

**VS**

Words: Ed Mitchell
Photography: Jesse Wild

DANELECTRO 'WILD THING' VS SQUIER VINTAGE MODIFIED SURF STRATOCASTER

It's time to get your feet wet with a pair of old-school surfin' classics



THAT bit in Pulp Fiction where Tim Roth shouts, "Everybody be cool, this is a robbery" before King of the surf guitar Dick Dale's pulverising intro to *Misirlou* blasts off, turned countless guitarists into reverb junkies overnight. Suddenly, everyone was digging surf music again, a glorious explosion of instrumental rock that gripped American kids in the early 60s. The surf scene was all Californian sun, sea, sand and teasing the beach bunnies with your well-polished Woodie. That's a type of car in case you were wondering.

The classic sound of surf is a singlecoil-loaded Fender Stratocaster, Jaguar or Jazzmaster running

through a sopping wet reverb. That sound drives surf classics like *Pipeline* by The Chantays and *Walk, Don't Run* by The Ventures. The Squier Vintage Modified Surf Stratocaster (£334) in our Head To Head represents every teen's dream guitar in the early 60s. The sleek body, Motor City-influenced paint job and old-school vibrato unit are just the most, daddios. The kids whose parents couldn't afford a Fender got a Danelectro with a spec sheet spookily similar to our new 'Wild Thing' reissue (£379). Now, these two sons of beaches are available for almost the same handful of clams. Only one can be crowned king of the surf; the other just might get sand kicked in its face. Let's rumble.

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DANELECTRO 'WILD THING'

£379

Jimmy Page's favourite bargain basement brand gets a new twist

THE bonkers-looking 'Wild Thing' is a reissue of a prototype 'Swept Wing' Dano of the 60s. Aside from its crazy body horns, this is a classic Dano with a semi-hollow body formed from a pair of Masonite sheets mounted on a plywood frame. The 'U'-profile neck has a chunky feel but playability is the business thanks to the 14-inch fingerboard radius (that's seriously flat like a modern metal guitar) and 21 beautifully finished medium jumbo frets. The classic Dano vibe is further nailed with the iconic 'Coke bottle' headstock, one-piece rosewood bridge saddle and vinyl body tape. We should point out that if this model's looks leave you cold you'll probably warm to the other more sober-looking Dano guitars in the range, which have the same feel and tonal range.

In true classic Dano style, this Thing has a couple of lipstick pickups wired to dual-concentric volume and tone controls. The larger disc on the bottom is the volume control; the little knob on the top is the tone. You will get them mixed up. Everybody does. You'll get the hang of it. Danelectro guitars were never really a hit with the original surf set basically because they were seen as fodder for beginners. That doesn't mean you can't get a great surf sound out of those lipstick tube pickups. On the clean channel, with oodles of reverb, the bridge unit comes over like a fat Strat singlecoil.

It jingles and a jangles beautifully yet barks a bit when you start viciously tremolo-picking the strings, Dick Dale-style. The neck pickup dials in some warmth while maintaining plenty of definition thanks to its positioning, which is closer to the bridge than you find on other guitars. Of course, as any Dano disciple will tell you the best click on the three-way toggle switch is the middle position. Danelectro pickups are wired in series. Selecting both units

unleashes a slab of musical beef that never gets dull. You'll have to try one out to see what we mean.

Danelectro guitars came into their own when surf went tits up around 1964 and garage rock took over. Lipstick pickups sound incredible when combined with a proper Germanium transistor-driven fuzz box. Guys like Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page thought so too when they picked up Danos in the late 60s. Classic rock, pop, indie, rock 'n' roll, rockabilly, garage rock, punk – the Danelectro 'Wild Thing' can do it all. When it comes to surf, though, we reckon only a Fender guitar will do. So, while we

think we love the 'Wild Thing', we definitely need to know for sure. It's time to give the Squier Surf Stratocaster a good going over.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Laminate wood frame with ply top and back

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, with dot inlays

FRETS: 21 medium jumbo

SCALE: 25"

PICKUPS: 2x Lipstick singlecoils

CONTROLS: 2x stacked dual-concentric volume and tone, three-way pickup selector toggle switch

HARDWARE: Nickel satin

LEFT-HANDED: No

FINISH: Candy Apple Blue (shown), Candy Apple Red, Black

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Skewes 01132 865381
www.danelectro.com

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



Dano's distinctive 'Coke bottle' headstock...

SQUIER VINTAGE MODIFIED SURF STRAT

A 60s cutie is dressed up with a bit of lipstick **£334**
for surf and retro aficionados

THE Squier Vintage Modified is a surf guitar player's wet dream. The guitar's beautiful looks make a mockery of its miniscule price tag. Only an early 60s-style matching headstock could improve on how this guitar looks. Picking it up, it's immediately obvious just how good Squier guitars are getting. Having played one of the Chinese-made Fender Modern Player Strats, we have to say that the Squier

feels almost identical. You'd have to compare them for yourself to see if having the Fender nametag is worth the extra dough. As it is, only a few squinty screws in its scratchplate betray the Squier's budget origins.

There's not much you can say about a Strat that hasn't already been repeated a million times.

We'll have a go, of course. This one has a basswood body in place of the classic alder, poplar or ash that you expect to see on more expensive models. The bolt-on maple neck fills the palm nicely and it has an old-school gloss finish. 22 medium jumbo frets and a modern 9½-inch fingerboard radius make fretting chords and bending strings easy as pie. The original 'synchronized' vibrato wobbles nicely and returns to pitch more often than not.

The three (Seymour) Duncan Designed lipstick pickups are an obvious rip-off from the Danelectro school of guitar building. They look so good on this guitar that we can't stay mad at it for long. The love grows

when you plug the thing in. While the bridge pickup has a pleasing bite about it, just the thing for tremolo-propelled savagery, we actually prefer the middle pickup's punchy warmth for surf licks.

It works so well with reverb that we just can't bring ourselves to flick the switch to another position. Whack out an open E minor chord and wiggle that vibrato arm and you'll be in retro heaven.

The Surf Strat can raise hell, too. It's as happy dealing with gain

as the Dano but the former guitar has a much smoother response. The Squier is a great blues guitar. The neck pickup is the business for Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan licks. If you close your eyes you'd never know this was a budget instrument. Its tonal quality is really that great.

The Dano 'Wild Thing' is a fantastic guitar in every way. It scores the biggest points for playability and that middle position tone. That said, we came to

surf and a custom colour, vibrato-loaded Stratocaster is the ultimate surf guitar. Pimping one with a set of lipstick pickups makes this guitar even more ridiculously desirable. Look around and you'll bag one of these fine bunnies for little more than 250 clams. Run. Don't walk.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Basswood
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, with dot inlays
FRETS: 22 medium jumbo
SCALE: 25 1/2"
PICKUPS: 3x Duncan-Designed LS-102 singlecoils
CONTROLS: Master volume, 2x tones, five-way pickup selector blade switch
HARDWARE: Chrome
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Surf Green (shown), Candy Apple Red, Sonic Blue
Fender GBI 01342 331700
www.fender.com

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...and those familiar
Squier tuning pegs