

GEAR REVIEW
GUILD BLUESBIRD



GUILD NEWARK ST BLUESBIRD £875

Guild continues its phoenix-like revival with a modern single-cut that's worthy of a whistle or two

SINCE the 2013 reboot of Guild's electric series with the launch of the Newark St Collection, we've seen the return of numerous models that first appeared in the 50s and 60s, not least the Starfires.

One guitar in the modern range that you might have missed looks like a Les Paul but with a slightly bigger body: the M-75 Aristocrat. This new version is actually a pretty close repro of Guild's original Aristocrat, introduced back in 1954. Despite its looks it was a hollowbody, a down-sized archtop with a sealed top that was described by Guild as a "light weight, semi-solid midget model... in a class by itself."

The midget description is where the 'M' of its name originated and it lasted in the Guild line until 1963.

This is a lighter weight single-cut with typical Guild class

Four years later it reappeared as just the M-75 before it was renamed the Bluesbird M-75 in 1968, its new name reflecting the Aristocrat's use by blues players. It lasted until 1972, two years after Guild had introduced a proper solidbody version. Over a decade later, in 1985, Guild returned – slightly – to that original hollow version with a semi-solid, more Les Paul-looking sealed-body electric, the Nightbird.

So what became of the Bluesbird, you ask? Guild, which was purchased by Fender in 1995, reintroduced the Bluesbird – modelled seemingly on the Nightbird rather than the original M-75 shape – as a USA-made high-end model in the late 90s. It was joined by more affordable versions in the DeArmond by Guild line, which were made in Korea. These

didn't last long and all too soon the Guild electric range disappeared... until their reappearance in 2013, of course!

As we've reported previously, Guild was sold again in 2014, this time to Cordoba. And although it's early days, the new owners seem intent on giving the name a proper home and have continued and expanded the electric line – along with introducing new acoustic ranges, including the long-awaited return of the USA-made higher-end acoustic classics.

So, while the majority of the new electrics so far have all been based of historic models, this new Bluesbird is a bit of a departure that in essence takes that late-90s model Bluesbird construction but retains the shape of the original 'bird.

As you can see, it retains Guild's classic 'centre raised', or 'domed' headstock and that distinct Chesterfield logo, but aside from those transparent ribbed control knobs it's a more modern affair. Its back is mahogany, routed out to leave an ES-335-like centre block, which is then topped with a carved maple top that here is faced with a figured maple veneer (it's also available in Jet Black). Its slightly wider body with its rounded horn and the lightweight build counters what some of us don't like about the Les Paul: its weight and small size. But the Bluesbird retains what we love about that Gibson classic: its scale length and easy bendability, the dual humbuckers/four-control electronics set-up not to mention its adjustable bridge and stud tailpiece, which here are by Tone Pros.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Chambered mahogany w/ carved maple top
NECK: Mahogany, glued-in
SCALE: 629mm (24.75")
FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood
FRETS: 22
PICKUPS: 1x Seymour Duncan JB SH-4 (bridge), 1x Seymour Duncan '59 Neck SH-1 (neck)
CONTROLS: 3-position pickup selector toggle switch, individual pickup volume and tone controls (with pull/push coil-splits)
HARDWARE: Nickel-plated Tone Pros NVR2 Locking tune-o-matic with stud tailpiece; Grover Sta-Tite open-backed tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Ice Tea Burst (as reviewed), Jet Black
CONTACT: Selectron UK Ltd 01795 419460 www.guildguitars.com

PUKKA PUPS

WHILE Guild has its own classic-sounding HB-1 full-size humbuckers (which are available as retro-fits), the Bluesbird uses a classic USA-made combo from Seymour Duncan: a JB at bridge and '59 at neck: perfect for classic rock and more

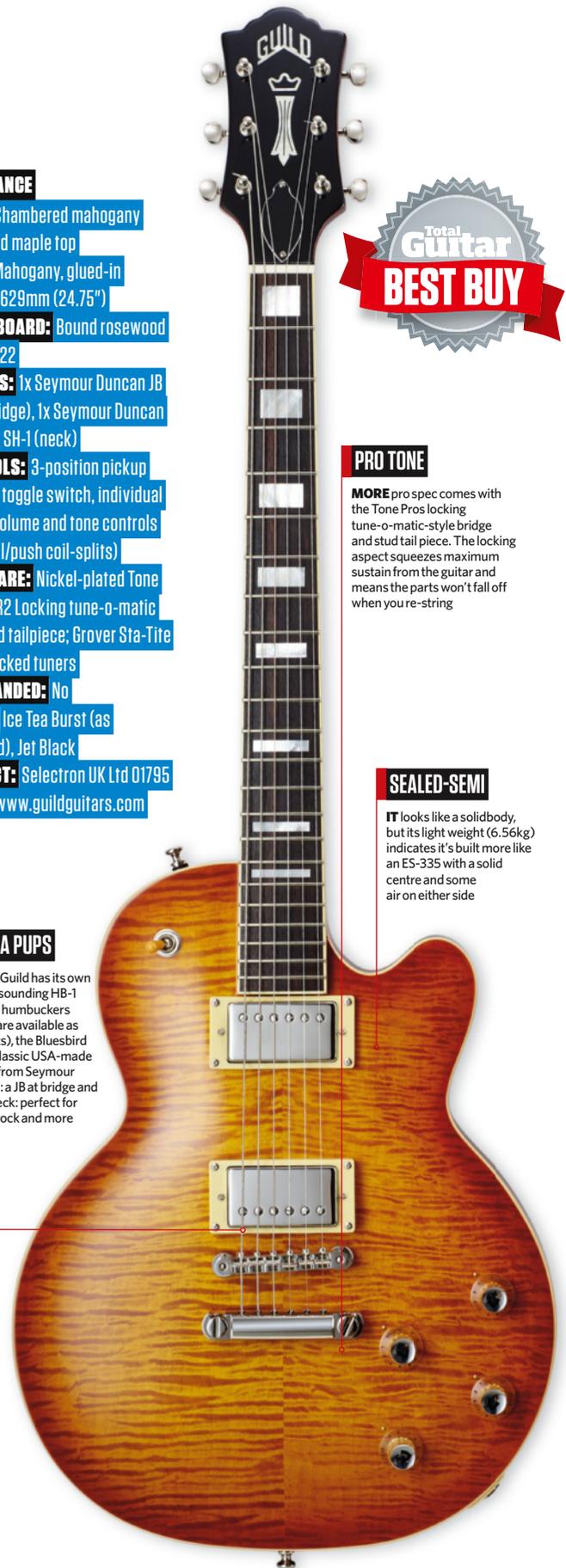
Total
Guitar
BEST BUY

PRO TONE

MORE pro spec comes with the Tone Pros locking tune-o-matic-style bridge and stud tail piece. The locking aspect squeezes maximum sustain from the guitar and means the parts won't fall off when you re-string

SEALED-SEMI

IT looks like a solidbody, but its light weight (6.56kg) indicates it's built more like an ES-335 with a solid centre and some air on either side





All That Jazz Blues

The Bluesbird uses a very famous pickup... just don't mention Jeff Beck!

Back in the day, Seymour Duncan (along with DiMarzio) pretty much invented the after-market pickup game, and the JB is the company's best-selling unit. The birth of the JB came when Seymour Duncan (the man) installed a couple of rewind PAFs onto a guitar named the Tele-Gib for Jeff Beck in 1974, who used it on the influential *Blow By Blow* album. Duncan nicknamed the bridge pickup the 'JB', and by today's standards its large 16.6kohm DC resistance puts in to the 'high output' category but players found it gave increased output without sounding harsh or dark like other high-output pickups of the time. In 1976, when the Seymour Duncan Company was formed, the JB, became the SH-4 JB Model; not 'the Jeff Beck', as it's often erroneously called – there has never been an official product endorsement agreement between Jeff and Seymour Duncan. If you ask Seymour Duncan what JB stands for, you'll be told 'Jazz Blues'.

An initial unplugged strum reveals plenty of zingy, ring; the neck is very Guild – a slim slightly flat-backed D – but with pretty chunky frets and a sharp setup, it makes for a very contemporary blues and rock-friendly player. In fact, only the rather too-shiny finish hints at its relatively lowly Korean-made origins – other than that it feels like a much more expensive instrument.

Plugged in, however, we're in for a treat with a classic pair of USA Seymour Duncan pickups that



Guild has used some quality parts, such as Tone Pros hardware



A small rivet in the body helps you easily tell where your pots are set

you'll have heard countless times: a JB at bridge and a '59 at neck. The '59 puts us in PAF-alike territory that on cleaner amp tones does great woody jazz and blues. Mixed position gets a little funkier, while the bridge sounds a little honky without some volume and tone reduction. But pull up your gain a little and the JB comes alive with a meaty upper-mid kick that suits anything from classic to pretty heavy rock without getting over-dark or one-dimensional. Coil-splits add some usable

single-coil voices and this really is a guitar you could take on your low volume jazz gigs or to your more rock out party performances. A lighter weight, resonant single-cut with typical Guild class.

Dave Burrluck

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

ALSO TRY...

PRS SE ZACH MYERS

£709
Another great Korean-made guitar, this semi-solid Singlecut sports fine-sounding SE 245 'buckers and a one-piece wrapover bridge



GRETSCH ELECTROMATIC G5435 PRO JET

£539
Gretsch's attempt at a Les Paul uses a sealed semi-solid body like the Bluesbird. There are many models, including a Bigsby-equipped version



ITALIA MONDIAL DELUXE

£769
This retro design sports a semi-solid mahogany/maple body with dual 'buckers plus a piezo. Bonkers... but in a good way!

