



# GRETSCH G5410T £809 ELECTROMATIC 'RAT ROD'

## A stripped-down hollowbody boasting plenty of attitude and authentic tones

**G**retsch Guitars and classic American cars are often mentioned in the same breath simply because both are emblematic of the 1950s, and similarities can be drawn between models such as the White Falcon, introduced in 1954, and a machine like a 1955 Ford Thunderbird. Both offer sleek lines and more chrome and gold than should be legal, and you're guaranteed to turn heads if seen driving either; some hard-tailed Falcons even feature what is called a Cadillac tailpiece.

That line of connection is maintained by the vibe surrounding this new and pared-back Electromatic

from maple laminate and, internally, it features soundpost bracing that provides a single point of contact between the guitar's top and back. A new feature, and one that we applaud, is that the Rat Rod's body is slightly thinner than usual – 58.5mm (2.25 inches) in depth at the edge rather than the 65mm (2.56 inches) of an Electromatic 5120. This puts it somewhere between a Gibson ES-335 and a full-sized Gretsch, and although the difference in dimensions may seem modest, it certainly does make the guitar easier to get to grips with in practical terms, especially if you're unaccustomed to hugging a big hollowbody.

## JAZZ, COUNTRY AND EVEN PUNK CAN BE TACKLED ACCORDINGLY

hollowbody. According to Gretsch, a Rat Rod "is part of Hot Rod culture – a stripped back, low-down and dirty Hot Rod with a rough primer finish designed for performance, not looks." Compared to other available models the streamlined spec sheet does show a level of restraint, but that's not say that corners have been cut in order to meet the requirements of the concept.

The first thing you notice when picking the guitar up is the matte finish that extends across the entire body and up the back of the neck to the headstock. It immediately underlines the Rat Rod primer vibe and our example is bound in black; examples with a black or phantom metallic finish feature white binding. Based on the classic Nashville singlecut the back, sides and top are all made

The pickup array has been overhauled, too. Gone are the 'Gretschbuckers' that graced some Electromatic hollowbodies and have been replaced by proper blacktop Filter'Trons, although here the black has been replaced by striking red inserts that mimic the red wheels of a Rat Rod car. Electronics comprise a volume pot for each pickup, plus a three-way toggle, a master tone and a master volume. The latter is fitted with a treble bleed circuit that ensures your tone is retained and doesn't become muddy when lowering the volume, a vital addition when using the control to alter not only the output of your signal but the level of amp overdrive, too.

We're happy to report that it works like a charm and with even a dirty blues level of amp gain you can turn the guitar's master

**1 PICKUPS**  
The red inserts under the polepieces of the otherwise standard blacktop Filter'Trons are in keeping with the Rat Rod vibe. They're purely cosmetic and Gretsch make no apologies about that.

**2 MASTER VOLUME**  
The MV pot is fitted with a treble bleed circuit that compensates for the loss of high end when the volume is rolled down. It works perfectly, too.

**3 NUT**  
The Graph Tech NuBone nut mimics the tone and feel of materials such as ivory and bone without the built-in need to slaughter an elephant.

### AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** Laminted maple

**NECK:** Maple

**SCALE:** 24.6 inches (625mm)

**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood, 12 inch radius, standard 'U' shape, Neo-Classic thumbnail inlays, 42.5mm Graph Tech NuBone nut

**FRETS:** 22 medium jumbo

**PICKUPS:** Blacktop Filter'Tron humbuckers with red inserts

**CONTROLS:** Three-way toggle pickup selector switch, volume pot for each pickup, plus master volume with Treble Bleed circuit and master tone, all with G-Arrow knobs

**HARDWARE:** Bigsby B60 licensed tailpiece, Adjusto-matic rosewood/chrome bridge array, vintage-style open back tuners,

**LEFT-HANDED:** No

**FINISH:** Matte Vintage White (as reviewed), Matte Black, Matte Phantom Metallic

**WEBSITE:** [www.gretschguitars.com](http://www.gretschguitars.com)







## Twang Thang

The enduring legacy of the Bigsby vibrato

**T**his ingenious tailpiece, designed by Californian Paul Bigsby back in the 1940s, is the forerunner of all modern tremolo systems. In a nutshell, it operates by balancing the tension of the strings, which are secured around a bar that forms part of the array, with a spring that's sited in a socket just under the arm itself and, when the arm is depressed, it provides a subtle detuning of the strings that can give an unmistakable shimmer and wobble. The intro to Duane Eddy's *Peter Gunn* is the ideal demo of what a Bigsby can do, and its popularity has endured simply because nothing else sounds quite like it.

volume down to clean up the sound without any discernible loss of clarity or high end. The good news is that treble bleed kits, comprising just a .001uF Orange Drop capacitor and a single 150K resistor, are widely available and very affordable. You might find you'll never go back.

Gretsches can be a real bind to keep in tune, and where some models are fitted with bridges like the rocking bar or those with wheel saddles to remedy the negative influence of friction, the Rat Rod keeps things simpler with a tune-o-matic resting on



a rosewood base. However, the guitar is strung out of the box with a set of 11-49s and, together with a new Graph Tech NuBone nut and a commendable factory set-up, we found that everything remained stable for the most part. The Bigsby wobble stick makes all the right noises and as long as you use it with care, you can shimmer and vibrate to your heart's content.

Depending on the pickup selection, the Rat Rod is warm and fat or snappy and cutting, and the gamut of associated styles – jazz, country, rockabilly, surf and even punk – can be tackled convincingly.

We're impressed! There are plenty of more ornate models out there to try, but if you're maybe looking for your first proper Gretsch and fancy something at a fair price that not only looks a little different but also sounds truly authentic, the Rat Rod could well be for you.

*Simon Bradley*

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

## ALSO TRY...

### EPIPHONE WILDKAT

£439

With a slightly smaller mahogany body, dual dogear Classic P-90 pickups and a flat-mounted B-70 Bigsby, this kitty's focussed low end and cool vibe give it real bite.



### IBANEZ ARTCORE AFS75T

£499

The Artcore certainly has one foot in the jazz camp, but the addition of two Classic Elite HBs allows it to flex its tonal muscles in a variety of genres.



### REVEREND CLUB KING 290

£879

With a routed Korina body, a spruce top and two custom P-90s, we're talking a classic vibe in a wholly modern and tonesome package. They look great too.

