

The Corvette's compact body makes it perfect for female guitarists

The Megatron pickups sound great clean or distorted

The Corvette's thin neck is just the thing for smaller hands

£499



GRETSCH G5135 ELECTROMATIC CORVETTE

IT MIGHT BE NAMED AFTER A CLASSIC SPORTS CAR, BUT DID THIS NEW GRETSCH GET OUR MOTOR RUNNING? LET'S FIND OUT... WORDS: KIM WILLS

> THE SIZZLE

The name Gretsch conjures up images of big-bodied guitars, with cool names like White Falcon, Black Phoenix and Country Gentleman being put through their paces by legends like Beatle George Harrison, 50s rock 'n' roller Eddie Cochran and king of rockabilly Brian Setzer. But there's more to Gretsch than big fat guitars with f-holes and Bigsby vibratos. Back in the 60s the company produced a solid-body electric called the Corvette, and this little cutie has just been reissued as part of Gretsch's Electromatic range, so there's no need to trail around second-hand guitar shops.

Over the years Gretsch's solid bodies have been seen in the company of The Cramps' Poison Ivy, Bo Diddley's guitarist The Duchess, Jimi Hendrix and Edwyn Collins. What's interesting about this list of players is the healthy proportion of female guitarists. In the early days of rock 'n' roll Gretsch was one of the few companies that went out of its way to entice girl axe-slingers. The Corvette was 'designed to appeal to feminine guitarists' – so that's girls, and presumably guys in touch with their feminine side (stand up Placebo's Brian Molko). But despite its attempt to appeal to the more feminine among us, Gretsch hasn't resorted to covering the Corvette in pink paint or buckets of glitter.

WHAT'S IT GOT?

Like its four-wheeled namesake, the Corvette is sleek and streamlined. Reminiscent of a Gibson SG it shares that guitar's solid mahogany construction, mahogany glued-in neck and rosewood fingerboard. The finish is a vintage-style cherry that allows the

grain of the mahogany to show through. The thin double-cutaway body makes this guitar much smaller than the usual behemoths that we're used to, which is a great first step on Gretsch's mission to appeal to female players. The strings are strung across an anchored Adjustomatic bridge, and end at a Bigsby B50 vibrato tailpiece. In the engine

"Its retro looks appeal to a wide spectrum of guitarists, and it also caters well for female"

compartment you'll find a pair of Megatron humbucking pickups with individual volume controls and a master tone. By the way, we love the chunky silver control knobs, each decorated with the Gretsch 'G-arrow' logo – a nice touch!

BUILT TO LAST?

Being made from solid mahogany, the Corvette isn't about to snap in half without warning. It's actually quite difficult to see the join where the neck is attached to the body, and there's a dowel rod joint holding it in place (instead of just glue) that creates an added level of sturdiness to the overall construction. As with most guitars, don't treat it badly and it'll stay in one piece.

HANDS ON

OK, so let's put that 'feminine guitarists' claim to the test. As we said before, the Corvette is smaller than most Gretsch models, so the reduced bulk makes it less cumbersome and lighter, which is great for anyone of smaller-than-average build. That's not to say this is a light guitar, but its weight is particularly well distributed, so you won't

be left needing a visit to the chiropractor after a night's gigging. The neck is perfect for smaller hands too, so fretting chords can be done with ease.

The Megatron pickups give a bright tone, which is perfect if you want jangly open chords, but it can be adapted to sound a little dirtier if you turn up the gain. The Corvette responded well to a touch of filth. The tone was equally suited to garage rock, punk and rockabilly, although we probably wouldn't recommend it for metal. The Corvette stayed in tune well and was an absolute pleasure to play. Make sure you use a straight jack adaptor to connect it to your amp though; TG found that the right-angled ones kept falling out, thanks to the raised metal rim around socket on the guitar. This is our only (tiny) niggle though.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Corvette rocked our world. Its retro looks are enough to appeal a wide spectrum of guitarists: garage rockers, punks and mods, etc. Its size, weight and dimensions mean it also caters well to female players, particularly those who want something 'un-blokey' but not pink or sparkly. But don't be put off if you're made of 'frogs and snails and puppy dog tails'. We could imagine Pete Doherty or the boys from Franz Ferdinand digging the Corvette. As you can probably gather by now, TG was suitably impressed with this axe – you could do far worse than being in the driving seat of this Corvette.

FOR: It looks and sounds great, the price
AGAINST: The jack socket is a little niggly

TG RATING:



WHO'S IT FOR?

Girls, boys, punks, mods and rockers...

INFORMATION

ORIGIN: Korea
BODY: Solid Mahogany
NECK: Solid Mahogany
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 21
PICKUPS: 2x Gretsch Megatrons
CONTROLS: 2x volume and a single tone
HARDWARE: Bigsby B50 vibrato tailpiece, Adjustomatic bridge
FINISH: Cherry only
CASE: No
LEFT-HANDERS: No
CONTACT: Fender GBI 01342 331700
WEB: www.gretschguitars.com

ALTERNATIVELY

Squier Jagmaster – £279
Gretsch Electromatic Pro Jet – £329
Epiphone G400 SG – £349