

Rocked & Ripped



The dark knight

Michael Angelo Batio gives TG the lowdown on his new axe...

What was the design concept behind the MAB1?

"We wanted to do a shape that was more traditional, and the graphic represents my version of what I think heavy metal is. I love history, so the finish is like medieval armour."

What made you choose EMG pickups for this guitar?

"With the [singlecoil] SA in the middle, it's a nicer clean sound than when you're using humbuckers. It's more compressed, so it's louder, meaning there was an extra benefit."

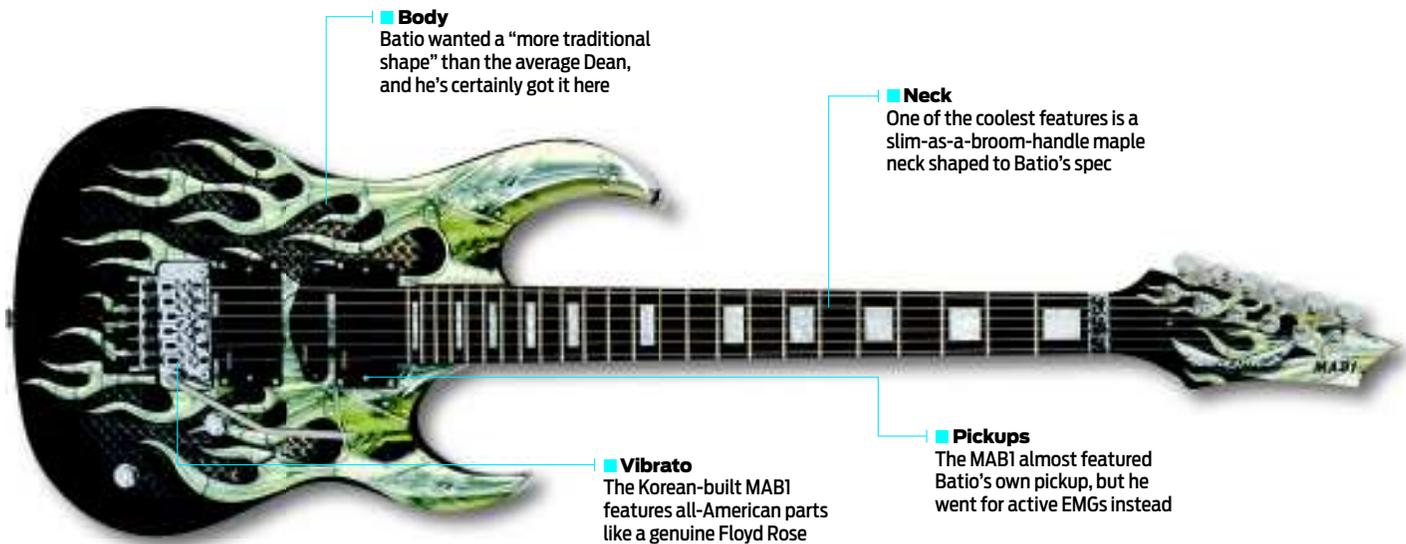
The neck profile is quite thin...

"The neck is thin, but not so thin that it takes away from the tone. People don't associate this with me, but I like higher actions. When I play lead there's a lot of mid range, and part of it is the higher action."

This guitar doesn't scream 'Michael Angelo Batio'...

"I'm not a narcissistic person! I just wanted to make a really good guitar with a unique graphic that other guitar players would play."

"THE POWER OF THE EMGS MAKES THIS GUITAR SHRIEK AND ROAR LIKE A DEMON"



■ **Body**
Batio wanted a "more traditional shape" than the average Dean, and he's certainly got it here

■ **Neck**
One of the coolest features is a slim-as-a-broom-handle neck shaped to Batio's spec

■ **Vibrato**
The Korean-built MAB1 features all-American parts like a genuine Floyd Rose

■ **Pickups**
The MAB1 almost featured Batio's own pickup, but he went for active EMGs instead

Dean MAB1 Armorflame

£1,099

TG has a knight to remember with Michael Angelo Batio's medieval signature...

Alice Cooper plays golf. Steve Vai keeps bees. Bruce Dickinson pens whimsical short stories. To this list of 'metallers who spend their downtime in ways you wouldn't expect', add shred lord Michael Angelo Batio, whose fascination with castles, chivalry, jousting, damsels, broadswords and mead has inspired him to get medieval on the finish of his MAB1 signature model. "I visit castles whenever I can," he says. "I wanted a guitar that reflected my love of history. So we made it armoured, with chain mail and flames."

The sizzle: For a man who once rocked a four-neck electric, Batio's baby is surprisingly functional. Underneath the finish we've got a bevelled doublecut alder body and bolt-on maple neck, described by the shredder as "incredibly thin but slightly rounded" and featuring a dead-

straight join that he claims assists his picking.

Things get fruitier with the official Floyd Rose and trio of active EMGs, though it's worth noting the MAB1 was all set to feature Batio's bespoke 'Hands Without Shadows' pickup until Dean engineers suggested the 81, 85 and SA instead. "I don't normally use EMGs," he says, "but once we put them in, I loved the sound."

We say: Without the finish, we doubt anybody would make a dash for the MAB1. Even Batio admits the shape is textbook Superstrat, but we'll let him off because it's been executed well, with the physical performance reflecting the flair of the US components and the care of the Korean production line. The body is nicely contoured, the vibrato flutters as it should, and while the neck is thin and duly excels at speed picking, it retains

enough substance for chunky riffs to feel satisfying.

The tone is more contentious. On one hand, only a fool would take issue with this combination of EMGs; the jaw-breaking power of these legendary active units makes this guitar shriek and roar like a demon. On the other, TG couldn't help but wonder if the inclusion of Batio's own pickup might have combined with the bespoke neck profile to make this guitar feel *truly* unique, instead of giving us massive grins and a slight sense of déjà vu. We'll probably never know. And given how hard the MAB1 rocks, we probably shouldn't care.

Henry Yates

At a glance

Dean MAB1 Armorflame

BODY: Solid alder
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
FINGERBOARD: Ebony with block inlays
FRETS: 24 jumbo
SCALE: 25.5"
PICKUPS: EMG 81, 85, SA
CONTROLS: Volume, tone, 5-way pickup selector
HARDWARE: Nickel
FINISH: Custom Armorflame graphic
CONTACT: Bill Lewington Ltd 01268 413366
WEB: www.deanguitars.com

SUMMARY

For: Stunning finish, versatile player, powerhouse tone

Against: Batio's pickup could have been the icing

★★★★☆

TG says... It's medi-evil



Michael's initials are the only obvious clue to his involvement

