

THE GAS STATION



90

# HARLEY BENTON SC-JUNIOR £177

More than the sum of its parts?

**S**ingle pickup guitars occupy a strange space; limited? Misunderstood? Well, they look certainly cool. There's something utilitarian, no-nonsense but self-assured and classic about a Junior.

The Gibson Les Paul Junior may have been designed as an entry-level model back in 1954, but it's won favour for good reasons. One P-90 pickup can do a surprising amount of things with the right tone and volume – and player, of course. There's no doubt that is where Harley Benton's SC-Junior is drawing its influence. And at a price to tempt even those who have hesitated to travel down One Pickup Avenue before. But

The neck profile is very much a slimmer C as opposed to a clubbier vintage 50s affair, and after a quick truss rod tweak we find the action surprisingly fast and springy in all the right places. We're pleased to see an angled neck heel for improved upper fret access and though we'd prefer a satin finish at the back of the neck for speed, that would be an easy fix with a couple of minutes, some care and 0000 ultra fine steel wire wool.

It's nice to see a combination wraparound bridge here, too, as, unlike the 'lightning' variety, the saddles allow you to intonate the individual strings. But there's a rub; the bridge profile and those saddles raise the strings a little too far above the Roswell (another Thomann

## ☞ A GOOD GUITAR BUILD THAT'S WORTH THE INVESTMENT ☜

how good can it be for £177?

Well, it's light. For a mahogany single cut guitar 6.8lbs is good news. And the general build standard here is testament to Harley Benton's Indonesian manufacturing. The exception is the fretboard dye merging with the black gloss finish at the top of one side. That 'board is amaranth (aka purpleheart) and it feels akin to ebony to our hands. Most importantly, the frets are polished and level with no sharp ends.

There's Vintage Sunburst and even a Silver Sparkle option in the SC-Junior range (the Thomann brand's double cut DC-Junior range offers even more spec choice) but there's something about the black / red tortoiseshell contrast here that has a punk rock vibe we love.

brand) P90D pickup for our liking. Nevertheless, it gives a good enough account of itself, even if we don't get to judge it at its clearest capacity.

It's a good introduction to a P-90 and shows off the resonance of this guitar, too – single notes sear with sustain, chord work can be beefy; but back off on the volume and it cleans up well.

There's room for upgrading here on a good guitar build that's worth that investment, but the remarkable out of the box value is undeniable. Bravo to Benton!

**Rob Laing**

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

### 1 FINISH AND SHAPE

Despite the influence of Gibson's Les Paul Junior here, the SC's upper horn is notably sharper. But even Epiphone don't currently offer a black single cut Junior... And an Ebony Gibson is £1300 street price.

### 2 TUNERS

For £179, Harley Benton could have cut corners on the tuners, and yet these 15:1 vintage tuners are Wilkinson's. Yes, we'd prefer off-white cream buttons but let's not punch a gifhorse in the mouth.

### 3 BRIDGE

Because you can't raise the dogear pickup itself out of the cavity (it's screwed down to the body), you can close some of the string to pickup distance in three pretty simple ways; make or buy a shim to go under it, upgrade the bridge and, easiest, raise the pickup pole pieces.

### AT A GLANCE

**ORIGIN:** Indonesia  
**TYPE:** 22-fret electric guitar  
**BODY:** Mahogany  
**NECK:** Mahogany (set)  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 628mm (24.72")  
**FRETBOARD:** Amaranth, 305mm (12") radius  
**FRETS:** 22, medium jumbo  
**NUT:** 43mm, graphite  
**PICKUPS:** Roswell P90D Alnico-5 dog ear single coil  
**CONTROLS:** 1x volume and 1x tone  
**HARDWARE:** WSC wrap around with adjustable saddles, Wilkinson vintage-style tuners with 15:1 gear ratio  
**LEFT-HANDED:** Yes (Vintage Sunburst only)  
**CASE:** No  
**FINISH:** Black (reviewed), Vintage Sunburst, Silver Sparkle  
**OPTIONS:** Harley Benton DC double cut available in standard and FAT interactions (latter has 50s neck profile and stacked P90D humbucker with coil split)  
**CONTACT:** Thomann [www.thomann.de](http://www.thomann.de)

