



Words Jonathan Horsley / Photography Dilly Curtis

# DANELECTRO ROUND-UP

They are kinda weird, vintage rock 'n' rollers, with Lipstick singlecoils and Masonite builds, but don't underestimate the Dano's magic...



**O**l' Bill Shakespeare once famously wrote, "To thine own self be true." The meaning of this quote, as first spoken by Polonius to Laertes, has been debated endlessly, but perhaps someone at the Danelectro woodshop has fathomed it. Take a look at the Danelectro lineup of this or any other year and you would be hard pushed to find a manufacturer with a better sense of what it is all about, what its guitars should look like, how they should sound. This month's test is a three-way shoot-out between a 64XT doublecut with tremolo, a

sparkly 60th Anniversary DC59M and a 12-string shorthorn 59X12. Each sports a 'Coke bottle' headstock and a vibe that's 100 percent genuine retro Americana. Danelectro is often cursed with bad adjectives, such as 'quirky', which doesn't really work because it fails to take the Dano magic seriously enough. The Dano magic is important because it gets at something fundamental about the electric guitar. Maybe it's about being cool. It is definitely rock 'n' roll. These Danelectro electrics have that. They've got the vibe. "To thine own self be true." Couldn't have put it better, Bill. Now, Laertes, where'd we put that fuzz box...



Fun on the outside, serious on the inside with stage-ready tone and studio chops alike



# DANELECTRO DC59M NOS+

£529

Honk if you're shorthorny



## AT A GLANCE

- BODY:** Masonite with poplar frame
- NECK:** Maple, bolt-on
- FINGERBOARD:** Pau ferro
- FRETS:** 21
- SCALE:** 25"
- PICKUPS:** 2x Danelectro NOS+ Lipstick singlecoils (neck and bridge)
- CONTROLS:** 2x stacked volume and tone
- SWITCHING:** 3-position toggle
- HARDWARE:** Fully adjustable wraparound bridge, vintage-style tuners
- FINISH:** Deep Blue MetalFlake [as reviewed], Silver MetalFlake
- CONTACT:** danelectro.com/0113 286 5381

**T**he 60th Anniversary DC59M comes in a choice of silver or blue MetalFlake finishes, which might be too disco for some, even for birthday celebrations. But then those people could always plump for the DC59M NOS+, which comes in black to best serve their fantasy that they're actually Jimmy Page, the tune is *Kashmir*, and they're standing atop the stage in some Midwest enormodome. Whatever, it's all a matter of taste. Either way you'll get the famous Danelectro construction, Masonite on the top and bottom with inside frame that gives the DC59M a lightweight homemade feel.

When you pick it up and plug it in, it soon gets serious. This guitar might be fun with a price to match, but there are few rock 'n' roll contexts, professional, amateur or somewhere in between, where it doesn't make perfect sense.

This is ready for the studio or stage. There are a pair of NOS+ (New Old Stock) Lipstick singlecoil pickups in the bridge and neck positions that really nail vintage rock tone. They are pleasingly quiet, work well with some dynamic overdrive or fuzz, and are ultimately well balanced tonally, with solid lows, plenty of midrange punch and a real snap to the high end. The aluminium nut must help deliver some of that brightness.

There's a three-way selector and two stacked controls with the inner white control handling tone and the outer black control handling volume. It's a neat touch visually, but can get in the

way when playing, especially with the volume taper requiring a fairly wide turn of the knob for swells and so on. There's a noticeable spike in volume in the middle position, too. But these foibles are soon forgotten, such is the playing experience.

The maple neck is bolted onto the body with a blocky heel and yet is so svelte that it accommodates noodling anywhere on the fretboard. Tonally, this will handle blues, rock, grunge, country, punk... Dial in a little slapback tape echo, some spring reverb, and you've got rockabilly twang that's thicker than pomade. This is truly a rock 'n' roll machine.

## THE MAPLE NECK IS SO SVELTE THAT IT ACCOMMODATES NOODLING ANYWHERE ON THE FRETBOARD



# DANELECTRO 59X12

Jangle all the way

£649

Lose yourself in the psychedelic 12-string trip and that's before the pedals take effect



## AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** Chambered Masonite with centre block and spruce frame

**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on

**FINGERBOARD:** Pau ferro

**FRETS:** 21

**SCALE:** 24.5"

**PICKUPS:** 1x Danelectro Dual Lipstick humbucker (bridge), Danelectro vintage-style large housing singlecoil (neck)

**CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone with push-pull coil-tap for bridge pickup

**SWITCHING:** 3-position toggle

**HARDWARE:** Fully adjustable 12-string vintage-style tuners

**FINISH:** Blood Red [as reviewed], Vintage Cream

**CONTACT:** danelectro.com/  
0113 2865381



**T**ransplanting the 64XT's pickup and switching configuration to the Shorthorn doublecut body of the 59 models, the 59X12 has a reassuringly familiar setup, all the better for investigating its octave-forward 12-string voice. An electric 12-string is by its very nature a strange beast. In recent times we've seen Fender's Electric XII resurrected, complete with cartoon headstock and split-coils. The 59X12 offers something different. The bridge humbucker offers a thicker, punchier voice. As with all these Danos, there is plenty of treble, that brightness again enhanced by the aluminium nut.

You can be as fastidious as you like with the tuning and intonation and yet when you dig in there's that natural chorusing effect; when using with any sort of overdrive it is a heady mix. Shoegaze players would love layering

gain and some fuzz over the top and letting the harmonic overtones work their magic. On single-note rockabilly lines, the 59X12 sounds incredible with some slapback echo and reverb, the overtones contributing to the rumble, but it's when you've got this running clean and letting those notes collide and bleed into each other that it comes into its own. Engage the coil-tap and you can go full on Byrds jangle. You could lose hours messing around with that oversized neck singlecoil, and that's before engaging the pedalboard.

There's a psychedelic quality to electric 12-strings before adding effects, but stepping on an old

## YOU COULD LOSE HOURS MESSING AROUND WITH THAT OVERSIZED NECK SINGLECOIL

orange box phaser and you start to worry less about the odd bum note and more about that acid flashback taking hold. It can feel a little neck heavy; there is a lot of metal on that headstock, but again that Dano slimline bolt-on neck is so easy to get to grips with.

If we had other gripes it would be that the controls being a little hard to grip for engaging the coil-tap. But this is certainly no deal-breaker. At this price, the 59X12 presents good value, and it's seriously tempting to have it as an option to complement your six-strings. All studios should have one. All players should make its acquaintance at some point in their lives.



# DANELECTRO '64XT

£729

## 'Rite out of left field



### AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** Chambered Masonite with centre block and spruce frame

**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on

**FINGERBOARD:** Pau ferro

**FRETS:** 21

**SCALE:** 24.5"

**PICKUPS:** 1x Danelectro Dual Lipstick humbucker (bridge), Danelectro vintage-style large housing singlecoil (neck)

**CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone with push-pull coil-tap for bridge pickup

**SWITCHING:** 3-position toggle

**HARDWARE:** Wilkinson floating tremolo, vintage-style tuners

**FINISH:** 3-Tone Sunburst [as reviewed], Gloss Black

**CONTACT:** danelectro.com/  
0113 286 5381



Kick back and experiment with the wide range of tone on offer

**W**hen it is time for something completely different, it might well be time for Danelectro's '64XT. Rocking a sort of reverse doublecut Mosrite body shape, with a big oversized singlecoil offset at an angle in the neck position, and a double Lipstick humbucker in the bridge, the '64XT exists way outside the Strat/Tele/offset continuum.

It has a vintage pawnshop look, old-school tone, but in a sense it has the modern player in mind. This is a hugely tweakable, high-functioning electric dressed to look like an oddball. The coil-tap on the tone control offers a singlecoil voicing of the dual Lipstick humbucker, with all the lively mid-high twang that entails. In its natural humbucker mode, you'll find plenty of chewy attitude, not necessarily super-hot but with enough hair to get some gnarly breakup from

your amp. It partners overdrive well, loves fuzz, and if you like to play in the styles of Ron Asheton or Johnny Ramone you'll find all the power you need. But what of more subtle tones? That's where the tone controls and neck pickup comes into its own. The positioning might dull some of its brightness but with the tone control's taper offering a wide sweep you can get some really cool nasally tones when overdriven, and warm spangly cleans that work really well for blues and rock 'n' roll, inviting experimentation with time-based effects.

With a guitar that doesn't look like it fits in anywhere, that invitation is

open-ended for those players looking to take their sound into bold new directions. Roll back the treble and you can do jazz if that's your bag, too, and the neck, slim as per the DC59M, has all the zip you need for fast, note-heavy runs.

The Wilkinson tremolo is perhaps a little modern, where a vintage two-point version would have been more appropriate. It's not quite like watching *Happy Days* and seeing the Fonz wearing an Apple Watch but it's kind of anachronistic. It is, however, stable, well engineered, and offers plenty of wobble without throwing the whole shebang out of tune.

## THIS IS A HUGELY TWEAKABLE, HIGH-FUNCTIONING ELECTRIC DRESSED TO LOOK LIKE AN ODDBALL

# FINAL VERDICT

## Which Dano will you be grabbing by the shorthorns?

**W**e've got ubiquitous Coke bottle headstocks, Masonite builds and bolt-on maple necks with the most rudimentary of heel joints throughout. The South Korean factory has lost nothing in translation in bringing a real feel of American rock 'n' roll to the collection. How to choose? Well, first, there is an obvious outlier, the 59XT12. It is a specialist instrument, perhaps too weird for the majority of players to consider for their

number-one guitar. We love having an electric 12-string with both singlecoil and humbucker voicings in the bridge; allied to the neck pickup, there is a lot of room to play with. This setup suits the '64XT well, too. And this is the one if you are looking to cover all bases, if you're searching for a sound and need the thicker growl from humbucking pickups, and of course a tremolo. Danelectro say it's the best-sounding guitar they've got. Maybe. But it is hard to see past the 60th

Anniversary DC69M. The NOS+ pickups are incredible, with a voice that belies their size, and this is exactly the kind of guitar that does not hide anything from the player, the kind that makes you a player better – and it will handle rock of all ages. As with all Danelectro models, if you see one you like, grab it, because they often switch up their lineup. That's a bummer. But these are priced to facilitate impulse purchases, and with rock 'n' roll guitars it's always best to go with your gut.

**DANELECTRO DC59M NOS+**



**TOTAL Guitar**  
BEST ALL-ROUNDER

**TOTAL Guitar**  
BEST BUY AWARD

**DANELECTRO 59X12**



**TOTAL Guitar**  
BEST FOR 60S PSYCH

**DANELECTRO '64XT**



**TOTAL Guitar**  
BEST FOR ROCK

**TOTAL Guitar**  
BEST BUY AWARD

<b>SUMMARY</b>	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

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