

GEAR

REVIEW

STERLING STINGRAY SR50



STERLING BY MUSIC MAN

STINGRAY SR50 £499

Leo's post-Fender bass gets the six-string treatment

THE StingRay bass has a modern tone and slick playability that sets it apart from Leo Fender's other great bass designs – the Precision and Jazz. You can tell a StingRay fan; they have thumbs like a lump hammer.

The original StingRay guitar had less of an impact, but at the time it was still a unique beast, with double-cut body, five-way pickup switch, six-in-line headstock and the dual humbuckers. As with the G&L guitars that Leo went on to design, it sought to evolve Leo's most famous creation, but perhaps was always destined to live slightly off to the left of the Strat's centre.

Music Man reissued the StingRay guitar earlier this year, but this Sterling version shaves a

to those top frets. It's attached to the body with a five-bolt fitting, and the truss rod is helpfully adjustable from a thumbwheel: no taking the neck off here. We're also impressed with the vibrato, which holds it together for everything from gentle wobbles to full-on depressions. We just can't knock this bad boy out of tune!

Tonally, you get two Ernie Ball Music Man humbuckers, which the firm describes as 'creamy'. We found the neck humbucker to be a bit heavy on the low-end, which becomes more apparent when you add overdrive. A quick cut to our Vox's bass control (and a tweak to the treble) control fixes this, though, bringing back some of the lost note separation and clarity.

It certainly delivers the goods for classic rock and blues

grand off the price tag. Not that you'd really know it – out of the box it's clear that this is a guitar that means business, starting with the weight. At 3.75kg, it's a hefty slab of mahogany. The finishing is near-perfect throughout, with the blemish-free Three-Tone Sunburst and chrome hardware combining for a classy look. The only slight disappointment is around the back – the pickup selector cavity is covered with a matching red tortoiseshell cap, but it's mounted on top of the body, rather than flush against it. It's a small detail, but it'll bother perfectionists.

The playability of the StingRay more than makes up for this, though; the satin-finish neck is a comfortable modern U shape, slightly flatter-feeling than the more rounded C-shapes you'll find on most Strats. Not better, per se, just different, while the heel gives those who venture to the unpaid end of the neck unhindered access

The bridge position pickup, meanwhile, is a great all-rounder of a humbucker. All midrange and punch, it's a full-sounding, solid pickup that may not be dripping with character, certainly delivers the goods for classic rock and blues sounds.

The StingRay fuses the comfort of a double-cut body with the girth of a dual-humbucker guitar, and it does it fantastically. Sterling will always be a leftfield choice when it comes to choosing a guitar of this kind, but if you're keen to straddle the gap between Fender and Gibson's classic appointments, this is a great place to look.

Stuart Williams

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

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: Maple
SCALE: 648mm (25.5")
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 22
PICKUPS: 2x Music Man Spec humbuckers
CONTROLS: 1x volume, 1x tone 3-way pickup selector
HARDWARE: Chrome
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: 3-Tone Sunburst (as reviewed), Black
CONTACT: Strings & Things
 01273 440442
www.sterlingbymusicman.com

SPEC

WITH its mahogany body and dual humbuckers, plus the double-cut outline, vibrato and 25.5" scale, the StingRay walks the line between the best of Gibson and Fender combined

BODY

THAT'S a solid slab of African mahogany, and it weighs about 3.75kg. You might want to hit the gym if you're planning on spending a long time stood up playing this!

PICKUPS

TWO Music Man humbuckers give you some fat blues and rock sounds. The neck is slightly muddy, and picky pluckers might scream for a coil-tap, but we love the bridge pickup

