

GIBSON 2015 LES PAUL STUDIO

£899

All change for Gibson's 2015 line-up and a Studio like never before

WHO'S been mucking about with my Les Paul? Gibson has. 2015's annual makeover is one of the most dramatic we can remember. Not only are the Min-ETune 'robot' tuners – improved and rebranded this year as G Force – standard on virtually every model, we also get a height-adjustable brass zero fret and increased neck width. There are no cost-cutting satin finishes, either – it's all gloss nitrocellulose, and there's a new gold-coloured TKL moulded case included with every instrument. There's a slight uplift in price but this Studio might well be the bargain of the 2015 range: a USA Les Paul for £899!

The Gibson humbuckers have vintage-like clarity and output

There are a host of subtle changes across the new range. For example, we have the 'slight' body contour, which means the Studio's top isn't as dished as the £2,500 Standard. Do we care? Nope. The very lightly figured maple top is 'B' grade, but in this cool Desert Burst, it looks quite vintage-y, and though we don't get binding, we do get dark cream pickup surrounds and switch collar, and aged-looking satin nickel-plated hardware. We also get modern weight relief, which means it's a chunky-feeling guitar but not overfed.

The slim-taper neck is a little odd. The extra width is apparent from the outer strings to the edges of the fingerboard – the string spacing at the nut and the bridge hasn't changed. Initially, it feels wide and a little uncomfortable, especially if you wrap your thumb around the neck; thumb behind, however, once you get playing, it feels rather good.

It's the same with the sound. The Gibson humbuckers have vintage-like clarity and output – ideal for classic-rock tones: if you want more power, use your pedals. The 'tuned coil-taps' are handy, giving a pseudo coil-split that sounds very single-coil-like, but without the usual drop in volume.

We've left the most 'Marmite' feature till last: the G Force tuners. Firstly, as you'll be aware if you're a guitar geek, hit the tune button, strum the strings and the mechanical tuners whirl. There are four preset banks of dropped, altered and open tunings, although going down to C, the tension gets floppy. Drop D tunings work better, and if you like your

open G Keef riffs, or earlier Stones-y open E tuning, both are a push-button or two away.

Recording and practising at home, we came to really like the G Force tuners. At a gig, they aren't the easiest to use, although you can tune up the old-fashioned way, albeit a little more slowly due to the high ratio of the tuners. But the more we used the system, the more we felt comfortable. Like the neck. In fact, the more time we spent with this guitar, the more we liked it in general. Love at first sight? No, but it is a grower... so long as you don't have your 'vintage-is-best' blinkers on.

Dave Burrluck

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★★★★
	SOUND QUALITY	★★★★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★
	BUILD QUALITY	★★★★
	PLAYABILITY	★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★★	

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany, modern weight relief w/ maple top
NECK: Mahogany, slim-taper profile
SCALE: 624mm (24.6")
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
PICKUPS: 1x Gibson 57 Plus (bridge), 1x 57 Classic (neck)
CONTROLS: 2x volume w/ push/pull coil-split, 2x tone w/ 3-way toggle pickup selector
HARDWARE: Satin nickel-plated Tune-O-Matic bridge & stud tailpiece, G Force 'robot' tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Manhattan Midnight, Wine Red, Desert Burst (shown)
CONTACT: Gibson
www.gibson.com

AUTO-TUNERS

UPGRADED G Force tuners offer auto tuning and retuning from a host of presets. You'll never need to use your electronic tuner again. Perhaps...

WIDER NECK

GIBSON'S 2015 necks are wider, but have standard string spacing – it means you won't fall off the outer edges while executing vigorous bends and hammer-ons

COIL-SPLITS

GIBSON 57 Plus (bridge) and 57 Classic (neck) humbuckers are well loved; here, we also get 'tuned coil-taps' for some excellent single-coil-like sounds

