTIONS: No
RANGE OPTIONS: The Longhorn baritone costs £439
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Gold, black, and red burst (as reviewed)

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Danelectro Dano '63 Bass (Short Scale)

PRICE: £249
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Double-cut semi-solid electric four-string bass
BODY: Masonite top and back, plywood frame
NECK: Maple, bolt on
SCALE LENGTH: 754mm (29.7-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Aluminium/41.5mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 356mm (14-inch radius)
FRETS: 22, medium
HARDWARE: Hardtail bridge with adjustable saddles, enclosed tuners – 'zero gloss' nickel-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51mm
ELECTRICS: Two lipstick-style Alnico single-coils, volume and tone pots, three-way toggle pickup selector switch
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.1/6.8
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: The short scale Longhorn baritone costs £439
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Red burst only

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Danelectro Dano '63 Bass (Long Scale)

PRICE: £249
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Double-cut semi-solid electric four-string bass
BODY: Masonite top and back, plywood frame
NECK: Maple, bolt on
SCALE LENGTH: 864mm (34-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: Aluminium/41.5mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 356mm (14-inch radius)
FRETS: 24, medium
HARDWARE: Hardtail bridge with adjustable saddles, enclosed tuners – 'zero gloss' nickel-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51mm
ELECTRICS: Two lipstick-style Alnico single-coils, volume and tone pots, three-way toggle pickup selector switch
WEIGHT (kg/lbs): 3.25/7.2
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: None
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Aqua (as here), black, red burst

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★