

Words: Dave Burrluck Photography: Joby Sessions

GRETSCH STREAMLINER ROUND-UP

Fancy a classic Gretsch but can't afford one? Well, with the new Streamliner range, now most definitely can!





FEW guitars get the ol' ticker racing as much as a Gretsch.

Virtually any music genre – bar ultra-gained metal – has been played on the firm's hollowbodies and semis. The trouble is, if you want a full-blown Professional Series model it'll cost you well into four figures, while even the Korean-made Electromatics, as good as they are, are still pushing £600 to £700. Thankfully, the nice chaps at Gretsch have come up with an answer: a mini-range of new Streamliner guitars that – including Bigsby – come in under £400. Rock this town, indeed!

Firstly, the new Streamliner range – the name, like the Electromatic, comes from an old Gretsch guitar, the precursor to the classic 6120 – is made in Indonesia, just like Yamaha's fab new Revstar guitars (see review in TG275), PRS's SE Standards... and quite a few more! There are three models: the large 16-inch-wide hollowbody G2420 and two centre-blocked double-cuts: the 16-inch wide G2622 and the downsized Junior version, the G2655. Each is available with Bigsby (in two colour options) or with a hardtail bridge and tailpiece, while lefties can get in on the fun with a southpaw version of the G2622.

Few guitars get the ol' ticker racing as much as a Gretsch



GRETSCH G2420T SINGLE CUTAWAY HOLLOW BODY WITH BIGSBY **£395**

A big ol' single-cut hollowbody that apes a Gretsch icon

AIN'T this just the coolest guitar? Based on the classic Gretsch 6120, it's a large single-cut hollowbody with Bigsby and Gretsch features aplenty. And with no badge on the headstock, unlike an Electromatic, nobody will know you're playing a cheapie. And neither will you: the slightly flat-backed three-piece neck is modern and ultra playable – well, not up the dusty end, perhaps – and although the frets feel smaller than 'medium jumbo', it plays beautifully. As with any vibrato-equipped guitar, it needs a little TLC to stay in tune and the tuners feel a little sponge-y... but it's a £400 guitar!

The sound from the new Broad'Tron humbuckers – developed for the range – is like a thicker, hotter version of Gretsch's hallmark tonality. Compared with an Electromatic G5420T, you hear a big difference – try it and see.

This is a deep hollow-bodied guitar, so feedback might well be an issue, and unlike that Electromatic G5420T, there's no post under the bridge connecting top to back. At high volumes it's a bit lively! But add Bigsby shimmer and you have an old-school beauty that excels at retro styles or howling feedbacked soundscapes: you choose. Either way you'll look – and sound – cool as...





GRETSCH G2622 CENTER-BLOCK DOUBLE CUTAWAY **£350**



A semi with a hollow centre-block? We're intrigued...

GRETSCH moved to a double-cut outline in the early 60s, but didn't add a centre-block until 2013. Centre-blocked semis can be weighty birds, not least because of a solid mahogany or maple block. But here, Gretsch has come up with an answer: a lightweight spruce centre-block that effectively has solid sides – onto which the hardware is mounted – but is hollow in the middle.

It means this semi is actually lighter than the Bigsby-toting hollow G2420T. A downside is that although it's very balanced played seated on a strap, it's a tad neck-heavy. So, aside from that centre block, a reduced 'thinline' body depth and, of course, those two

flattened horns, the G2622 is a dead ringer for the G2420T in terms of its neck, parts and pickups. But the centre-block not only raises the feedback threshold, it also adds a slightly firmer, more solidbody voice. It's less Gretsch-y, and with these thicker, hotter pickups chases a more classic ES-335 voice – but perhaps without the clout of the heavier solid centre-block.

That said, turn the pickup volumes down a bit, clean up your amp tone and you'll find janglier, more Gretsch-y territory. Turn the wick back up and you've gone from Beatles to Cream in a nanosecond. Hugely versatile, it's probably the best bargain 'ES-335' money can buy. Join the queue!

GRETSCH G2655 CENTER-BLOCK JUNIOR DOUBLE CUTAWAY **£350**

A down-sized semi for those who don't like big bouts...

OKAY, take that G2622, give it the Ant-Man treatment and, hey presto, you have this G2655 Junior that, at just over 13 inches across its lower bouts, is pretty much solidbody-sized. It's a unique shape to the Gretsch range, but one we reckon might be a bit Marmite: with its full-size neck and parts, it does look a bit, erm, unbalanced. And while the smaller body makes for a really comfy sofa axe, or a perfect home recording guitar compared with the bigger models, strapped on, it really is unbalanced, so you'll need to level it with your forearm.

Don't forget, with both this and the G2622, if you don't want one with this new-design 'V' tailpiece, there are two options with a horseshoe-style Bigsby B50 that, with its added weight, might well improve the strapped-on balance.

Another hook could be the fact that one of those vibrato options is the only Streamliner currently available in the traditionally Gretsch black, which matches the acrylic knobs with their black-painted bases, unlike the gold-coloured knobs of the other guitars.

But if you're okay with the looks, this is quite a guitar. It has the best high-fret access, the highest feedback threshold and is the most solidbody-sounding of the trio, although it still has plenty of semi-solid 'bloom' and character. Like the G2622, and of course with the same controls, it's just as versatile, and while it does the strummy, jangly thing near-perfectly, it really excels at more gained or fuzzed-out tones. We suspect this might well be the choice for the at-home player or home recordist. Looks aside, it's a lot of guitar for the money. >>>



VERDICT

GRETSCH HAS picked up the affordable ball and smashed it right out of the park! If you want a proper Gretsch-brand hollowbody or semi, you don't have to put up with copies with the wrong name on the headstock any more. This trio are quite possibly the bargains of 2016 and we're only just into the new

year. Fit, finish, sound and playability are all way above what you'd expect at these prices – far from being half as good as the Electromatics; nearly as good but half the price would be a better summary. Your only problem is choosing which one of the range you want to buy!

GRETSCH G2420T STREAMLINER SINGLE CUTAWAY HOLLOW BODY WITH BIGSBY £395

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Laminated maple
NECK: Nato
SCALE: 629mm (24.75")
FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
PICKUPS: 2x Broad'Tron humbuckers
CONTROLS: 3-position pickup selector toggle switch, master volume, master tone, 2x individual pickup volumes
HARDWARE: Nickel-plated secured Adjusto-Matic bridge, Bigsby Licensed B60 vibrato, die-cast tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Gold Dust (as reviewed), Flagstaff Sunset; Aged Brooklyn Burst (non-Bigsby only at £350)
CONTACT: Fender GB | 01342 331700 | www.gretschguitars.com



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

GRETSCH G2622 STREAMLINER CENTER-BLOCK DOUBLE CUTAWAY £350

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Laminated maple w/ spruce centre-block
NECK: Nato
SCALE: 629mm (24.75")
FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
PICKUPS: 2x Broad'Tron humbuckers
CONTROLS: 3-position pickup selector toggle switch, master volume, master tone, 2x individual pickup volumes
HARDWARE: Nickel-plated secured Adjusto-Matic bridge, Gretsch 'V' stud tailpiece, die-cast tuners
LEFT-HANDED: G2622LH in Flagstaff Sunset (£395)
FINISH: Walnut Stain (as reviewed); Flagstaff Sunset and Torino Green (Bigsby only at £395)



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

GRETSCH G2655 STREAMLINER CENTER-BLOCK JUNIOR DOUBLE CUTAWAY £350

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Laminated maple w/ spruce centre-block
NECK: Nato
SCALE: 629mm (24.75")
FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
PICKUPS: 2x Broad'Tron humbuckers
CONTROLS: 3-position pickup selector toggle switch, master volume, master tone, 2x individual pickup volumes
HARDWARE: Nickel-plated secured Adjusto-Matic bridge, Gretsch 'V' stud tailpiece, die-cast tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Flagstaff Sunset (as reviewed); Walnut Stain and Black (Bigsby only at £395)



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