

Liner Notes





They look like Gretsch guitars and sound quite like them, too. But those prices? Gretsch opens its arms to the entry-level market and sets the bar impressively high

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GRETSCH G2420T STREAMLINER, G2622 STREAMLINER & G2655 STREAMLINER

£395, £350 & £350

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What You Need To Know

- 1 So, what's the deal?**
These new Streamliners represent a new price point for Gretsch. Made in Indonesia, they sit comfortably below the Korean-made Electromatic range and the loftily priced Japanese-made Professional series.
- 2 Wasn't 'Streamliner' the name of a Gretsch guitar from yesteryear?**
Yes, the Streamliner first appeared in 1954, a renamed version of the Electromatic that had surfaced in 1953. It lasted until 1959 before reappearing in a double-cut outline in '68. A third version came along in '72 before leaving the Gretsch catalogue by '75. The classic Chet Atkins Hollow Body was based on the Streamliner.
- 3 Who's going to play these?**
Their target is clearly the entry market, but – as with other 'retro' brands such as Danelectro – they might well be given houseroom by much more experienced players wanting some Gretsch flavour without the outlay. They could be ideal for modders, too.

The Streamliner concept is simple: to create more affordable Gretsch guitars without losing their specific DNA. So, this new range centres on three body styles: the large 406mm (16-inch) wide G2420T; the same-sized double-cut thinline G2622, with spruce centre block; and a downsized 340mm (13.375-inch) wide Junior version, the G2655. There are two Bigsby versions of each model (the only difference being the sole colour they are offered in), and one hard-tail version that, along with a single G2622 lefty, creates a

10-string range. Despite the different styles, there are just two prices: the non-Bigsby versions cost £350; the Bigsby-equipped models and the lefty are £395, pretty much half the price of the existing Electromatics.

The Streamliner models share a majority of features. Each has two new Broad'Tron humbuckers controlled in classic Gretsch style by a three-way toggle selector switch on the bass side shoulder, a master volume on the treble side horn, and then a trio of controls by the treble-side f-hole for individual-pickup volume and master tone.





1. All three Streamliners use new Broad'Tron humbuckers controlled by a master volume and three-way toggle switch, plus individual pickup volumes and master tone. Neat control knobs, too
2. Each model has a Bigsby or hardtail option. Here on the G2420T, the B60 is paired with a secured wooden foot Adjusto-Matic bridge
3. This V-shaped stud tailpiece was designed for the centre-blocked Streamliners, with the Adjusto-Matic mounted directly to the body

Construction follows the hollow/semi protocol of laminated maple top, back and sides, although on the G2622 and G2655 there's a new-design centre block that is mainly hollow (see image on p102). All have the same slightly longer scale length of 629mm (24.75 inches), bound rosewood 'boards, a 305mm (12-inch) radius, and the same profile nato (as opposed to maple) necks. Gretsch is calling the frets 'medium jumbo', though at approximately 2mm wide and 0.9mm high we'd say that's a misnomer – they are certainly smaller than the 'medium jumbo' wire of the Electromatics, which measures approximately 2.65mm wide with a pretty similar height. Then there are the large block fingerboard inlays that nod back to the 70s; the headstock outline follows the classic 6120 shape with a gold logo and no series name while the smaller size f-holes follow those from Gretsch's Baldwin-owned era (1967 to 1980). The clear-topped acrylic control knobs, with either gold or black coloured bases, actually revisit a design used by Gretsch in the early 50s, before knurled metal knobs, while the 'teardrop' pickguards emulate those on the Duo Jet.

G2420T Streamliner

Side-by-side with an Electromatic G5420T, the Streamliner – which is nearly half the price – certainly doesn't look cheap,

The Streamliner concept is simple – more affordable Gretsches that retain the brand's DNA

especially in its new muted Gold Metallic finish. Aside from slightly untidy f-holes, the finish is cleanly edge-scraped, revealing a white binding, top and back, with an inner black line. Internally, it's certainly clean. The dual top braces are actually smoother to the touch than those on the Electromatic and there are very similar kerfed linings. There is, however, no post under the bridge, connecting top to back, which may have an impact on its tendency to feed back. In places, it's not sanded quite as smoothly as the Electromatic, and the arching to the top and back seems a little pinched in the waist.

The neck has a similar headstock splice and heel piece to the Electromatic, and although the neck shape has a slightly flatter back, it's a little deeper than our reference G5420T: 21.7mm at the 1st fret, 24.3mm at the 10th, as opposed to 20.8mm and 23.2mm. The fretwork is good, the fret ends sit over the binding and those big block

inlays are crisply inlaid. The licensed Bigsby B60 and Gretsch's anchored wood-based Adjusto-Matic tune-o-matic-style bridge are identical to the Electromatic G5420T. A small point: instead of Gretsch's usual knurled metal locking strap buttons, the ones here are standard.

G2622 Streamliner

Gretsch's double-cutaway guitars appeared in the early 60s and adopted a clearly inspired-by but different outline to the Gibson ES-335 – notably their flatter, less pronounced horns. They were also hollow, without a centre block, which didn't appear until 2013. While the body width is identical to the G2420T, the depth is trimmed at the rim from 72mm to 47mm. As we've reported, an ES-335-style guitar can be surprisingly heavy thanks to its all-solid mahogany or maple centre block. Our sample, however, is a shade lighter than the G2420T, which is certainly in part due to the unique design of the centre block – essentially, two strips of spruce that run down the centre of the guitar, connecting top to back and anchoring the pickups, bridge and tailpiece but leaving a gap in the middle from just past the neck pickup to the base of the guitar.

The other primary change here is the hardtail bridge and tailpiece setup. The Adjusto-Matic screws into metal ferrules



A Bigger Sound

The new Broad'Tron humbuckers recall the 'GretschBucker' used on many Electromatics before the introduction of the 'Black Top' Filter'Trons, used from 2010. "They're basically Filter'Tron-style full-size humbuckers," says Gretsch's Adam Bowden-Smith, which means you have a host of retrofit options.

"These pickups have gone through extensive R&D specifically for these guitars. They're punchy with a higher output, hotter-than-vintage Filter'Trons. The older ones had a larger logo; the new ones are nickel-plated with a more subtle stamped logo. The first prototypes were wound by Chris Fleming, then head of Gretsch R&D [and with extensive experience in Fender's Custom Shop]."

The pickups are made to spec by Korean pickup giant G&B. They're based on Gretsch's G115 model and are quite a different unit to the classic Filter'Tron or, indeed, those fitted on our reference Electromatic G5420T: those more Filter'Tron-like units have a DC resistance of around 4.27kohm (bridge) and 4.12k (neck); the Broad'Trons are more traditional 'bucker-alikes, 9.28k (bridge) and 7.9k (neck). While DC resistance doesn't tell us much in isolation, we can clearly see the pickups are calibrated in terms of output.



and the strings are anchored by a 'V' shaped stud tailpiece designed specifically for these guitars. "The V shape makes it very Gretsch-y," says Gretsch's Adam Bowden-Smith, "like the Cadillac tailpiece or the big V cut-out on the Gretsch-branded Bigsby. We wanted to make the effort so the Streamliners aren't copies of ourselves; we wanted to make them our own." The Bigsby version uses the B70 style with tension bar, which will add weight and alter the balance compared with our hard-tail version.

G2655 Streamliner

This Junior' sized double-cut is essentially the same as the G2622, but downsized so the body measures 340mm (13.375 inches) across its lower bouts, the same as the Jet. "We have dallied with a Junior," says Adam. "Fred Gretsch did some downsized 14-inch models and Center-Block Juniors exist in the Pro series, but this is really a new concept: centre block, the downsizing and the double-cut outline."

While the body is downsized, like Gibson's ES-339, the rest of the guitar, its neck and, obviously, parts are all full-size. The Bigsby version uses the horseshoe-style B50, which is available in Walnut Stain and Black.

Sounds

All three guitars share the same neck and excellent setups: all a pleasure to play. If high-fret action is your game, then the smaller Junior has the best access, the G2622's fingerboard sits into the body further than a ES-335 – and the G2420T? Well, good luck! Played seated, both the bigger guitars feel great: the G2622 doesn't fall off your lap like a heavier semi can, while the Junior ticks the boxes for a home-recording guitar sat in front of your computer. Strapped on, the G2420T feels huge if you're coming from a Les Paul, but its relative light weight hangs well on a strap. The G2622 is slightly neck-heavy, but the upper horn strap-button placement



means it sits quite conventionally, unlike a heel button placement, as on the Junior. And strapped on, it's far from balanced.

Listening to our reference Electromatic G5420T, there's an instant, unique Gretsch tonality: a combination of its shorter archtop-like sustain married to low output, clean pickups that avoid being over-sharp thanks to the hollow body, but still have a crystalline snap to the highs; a more bell-like mix; and a sort of hot single-coil neck voice. Switch to the G2420T and there's a big difference, not least in a reduced feedback threshold. There's a thicker, more generic sound, but still with some Gretschness, which for many players could be just as much an advantage as not. The master volume is very useful, especially on such a big guitar with a Bigsby. The arm of the Bigsby itself sits right above those standard controls, but it does mute the highs a little as you reduce it. Overall, it's a thicker,

hotter version of a 6120 that suits dirtier tones. The G2622's construction gives a different response and resonance and, with these pickups, moves further from the Gretsch sound. And while its construction gives it a more solid, or at least ES-335, character, it's a little more airy and less punchy with a softer, squashier tonality, for example, compared with a lower output Guild Newark St Starfire V. The Junior matches the G2622 for its inherent ring and resonance, albeit with slightly less bass end, which translates pretty much into what we hear amp'd: slightly more solid sounding, but still very much a semi.

Verdict

More guitar for less money will continue to be a theme this year. It will be interesting to see if any major brands manage to do it quite as well as Gretsch has done here. Construction is crisp, seen in the important

details of the neck, fingerboard and fretting. Centre blocks and lightness don't always go hand in hand, and yet here they do.

But are we really getting a half-price Gretsch? Yes and no. The beefier pickups certainly don't nail a classic Gretsch tonality – although if that's what you want, the full-size pickups are easy to replace – but they do broaden the sonic potential, especially for more gained styles, while staying close to the classic iconography. Either way, it's hard to be critical with those prices in mind. The deep hollowbody G2420T is hugely evocative and perfect for lower-volume older styles. The G2622 might well be the bargain 'ES-335' we've all been waiting for, and with the G2655, you'll find a solidbody-sized centre-blocked semi that might be the most 'solid' sounding of the trio but will handle virtually any style. If these are indicative of what we can expect for 2016, it could be quite a year. **G**



4. The G2655 has a downsized body, with small f-holes dating back to Gretsch's Baldwin era
5. A classic 6120-style headstock, but with no model range logo. No-one will know that you're playing a cheapie!
6. The centre block on the G2622 and G2655 differs from those used on the Pro and Electromatic ranges. It's spruce and effectively has a hollow centre (see above, centre): lightweight and resonant



4



GRETSCH G2420T
STREAMLINER
SINGLE CUTAWAY
HOLLOW BODY
WITH BIGSBY

PRICE: £395
ORIGIN: Indonesia
TYPE: Single-cutaway hollowbody electric
BODY: Laminated maple back, top and sides
NECK: Nato
SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")
NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/43.3mm
FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood, pearloid large-block inlays, 305mm (12") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Nickel-plated secured Adjusto-Matic bridge, Bigsby Licensed B60 vibrato, die-cast tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51mm
ELECTRICS: 2x Broad'Tron humbuckers, 3-position pickup selector toggle switch, master volume, master tone, 2x individual pickup volume controls
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.5/7.7
OPTIONS: The non-Bigsby version costs £350
RANGE OPTIONS: See G2622 and G2655T on review
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Gold Dust (as reviewed) and Flagstaff Sunset. Aged Brooklyn Burst (non-Bigsby only) at £350

8/10

PROS Build-to-price ratio is very high; hard to fault at this price. Its hotter pickups could broaden its sonic potential

CONS Slightly sponge-y tuners, thicker-than-Gretsch tonality



GRETSCH G2622
STREAMLINER
CENTER-BLOCK
DOUBLE CUTAWAY

PRICE: £350
ORIGIN: Indonesia
TYPE: Double-cutaway semi-solid electric
BODY: Laminated maple back, top and sides
NECK: Nato
SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")
NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/43.2mm
FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood, pearloid large-block inlays, 305mm (12") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Nickel-plated secured Adjusto-Matic bridge, Gretsch 'V' stud tailpiece, die-cast tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51mm
ELECTRICS: 2x Broad'Tron humbuckers, 3-position pickup selector toggle switch, master volume, master tone, 2x individual pickup volume controls
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.28/7.2
OPTIONS: The Bigsby version, in 2 colours, costs £395
RANGE OPTIONS: See G2420 and G2655 on review
LEFT-HANDERS: The G2622LH in Flagstaff Sunset (£395)
FINISHES: Walnut Stain (as reviewed), Flagstaff Sunset and Torino Green (Bigsby only) at £395

9/10

PROS Ditto the G2420T, but the centre block widens its use at higher gains/volumes

CONS The same faults as the G2420T; high-fret access isn't as good as an ES-335



GRETSCH G2655
STREAMLINER
CENTER-BLOCK
JUNIOR DOUBLE
CUTAWAY

PRICE: £350
ORIGIN: Indonesia
TYPE: Double-cutaway, downsized semi-solid electric
BODY: Laminated maple back, top and sides
NECK: Nato
SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")
NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/43.1mm
FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood, pearloid large-block inlays, 305mm (12") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Nickel-plated secured Adjusto-Matic bridge, Gretsch 'V' stud tailpiece, die-cast tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51mm
ELECTRICS: 2x Broad'Tron humbuckers, 3-position pickup selector toggle switch, master volume, master tone, 2x individual pickup volume controls
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.79/8.3
OPTIONS: The Bigsby version, in two colours, costs £395
RANGE OPTIONS: See G2420 and G2622 on review
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Flagstaff Sunset (as reviewed), Walnut Stain and Black (Bigsby only) at £395

7/10

PROS Just like the G2622, with a smaller body and more 'solid' tonality; best fingerboard access of all three models

CONS As the other models; plus terrible strapped-on balance

