GRETSCH ELECTROMATIC CVT III £274

Go ahead, punk. Make your day with a stripped-down, budget classic

PART of the recently rebooted Gretsch Electromatic Series, the new CVT III is based on the Corvette solid body originally launched back in 1961. It's really only in the last few years that the pretty little Gretsch has achieved anything like classic status. Now, the Chinese-built CVT III joins a family of Electromatic Corvette models that includes the 60s reissue G5135 CVT (£670), the G5135GL G.Love Signature (£1,042) and the G5135PS Patrick Vaughn Stump (of Fall Out Boy, natch) 'Stump-O-Matic' (£826).

Like Patrick's guitar, our Corvette has three pickups

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screwed to a beautifully sculpted mahogany body. Controls include a master volume, master tone and three-way pickup selector toggle switch. There's also an anchored Adjusto-Matic bridge and tailpiece setup that, while more textbook Gibson than classic Gretsch, does a smashing job of keeping the strings attached to the guitar.

The CVT III is the first Gretsch Corvette to be spec'd with a bolt-on neck. This particular tweak of the blueprint helps keep the guitar's price tag the affordable side of £300 but we reckon the bolt-on construction works well here. You see, a bit like a Gibson SG, the classic all mahogany set-neck Corvettes can be a bit fragile if mishandled. The pleasantly chubby 22-fret maple neck fitted to the CVT III gives it a robust feel, and the playability is great, too.

The rosewood fingerboard has a 12-inch radius that places this guitar's feel in the same postcode as a Les Paul or SG.

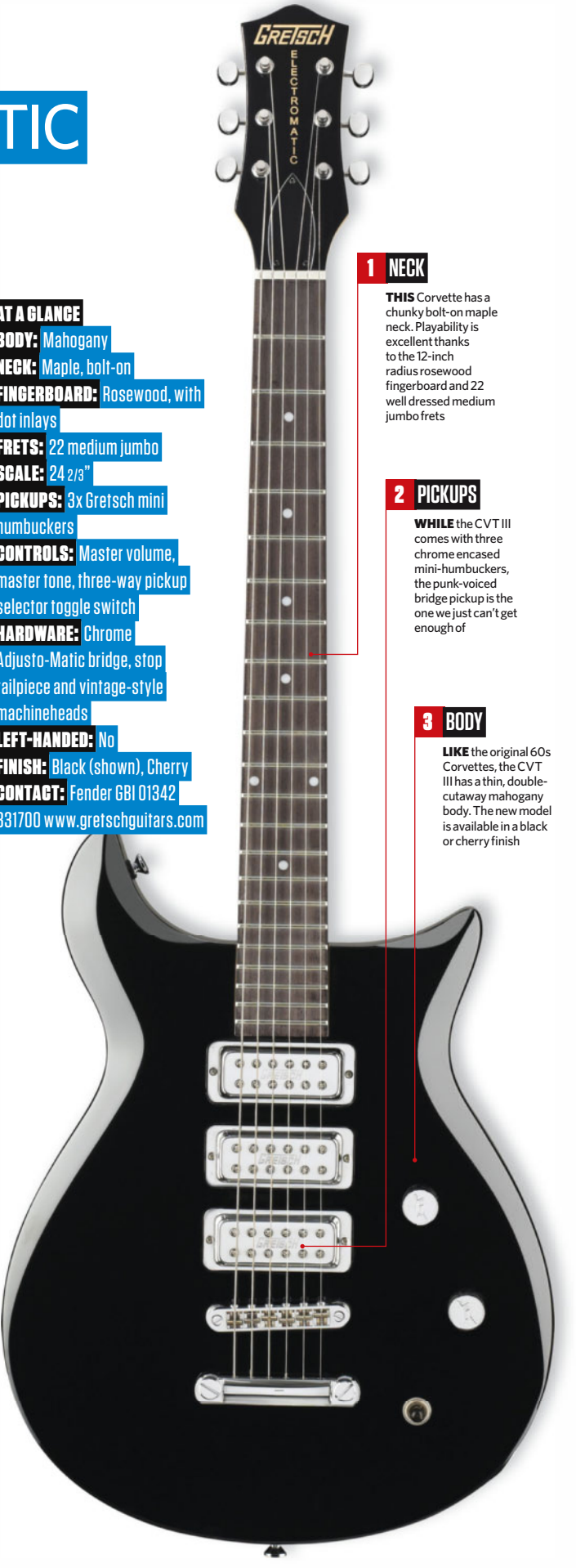
Plugging in, it's immediately obvious that the bridge mini-humbucker is the pick of the litter. It jangles sweetly through a clean channel yet snarls with Rickenbacker-like aggression when you wind up the overdrive and whack the strings like a brute. If you're familiar with Paul Weller's epic Ricky-fuelled tone on Jam records like *Going Underground* and *Strange Town*, you'll know what we're talking about. While running through the middle and neck 'buckers progressively adds warmth to the tone, they don't trigger the goosebumps quite like the bridge pickup. That said, the neck 'bucker pumps out a decent dirty tone that will resonate with lovers of blues artists from Muddy Waters to The Black Keys.

We suspect some Gretsch connoisseurs will dismiss the CVT III as a cheap, unsophisticated plank. Well, we say that's exactly what's so great about it. The Corvette is a tough little punk, blues and garage-rock orientated guitar that offers great playability and vintage-style cool for not a lot of money. The CVT III isn't aimed at elitists, anyway. It's designed to offer the young and the borderline skint a serious alternative to an Epiphone SG, Squier Telecaster and a legion of Les Paul and Strat knockoffs. In fact, shop wisely and you'll pick up a CVT III for little more than £200. Now, that could really make your day.

Ed Mitchell

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, with dot inlays
FRETS: 22 medium jumbo
SCALE: 24 2/3"
PICKUPS: 3x Gretsch mini humbuckers
CONTROLS: Master volume, master tone, three-way pickup selector toggle switch
HARDWARE: Chrome Adjusto-Matic bridge, stop tailpiece and vintage-style machineheads
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Black (shown), Cherry
CONTACT: Fender GBI 01342 331700 www.gretschguitars.com



1 NECK

THIS Corvette has a chunky bolt-on maple neck. Playability is excellent thanks to the 12-inch radius rosewood fingerboard and 22 well dressed medium jumbo frets

2 PICKUPS

WHILE the CVT III comes with three chrome encased mini-humbuckers, the punk-voiced bridge pickup is the one we just can't get enough of

3 BODY

LIKE the original 60s Corvettes, the CVT III has a thin, double-cutaway mahogany body. The new model is available in a black or cherry finish

SUMMARY

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