

FIRST PLAY



**CHARVEL PRO-MOD
DK24 HSH**
£939

WHAT IS IT? Just about the most perfect rock guitar you'll ever try



**CHARVEL PRO-MOD
DK24 HSS**
£939

WHAT IS IT? A modern day hot-rod with 80s roots

Rock Of Ages...

You should never judge a book by its cover, apparently. Meet two new high-spec 'shred machines' that prove that old adage is just as applicable to guitars

Words Ed Mitchell **Photography** Phil Barker

Everyone knows that old expression, 'we buy with our eyes'. To that end, some of you have probably already dismissed these new Charvel Pro-Mod DK24 guitars as 80s throwbacks or 'shred machines'. Just look at that one guitar's finish. It couldn't be any more orange. They might as well have called it 'Presidential Tan'. Well, before you write these guitars off as 'not for me' and turn the page, let's pick them apart like Quincy ME.

Aside from their respective finishes, not to mention the front pickups, our Mexico-born DK24 HSH and HSS are identical. Skipping down the spec sheets you'll find an offset 'Dinky' alder body at the nucleus of each guitar. Ribs and beer bellies alike are catered for with your classic Strat-style rear contouring. The front of the body is also sculpted for your right forearm. As you'd expect on guitars of this species, the







1. In place of the usual shred-friendly double-locking Floyd Rose vibrato is a Gotoh 510. This vibrato swings both ways in its body recess and comes paired with locking machineheads and a slippery Graph Tech top nut for excellent tuning stability

2. Both models here feature bolt-on necks, and you'll notice that the body and rear side of the treble cutaway is sculpted to provide even better access to those upper frets



bit where the neck bolts to the body is ergonomically profiled to assist upper-fret access. The rear of the treble side cutaway has also been sculpted to get your fingers where they need to be, fast.

The Satin Orange Crush DK24's HSH designation confirms we're dealing with a humbucker/single coil/humbucker format guitar. All pickups are proper American-made direct-mounted Seymour Duncans. Yes, they're screwed straight to the body. You get a SH-10B Full Shred humbucker in the bridge position, a SSL-6 Flat Strat single coil occupying the middle ground, and an APH-1N Alnico II Pro humbucker closest to the 24th fret. Our Primer Gray DK24 shares the same back and middle pickups as its citrus-hued amigo. It lives up to its HSS format, however, by replacing the humbucker with another SSL-6 Custom Flat Strat single coil at the neck. This SSL-6 is the hum-cancelling 'RWRP' (reverse wind, reverse polarity) version.

The 'caramelised' maple necks are a bit special... lighter yet stronger than regular maple

Both DK24s run their pickups through the same spec wiring loom. The knob that will likely see the most action is the speedy 500kohm EVH Bourns Low-Friction master volume. You also get a No-Load master tone and a five-way pickup selector blade switch.

These DK24s are supposed to be modern shred machines, so where's the obligatory double-locking Floyd Rose vibrato? Floating, of course. Well, our guitars feature a much simpler setup. The Gotoh Custom 510 six-saddle bridge is a modern take on the classic Strat 'Synchronized' vibrato. Poised on twin posts, it pivots above a body recess that allows it to swing both ways. The screw-in arm has its thread running through its insides. It mates with a screw in the 510's steel block providing a firm connection. You don't get that disconcerting wiggle you often experience in worn traditional threaded vibrato arms, or the infuriating ever-loosening screw-on sleeve you're stuck with on many licensed Floyds. The other end of the strings are secured to a set of Charvel-branded die-cast locking tuners. Further tuning stability is assured with a perfectly cut, and super slippery, Graph Tech TUSQ XL top nut.

Until now, we've held back on what makes these guitars a bit more special. You might have noticed the honey-tinged vibe of the bolt-on maple necks. Charvel refers to this

effect as 'caramelised'. You've probably seen this process described as 'roasted' on Fender Custom Shop Strat and Tele necks. Other manufacturers use terms such as 'baked', 'toasted' and, in the case of numerous acoustic guitars, 'torrified'. Caramelised maple is cooked in a kiln at over 300 degrees. The result is a timber that has much less moisture than regular maple, is lighter yet stronger, and resists changes in temperature and humidity. It also looks pretty.

While caramelised maple doesn't require a finish, Charvel has spec'd a thin hand-rubbed urethane coating. It makes this caramel treat extra sweet to play... not sticky. The cooking process also aims to make the necks stiffer. Again, Charvel has gone all belt and braces with a couple of graphite rods for additional reinforcement. The necks are two-piece thanks to the use of a 305 to 406mm (12- to 16-inch) radius

3. These DK24 models have a sculpted area on the rear bottom body bout that hosts the recessed Strat-style jack plate. This plate is angled upwards to direct your guitar cable over your strap or into a radio transmitter

4. Since Charvel is a member of the Fender family, you get that iconic Strat headstock on the DK24 models

maple cap. That explains the lack of a skunk stripe round the back. It reminds us of the necks on '68 and '69 Strats. The 648mm (25.5-inch) scale length accommodates 24 jumbo frets and a bunch of small dot inlays. The side markers are cut from something called Luminlay, which lights up when you're on a darkened stage.

Before we move on, we must doff our caps to the Strat headstock. It evokes the early days of modified Fenders and Eddie Van Halen's groundbreaking Frankenstein. Other manufacturers can't use this headstock, of course, but Charvel can 'cos it's 'one of the boys' and owned by Fender.

Feel & Sounds

These Charvels are obviously modern rock machines, so you would expect the necks to be more caramel wafer than caramel log. They are slim but not quite as insubstantial as, say, an Ibanez Wizard neck. Unless you're pathological about 50s baseball-bat necks, you should get on okay here.

While the recessed 510 vibrato returns to pitch flawlessly, it doesn't have quite the range of a Floyd. It will dump the strings on the pickups like a load of metal spaghetti, but there's less pull-back potential. It's a small price to pay for the stress-free string changing and intonation adjustment.



Before we continue, let's check in with the slightly unusual pickup switching. On the HSH, position 1 gives you the bridge pup on full power; position 2 is the Full Shred's inner coil and middle SSL-6 single coil; position 3 is the bridge and neck humbuckers' inner coils; position 4 is the neck's outer coil and the middle pickup; while position 5 voices the neck pickup in full humbucker mode. The HSS shares the same first two settings as the HSH, but the difference comes at position 3 where you get a combo deal on the bridge pickup's outer coil and the neck single coil, sort of Tele-like. Position 4 is the middle and neck, and position 5 is neck only.

As previously noted, a Seymour Duncan Full Shred 'bucker occupies the bridge position in both DK24s. This is described





These guitars are not quite as niche as they appear... they're not a million miles away from a Suhr Modern

by Duncan as a “bright, moderate-output rocker with a tight low-end, and scooped mids”. Output is ranked at 14kohms and that’s fuelled by the Alnico 5 magnets. It isn’t as brutal-sounding as the moniker suggests and actually reminds us of the iconic SH-4 JB, albeit with slightly lower output (the JB is 16.6k) and less midrange punch. The Full Shred holds its own through the gain scale from jangly clean to blues-rock and widdly metal. We especially like the tonal right hook it brings to bottom-string riffs.

The overwound middle position SSL-6 Custom Flat Strat comes in at 13.3k. The flat magnet format is designed for guitars with an equally flat fingerboard radius. On both guitars, this pickup is punchy and beautifully defined and we like how it interacts with the bridge pickup in coil-split mode. You get that glassy *Little Wing* thing many of us can’t get enough of. The HSH’s neck-position Alnico Pro-II comes loaded with Alnico 2 magnets and a 7.5k output



for more of a vintage delivery. Its warmer tone sounds great for jazzy stuff and blues noodling when you kick in some overdrive.

The DK24 HSS pairs the middle SSL-6 with a neck-loaded RWRP example that’s hum-cancelling when both pups are running in cahoots. While we like the clarity punching its way out of the neck SSL-6 single coil, we prefer the fat warmth of the Alnico Pro-II. The latter pickup splits when used in conjunction with the middle pup, so you get a fairly similar sweet single/single tone on both DKs.

5. The DK24 HSH and HSS offer different pickup formats. The HSH comes loaded with three Seymour Duncans: a SH-10B Custom Full Shred humbucker (bridge), SSL-6 Custom Flat Strat single coil (middle), and a APH-1N Alnico II Pro humbucker at the neck

6. Both of our DK24 models feature caramelised maple necks. Also known as roasted maple, the wood is cooked in a kiln to make it lighter yet stronger. It also resists changes in temperature and humidity and gives it a tasty honey-like tinge



7

Verdict

Some of you might find it hard to see beyond the lairy finishes and Charvel's widdly backstory. That's a shame, because these guitars are not quite as niche as they appear. The beautiful caramelised necks are fast without being too thin; the bodies are lightweight and balance beautifully on a strap. Then there's the Gotoh 510 vibrato that offers almost all the performance of a locking Floyd without faffing around with Allen keys. Tuning stability is excellent on both guitars.

We can't conclude without mentioning that their build quality and attention to detail places these DK24s above much of the competition. We would like to have seen a case or gigbag included in the price, but at a touch under a grand, these guitars still offer excellent value for money.

"It's still a shred guitar," we hear you cry. Actually, spec-wise, the DK24s aren't a million miles away from something like a Suhr Modern. Okay, the HSH model's eye-popping rind might alienate some. Deserters can enlist the cool Matt Army Drab finish option instead.

The message? Give them a chance. Who knows? Once you get a grip of those caramel-coloured necks, you might not be so toffee-nosed about what we reckon are a couple of modern classics. **G**

7. The HSS shares the same bridge and neck pickups as the HSH. The difference here is the additional neck-mounted SSL-6 single coil. This version is the RWRP model that hum-cancels when used in conjunction with another pickup



CHARVEL PRO-MOD DK24 HSH

PRICE: £939
ORIGIN: Mexico
TYPE: Offset solidbody electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: 2-piece caramelised maple with hand rubbed urethane finish and graphite reinforcement, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech TUSQ XL/42.86mm
FINGERBOARD: Caramelised maple with small dot inlays, 305-406mm (12-16") radius
FRETS: 24, jumbo
HARDWARE: Chrome Gotoh Custom 510 6-saddle floating bridge with screw-in arm, Charvel die-cast locking tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 53mm
ELECTRICS: Direct-mount Seymour Duncan SH-10B Custom Full Shred humbucker (bridge), SSL-6 Custom Flat Strat single coil (middle), APH-1N Alnico II Pro 'bucker (neck), 500k EVH Bourns Low-Friction master volume, No-Load master tone, 5-way pickup selector lever switch
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.5/7.12
OPTIONS: Hard case (£108.99); padded gigbag (£43.99)
RANGE OPTIONS: Pro Mods with Floyd Rose vibratos: DK24 HH FR twin-humbucker with alder body and quilted maple top (£949); DK24 HH FR twin-humbucker with alder body (£889); DK24 HH FR twin-humbucker with okoume body (£889)
LEFT HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Satin Orange Crush (as reviewed), Matt Army Drab



PROS A machine stripped down to its absolute basics; awesome playability and tone make the HSH irresistible

CONS Something to carry it around in would have been nice



CHARVEL PRO-MOD DK24 HSS

PRICE: £939
ORIGIN: Mexico
TYPE: Offset solidbody electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: 2-piece caramelised maple with hand rubbed urethane finish and graphite reinforcement, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech TUSQ XL/42.86mm
FINGERBOARD: Caramelised maple with small dot inlays, 305-406mm (12-16") radius
FRETS: 24, jumbo
HARDWARE: Chrome Gotoh Custom 510 6-saddle floating bridge with screw-in arm, Charvel die-cast locking tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 53mm
ELECTRICS: Direct-mount Seymour Duncan SH-10B Custom Full Shred humbucker (bridge), SSL-6 Custom Flat Strat single coil (middle), SSL-6 Custom Flat Strat RWRP single coil (neck), 500k EVH Bourns Low-Friction master volume, No-Load master tone, 5-way pickup selector lever switch
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.4/7.9
OPTIONS: As Pro-Mod DK24 HSH
RANGE OPTIONS: See HSH. There are two Pro-Mod DK24 hardtails: HH HT twin-humbucker with alder body and quilted maple top, and with ash body (both £889)
LEFT HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Primer Gray (as reviewed), Satin Shell Pink



PROS Beautifully realised and way more versatile than you might expect; think you don't like rock guitars – get a load of this

CONS Again, the only niggle is the missing case

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