



PHOTOGRAPHY ANDY SHORT



# Taylor T5 Std & Parker Mojo Flame s/c £2,199 each

Taylor is now making electrics and Parker has dropped its famed piezo 'acoustic' tones from its latest solidbody. Has the world gone mad? by Dave Burrluck

Okay, let's get one thing straight: this isn't a 'which is best?' review. Instead, we pair up two distinctly different guitars from two very modern guitar companies that are both enjoying a change. Taylor's T5, launched last year, was the acoustic company's first 'electric' guitar, and it can now be ordered in a more electric format with two visible humbuckers. Parker,

meanwhile, has not only come up with a new single-cut outline – the first new shape since the brand launched back in 1993 – but this is also the first USA Fly without the piezo 'acoustic' sounds.

## Taylor T5 Standard

Since we last wrote about Taylor's T5 (in issue 264), the guitar has taken on a life of its own. It has become Taylor's

fastest-selling instrument ever, it has its own factory within Taylor's San Diego base, it has won awards for both Best Acoustic and Best Electric, and last year Taylor made around 10,000 T5s – nearly as many instruments as an established electric maker like PRS makes in a whole year in the USA.

Another change in this year's T5 specification, along with the dual top-

## The rivals

**TAYLOR T5**  
PRS Hollowbody Spruce  
w/piezo £3,330  
Parker Fly Deluxe £2,199  
Parker P6E £899

PRS's Hollowbody with the optional piezo tones is an expensive piece but it covers accurate acoustic tones with classic humbucker voicing, making it a very versatile guitar. Parker's original Fly is one instrument you must try. Its ultra-thin sculptured body is complemented by its versatile sounds, while the piezo-equipped vibrato works effortlessly – this is a seriously futuristic guitar. We've reviewed the Parker P6E elsewhere in this issue (page 100) and it's Parker's first electro-acoustic. Challenging looks, for sure, but a very neat instrument for the acoustic player who wants more textures



The Taylor T5 Standard sports two chrome-plated T5 CMR humbuckers



**TAYLOR T5 STANDARD****PRICE:** (inc case)

£2,199 with met top

**ORIGIN:** USA**TYPE:** Cutaway Grand Auditorium-shaped thinline electric/acoustic hybrid**TOP:** Sitka spruce edge bound with twin soundholes**BACK/SIDES:** Sapele**MAX RIM DEPTH:**

53.2mm

**MAX BODY WIDTH:**

405mm

**NECK:** Mahogany, with T-Lock bolt-on joint**SCALE LENGTH:**

632mm (24.9inch)

**TUNERS:** Individual

die-cast chrome

**NUT/WIDTH:** TUSQ/

43mm

**FINGERBOARD:** Ebony, pearl micro-dot inlays, 381mm (15-inch) radius**FRETS:** 21, medium**BRIDGE/SPACING:**

Ebony/56mm

**ELECTRICS:** Chrome-plated T5 CMR air-coil bridge and neck humbuckers, T5 dynamic neck pickup (buried in neck joint), controlled by shoulder-mounted five-way lever pickup selector, with preamp/EQ and front-placed volume, bass and treble controls, side-mounted output jack (6.4mm) and rear battery compartment (one 9V PP3)**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 3/6.75**OPTIONS:** The spruce-topped Standard without metallic finish costs £1,999. The single CMR air-coil bridge pickup version comes with an additional body sensor at the same price.

The maple-topped T5 Standard costs £2,299

**RANGE OPTIONS:** The T5 Custom includes Artist inlays and gold-plated tuners. It's available with Sitka spruce (£2,199), Hawaiian koa (£2,799) or maple (£2,599) tops. Again, metallic finishes add £200. Premium-grade tops include koa (£3,199, Custom-only), while maple adds £300 to either the Standard or Custom**LEFT-HANDERS:**

Available to order, no extra charge

**FINISHES:** The spruce-topped Standard is available with honey, cherry and tobacco bursts, while maple tops add red, blue, trans black edge bursts and solid black. Four metallics are offered – crimson red (as reviewed), lake placid, sage green and pearl blue**Sound Technology**  
01462 480000[www.taylorguitars.com](http://www.taylorguitars.com)

The three rubber controls handle volume, bass and treble EQ

→ mounted humbucker option on our review guitar, is a choice of four solid metallic colours. It gives the T5 a less acoustic look and an almost retro vibe.

We say 'almost' because Taylor just doesn't do vintage or retro in the least. Whereas a brand like PRS clearly revisits past glories in its designs, the T5 is solely modernistic. This is partly to do with the absolutely perfect construction, but also features like that ultra-white binding around the body, neck, head and the beautifully shaped soundholes. Then there's the generic Taylor logo'd and chromed large-bodied and buttoned tuners, the micro-dot inlays, chromed pickup covers and the ultra-glossy, super-sheen finish. We doubt we'll see a 'vintage' T5 with cream binding, Kluson-style tuners, nickel hardware and a lower-gloss finish, but hey, it's a nice thought.

Taylor's neck work is legendary for its precision, and on our guitar, both the neck shape – a beautifully smooth C-section profile – and clean fingerboard create an excellent player,

TAYLOR T5 STANDARD	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

■ **WE LIKED** Superb build and design; broad range of electro-acoustic and electric tones

■ **WE DISLIKED** Nothing, so long as you remember that it's a hollow body and so at high volume/gain, you'll get feedback

even though the fret gauge (approx. 2mm wide x 1mm high) is smaller than most contemporary electrics. The T5 introduced the new NT bolt-on neck joint to the Taylor camp that attaches the neck to body via a single Allen-keyed bolt. Typically, however, the fit between neck and body is almost invisible and unlike many Fender bolt-ons, shows no desire to move sideways under generous pressure.

Initially, the T5's large cutaway body seems huge in comparison to an electric solidbody, but the hollow sapele back and sides, plus longitudinally braced

## Despite the relatively shallow body, there's a good unplugged, acoustic-like tone and feel to the T5, and it has surprising volume too

spruce top illustrate its thinline electro-acoustic start point. It's not an acoustic – it's an electro, intended for the stage. Of course, the additional top-mounted humbuckers provide the T5 with its 'electric' sounds. For this dual top-mount pickup version, we lose the body sensor of the 'single pickup' version, but retain the humbucking neck sensor, positioned out of sight in the heel joint under the fingerboard.

Mounted in a nicely designed bezel on the upper shoulder is an electric-style five-way lever switch that gives the following combinations of the three pickups: Position 1, the under-fretboard humbucker and neck humbucker in series; position 2, under-fretboard humbucker; position 3, bridge humbucker; position 4, bridge humbucker and under-fretboard humbucker in parallel; position 5 bridge humbucker and under-fretboard humbucker in series.

This bezel also houses a red status LED for the 9V battery that powers the active preamp/EQ. According to Taylor it should last for about 40 hours.

Then we have the three face-mounted, rubber-knobbed rotary controls – volume, bass and treble EQ – all of which are centre notched. Only the output jack, a standard passive jack on the guitar's side, leaves a little doubt after this reviewer recently turned up to a gig to find that a similar output jack had lost its nut and the socket had slipped inside the body. Fixing the chassis jack to a metal plate would prevent this potentially embarrassing problem occurring here.

**SOUNDS:** Despite the relatively shallow body, there's a good unplugged, acoustic-like tone and feel to the T5, and it has surprising volume too. Its five pickup selections all sound pretty 'acoustic' through an acoustic amp. This dual pickup version loses perhaps the most acoustic-like body sensor, but even the hidden neck pickup (position 2) captures a full-toned, rich acoustic voice that's pleasantly darker than many electros, though still with acoustic-like crispness. Indeed, any of the selections that voice this pickup sound very acoustic-like, and with the broad EQ, you can go from mid-scooped strum friendliness to an older mid-heavy voice that's more suited for blues and jazz or slide styles.

Through an electric amp, a good place to start is position 3 (bridge humbucker), which produces quite



a bright, twangy tone with the EQs flat. Knocking off a little high end, either from the guitar or the amp, soon creates more electric-like accuracy. There are some excellent rootsy or lo-fi tones to be had and again, experimenting with the EQ and volume is essential for coaxing the most useable tones. There's noticeable active background hiss and on more gained higher-volume tones, the guitar becomes a little uncontrollable. Like any semi, though, that's part of the fun.

A dual amp set-up really illustrates the potential. With only one set of onboard EQs, you have to make compromises and adjust each amp accordingly. Fairly obviously, more acoustic-like tones need some high-end crispness and the more electric tones need fewer highs and more mids. However, get the balance right and this is a very expressive guitar that really can't be compared to many others on

the market. It's a new sound – if that's possible – but above all, it's a new style of instrument to make your music with.

### Parker Mojo Flame Single-Cutaway

As you can see in the Rivals section of this review, the Parker Fly Deluxe, with its magnetic and piezo sounds, is a direct competitor to the T5. It was one of the first guitars to really popularise the dual magnetic/piezo 'hybrid' concept – one of the Fly's unique selling points. However, with this new USA-made single-cutaway, Parker is

entering the mainstream with a guitar that's clearly designed to compete with the likes of the Gibson Les Paul and the PRS Singlecut, without any piezo tones.

Unlike the PRS Singlecut, it's unlikely to attract any interest from Gibson's legal department, thanks to its highly recognisable minimalist headstock and less visually obvious (but fundamental to the design) 648mm (25.5-inch)-scale length. Its outline shape retains the original Fly style in the shape of the single horn but the lower bouts are more symmetrical and the upper shoulder is square-topped.

The mahogany/maple sandwich construction adds weight to the design too, but it's only 44.5mm thick, as opposed to the 60mm of a Les Paul or Singlecut. As a result, it's still in the lightweight category. It also has quite a bit of rear contouring, especially around the neck-to-body joint. This is a version of the original's finger-joint, but →

### The rivals

**PARKER S/C**  
Gibson Les Paul  
Standard approx £2,172  
PRS Singlecut  
(gloss finish) £2,295  
Duesenberg 49er £945  
As the single-cut benchmark, the ageing Les Paul is still the market leader by a long way. Gibson might lack the constructional detail and consistency of some modern brands, but you can't argue with the sound – or the history! PRS's Singlecut is now back in full production and is a slightly more modern take on the Les Paul's design principles. Big, fat and clear sums it up, and the longer scale makes detuning more effective in comparison to the Les Paul. Duesenberg's 49er impressed us in issue 279, illustrating, like the Mojo single-cutaway, that a single-cut design doesn't have to be a Les Paul copy

PARKER MOJO FLAME	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

- **WE LIKED** Beautifully made; more weight and comfort than standard Fly; tonal range
- **WE DISLIKED** Not as 'big' sounding as its rivals; lack of piezo 'acoustic' tones

The Mojo's neck is one-piece mahogany, reinforced with carbon and epoxy composite





**PARKER MOJO FLAME SINGLE-CUTAWAY****PRICE:** £2,199 (inc case)**ORIGIN:** USA**TYPE:** Single-cutaway, arched-top solidbody electric**BODY:** One-piece mahogany with carved AAA maple top**NECK:** One-piece mahogany with carbon/glass/epoxy reinforcement, glued-in**SCALE LENGTH:**

648mm (25.5-inch)

**NUT/WIDTH:** Graphite/41.85mm**FINGERBOARD:**

Carbon/glass/epoxy composite (0.5mm thick), 254-330mm (10-13-inch) radius

**FRETS:** 22, medium jumbo**HARDWARE:** Tune-o-matic bridge and stud tailpiece, Sperzel Trim-Lok locking tuners, all black-plated**STRING SPACING,****BRIDGE:** 54mm**ELECTRICS:** Two Seymour Duncan uncovered humbuckers (JB at bridge, Jazz at neck), three-way toggle pickup selector switch, volume for each pickup, and master tone (with pull/push coil-split)**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 3.4/7.5**OPTIONS:** None**RANGE OPTIONS:** USA Flies in the distinctive double-cut shape start at £1,299 with the bolt-on NiteFly; set-neck instruments start with the Deluxe at £2,199. The Korean-made P-Series starts at £449**LEFT-HANDERS:** No**FINISHES:** Black cherry burst (as reviewed), trans blue burst and trans green burst**Sound Technology****01462 480000****www.parkerguitars.com**

→ with a design that's more comfortable, especially seated, than the original Fly.

The entire neck, back and sides are painted black and aside from the reasonably flamed maple top poking through the dark-red-to-black sunburst, you can't see any other wood. The neck, according to the spec, is one-piece mahogany (as is the body back), and like the Fly Mojo's mahogany neck, this one is reinforced with a thin layer of carbon and glass-strengthened epoxy composite.

Described as 'regular/fat', the neck is a very comfortable C shape that's not V'd in any way, nor overly slim or deep (20.5mm at the first fret, 21.3mm at the 12th). It's a little different than the quoted 42.7mm at the nut, in that the width at the nut is 41.85mm, but quickly widens to 43.2mm. This creates perhaps too much 'board on the outside of the two outer strings, especially as the bridge spacing is wide at 54mm.

The fret gauge is chunky compared to a Fly (2.6mm wide x 1.32mm high, as opposed to the smaller wire 2.4mm wide x 1.14mm high of the Fly), but these stainless steel frets, bonded directly to the composite fingerboard (that's about the thickness of a D string), feel super-smooth on the tops. Although a little more edge rounding is required to match Tom Anderson's stainless steel fretting, the ends aren't sharp at all.

As ever, we have Sperzel locking tuners, but we now get standard

## The Parker offers quality sounds, and once people understand that it's a lighter, brighter single-cut than either a Gibson or PRS, it could win many fans

Seymour Duncan humbuckers (a JB and Jazz combo, the same as the Fly Mojo) and a regular tune-o-matic/stud tailpiece combo. The upside of this regularity, however, is that any standard humbucker can easily be retro-fitted to the guitar – unlike the Fly, with its specially made DiMarzio or Duncan pickups – and the hard-tail bridge set-up has none of the complications of the Fly bridge.

**SOUNDS:** While the single-cutaway doesn't supply the huge lows and power of a Les Paul or a Singlecut, it's a much more manageable guitar when strapped on. The range of sounds is perfectly rock-ready in humbucker mode: the familiar midrange crunch of the JB immediately dials up a modern, quite aggressive sound that's matched by the more fluid neck pickup. However, it's a brighter sound that's almost in



The Mojo has a volume control for each 'bucker, plus push-pull coil split for the master tone

double-cut PRS Custom territory. The single-coil splits (the inside coils of each humbucker), especially with some softening volume reduction, produce some bluesier tones with twang and funk, aided by the longer scale.

There's nothing surprising about the tones, though. Yes, the guitar plays very nicely and any worries about the slightly over-wide neck are soon forgotten. A hidden asset is that the longer scale means that down-tuning retains more tension than a 626mm-scaled Les Paul. The dual volumes are easy to adjust too – the one nearest the bridge is the neck volume, which is initially confusing, but many guitars are wired in a similar fashion.

Overall, it offers quality sounds, both humbucking and single-coil, and once people understand that it's a lighter, brighter single-cut than either a Gibson or PRS, it could win many fans.

### Verdict

Taylor and Parker have both pushed the boundaries when it comes to construction and here are two modern instruments that might be wildly different in style but are both great examples of modern guitar craft.

The T5 becomes more alluring every time we play one. For the acoustic

player wanting some electric tones, it's the finest in its class, although there's so much more to it than that. The more electric sounds on this new dual top-mount pickup version create a guitar that's at home with cleaner, lower-gained jazz, blues, pop and rock, and so long as you watch your volume, it's a perfect stage instrument. For the more adventurous, it's a superb studio guitar for creating sounds and textures, from clean acoustic to noisenik mayhem. Oh, and it plays like a dream, too, even though some slightly bigger frets might broaden its appeal further.

The Mojo Flame Single-Cutaway is way less 'out there' than the Fly Deluxe in terms of looks, and without that guitar's piezo 'acoustic' tones, it may seem limited in comparison. While it doesn't capture the width and depth of a Les Paul or PRS Singlecut, it's a very comfortable stage guitar with a broad texture of tones, from good-sounding single-coils to rock-ready humbucker voices. Not a classic, then, but a seriously good guitar nonetheless. **G**

### Taylor T5 Standard

**Guitarist RATING** ★★★★★

### Parker Mojo Flame Single-cutaway

**Guitarist RATING** ★★★★★