





Original Vintage

Vintage already offers a huge number of affordable and tidily made electrics, but for 2024 we get a whole new retro-inspired range – and 15 new models. Where to start?

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Adam Gasson



VINTAGE REVO SERIES CUSTOM SUPREME & TRIO

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What You Need To Know

- 1 More cheapo copies, then?**
Okay, Vintage doesn't shy away from affordable lookalikes, but the new REVO range (which stands for REtro Vintage Originals) certainly mixes up the styles and adds some unique spins. By design, there's a strong retro vibe throughout, a calling card of designer Alan Entwistle.
- 2 Alan Entwistle?**
A veteran guitar designer, Alan has probably designed more guitars than you and we have had hot dinners. We last caught up with him when we looked at his new Rapier models – inspired by the likes of the Brit-made Watkins guitars of the early 60s.
- 3 How big is the series itself?**
There's no shortage of choice from 15 new models, with trendy offsets well represented, some neat takes on 'student' Mustang style, a bit of a nod to the Höfner Verithin, and even an original shape, the Vision, which features a "unique transonic spring cavity in the rear for added sustain". Intrigued? So are we...

If something a little different is what you're after then this Vintage REVO range will be more than welcome. These aren't artfully crafted boutique instruments – although a lot of the recipes here are what you might find in that costly, rarified world. But neither are they past 'pawn shop' relics that look cool but fall far short of the sort of playability you'd expect from a modern instrument.

While our Trio is clearly based around the original solidbody production electric,

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with its three Jazzmaster-style pickups and vibrato, it's far from a direct clone. Meanwhile, the Custom Supreme is inspired by an actual UK-made guitar from yesteryear. Vintage tells us: "We designed this one based upon a Grimshaw guitar that Pete Townshend played in the 60s with a modern twist." That probably late-50s 'SS' model was modded by Pete with a Rickenbacker truss rod cover on

the headstock and three Rickenbacker pickups. According to TheWho.net, Pete is quoted as saying, "I bought the guitar at Ivor Mairants; I'd always wanted one (was it because Joe Brown played one?). At the time, I was used to Rick pickups so when I ran out of Rickenbackers one day I rigged the Grimshaw with the pickups and added the headstock blazer as deception. However, when people asked me what model of Rick it was, I told them it was a Grimshaw. It played beautifully."

Custom Supreme

Here's a guitar that will get you noticed on a stage – you'll feel its presence, too: at 4.44kg (9.77lb), it's no lightweight. That's perhaps no surprise as the all-maple laminate body is 405mm (16 inches) wide, 46mm at the rim and around 74mm deep overall, with a substantial-looking maple centre block. Its outline, though considerably bigger, is rather Les Paul like, with that quite classy upper horn that reminds this writer of one of Josh Homme's Echopark builds. And while we don't get the Rickenbacker 'blazer' from the modded model it's inspired by, the trio of 'toaster' humbuckers certainly reference Rickenbacker, with those two tear-drop soundholes adding a sprinkling of Gretsch. But then there's the Gibson



1. You find this roller bridge and Jazzmaster-style vibrato on many lower end offsets, but it works really well and imparts an almost semi-acoustic-like response with typical offset overtones

2. Unlike the Pete Townshend-modded Grimshaw model, the Custom Supreme uses a regular Vintage headstock with Graph Tech nut and enclosed Grover-style tuners



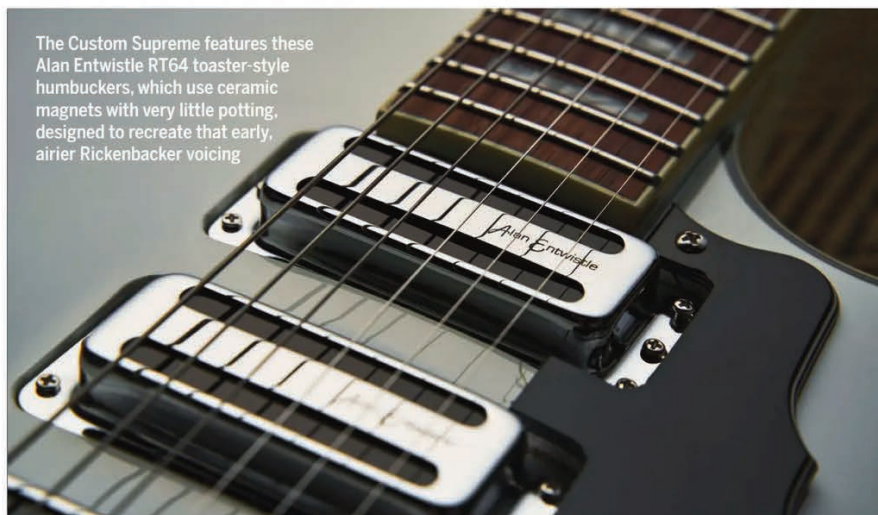
Maestro-style vibrato adding some show, and, with respect, the control plate looks more like something Vintage has knocked up in its ProShop. The headstock actually looks a bit like Vintage's standard three-a-side outline, though the block REVO logo, which is repeated on the truss rod cover, lacks the flair of the overall design.

Those 'toaster' humbucking pickups are tidily recessed into the body, and the chunkier roller-saddle bridge (a well-used design that has lock-down adjustable saddle blocks) sits quite low on the body.

That large control plate houses three on/off slide switches, a master volume and two tones (labelled 'tone' and 'midrange' on the control instructions pdf) with knobs borrowed from Gibson. Hmm.

Trio

You'd think a T-shape with two Jazzmaster pickups and vibrato would be a decent mash-up, but as you can see we have *three* pickups here, hence the name. The new REVO range is definitely generous with its pickup complements. Along with our three-some review models (and the Custom Supreme baritone), the Vision, the Superthin and the more S-style Deluxe also have a trio of pickups. Even more generous is the four-pickup Surfmaster Quad!



The Custom Supreme features these Alan Entwistle RT64 toaster-style humbuckers, which use ceramic magnets with very little potting, designed to recreate that early, airier Rickenbacker voicing

But designer Alan Entwistle is also known for some pretty tricky passive circuitry, as we see not only on the Custom Supreme but also this Trio. First off, we have two three-way lever switches. Switch A (closest to the bridge) voices bridge, bridge and neck, and neck in its three positions. Switch B selects middle (overriding switch A) in its lowest position, in centre position it adds the middle pickup to any of the switch A selections, while in its third upper position it's out of circuit, leaving just the selections of switch A.

Like the Custom Supreme, we also get three rotary controls – master volume and two tones. The control closest to the output jack is advertised as 'tone', while the tone closest to the vibrato is named 'mid-tone'. That might need a bit more explanation.

We'll get to those controls a little later, but the rest of the Trio is pretty tidy. As you'd expect, we have a Fender scale length, and the standard bolt-on maple neck (with skunk stripe) has a nice vintage tint under its glossed back. The reddy-brown jatoba fingerboard (the same that's used on the



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3. These on/off pickup switches work perfectly well, although they're not ideal if you need quick changes in a song. Plus, embarrassingly, you can turn yourself off completely!

Custom) is cleanly bound, but here we have dot inlays instead of the Custom Supreme's blocks. Fretwork on both guitars is good, the fret ends sitting over the edge binding, and the Trio uses a similar wide 'n' low gauge to the Custom Supreme.

The Honeyburst finish of the Trio's body is well named and we're told the wood is okoume. However, it does appear that the top and back have a veneer facing as the grain doesn't match the body core, which is at least two-piece, probably three. Like the Custom Supreme, it's cleanly double edge-bound with a cream binding and it's all rather nicely done. Above all, this guitar has a good weight of 3.32kg (7.3lb).

Both the J-style vibrato and its roller bridge tune-o-matic are rather generic but function very well, and the EZ-Lok Wilkinson tuners have dual string-post heights, the lower three for the G, B and E strings, which means you don't get any string trees.

Feel & Sounds

Okay, we might have two three-pickup-with-vibrato guitars here, but other than that they barely share any similarity. We've mentioned the weight differences: the Custom Supreme is a big ol' bird compared with the much more manageable Trio. The all-gloss finishes mean there's less

difference between neck shapes than you might expect, though the Custom's is very slightly wider and deeper with a nut width of 43.9mm (and 35mm string spacing), 21.7mm deep at the 1st fret and 24mm by the 12th. The Trio's nut measures 43.6mm (with a string spacing of 35.5mm), 21.4mm deep at the 1st fret and 21.4mm by the 12th. Speaking of string spacing, the Custom's bridge spread is 50.5mm, the Trio's is

Designer Alan Entwistle is known for some pretty tricky passive circuitry, as seen on this Custom Supreme and Trio

51.5mm. Both share a similar neck profile, a little more D than C, we'd wager, with a slightly flat back.

The Custom's acoustic response is quite big, ringing and bold, and the Trio, as you'd expect, is a little lighter in tone and volume with a little 'offset' to the response due to the undamped string length behind both the nut and saddles. We'd be tempted to fit a string tree to at least the top two strings here as the response is a little light in sound, but adding a few more wraps around the string posts might improve that anyway.

UNDER THE HOOD

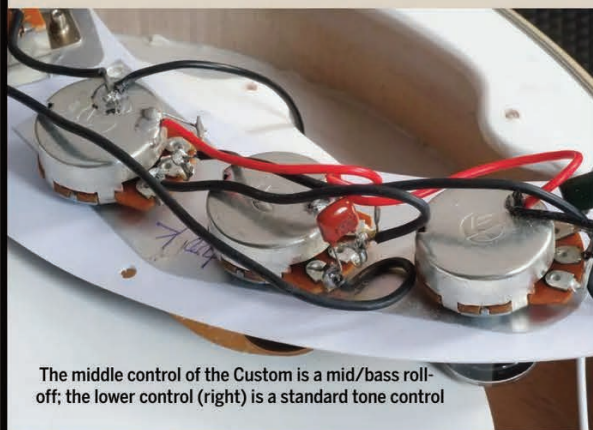
You guessed it, the circuits here are a little different...

The Custom Supreme's circuit is simple with three on/off slide switches and a trio of pots with a nominal value of 500kohms (measuring between 462k and 554k). The pickups' output hits the centre mid/bass cut pot first, which uses a .0022 μ F (222J) capacitor in series across the first two lugs (input and output) of the pot. The output from that goes to the volume then from its centre output lug to the lower tone, which uses a .015 μ F (153J) cap in parallel, like a regular tone control.

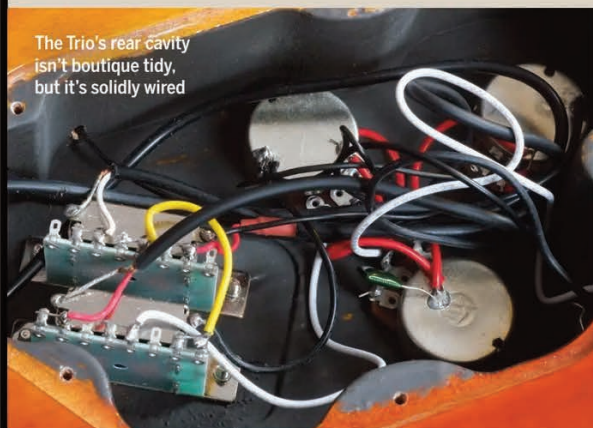
The Trio's controls are rear mounted in a large cavity with recessed backplate. Here, the pots have a nominal value of 250k (measuring between 239k and 264k). Reflecting what we heard in our sound test, both tones are regular, but the cap values are a lot lighter than most would use: .0068 μ F (682J) on the tone closest to the vibrato and .015 μ F (153J) on the tone closer to the body edge. We get a pair of the block-style three-way lever switches, but both feel pretty solid in use.

Neither guitar uses a treble bleed on the master volume controls, so pulled back you'll get a little treble roll-off, which might be welcome if you find the voicing quite bright. Both guitars really suit a player who uses their volume and tone controls!

The Custom Supreme's RT64 toaster-style humbuckers use ceramic magnets with only partially potted coils. Our samples all measured around 7.5k. The Trio's J90A single coils use a coil that's deeper than a Jazzmaster pickup, more like a P-90, but retain the Fender-style rod Alnico magnets. These have higher DCRs: ours measured 8.89k (bridge), 9.07k (middle) and 7.6k (neck).



The middle control of the Custom is a mid/bass roll-off; the lower control (right) is a standard tone control



The Trio's rear cavity isn't boutique tidy, but it's solidly wired



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If you're after a fire-breathing metal monster you've come to the wrong place. Set up a clean amp tone with or without some reverb and/or short delay, and you're right back in the 60s. If you want dirt, you'll need some help from a pedal. The Custom's voice is very single-coil like; there are good sounds with a balanced midrange and pretty crisp highs. The Trio's single coils are more mid-scooped with plenty of high-end detail, too.

Not everyone gets on with a three-pickup guitar, the middle pickup can get in the way, and while that's a personal decision it's worth pointing out that the Custom's humbuckers don't sound like they're fully potted – there's a bit of 'clonk' when your pick hits the cover.

The three on/off switches on the Custom provide a simple drive, but you need to remember that down is 'on' and up is 'off', otherwise you'll get in a mess and quite probably mute yourself. Once you get your head around the dual switches of the Trio, it's pretty logical and at least you can't mute the guitar.

The Custom's two tone controls? Well, irrespective of what Vintage says, the first tone (the centre of the three knobs) thins the sound as it's rolled back, like a pretty wide mid/bass cut. Fully off with neck pickup engaged, it sounds more like the

4. Obviously based on a Jazzmaster's single coils, these Alan Entwistle J90A units of the Trio model retain the Alnico rod magnets, but the deeper coil wind is more like a P-90

Variety Show

Why introduce one new model when you can create 15? Here's more REVO style

Words Dave Burrluck



COLT HS

With a strong nod to the Mustang design, the Colt HS comes with hum/single Alan Entwistle-designed pickups and a Mustang-style vibrato, and uses okoume for the body. Other Colts – all bolt-ons featuring a 629mm (24.75-inch) scale length – include the SS with dual Entwistle Astrosonic single coils, while the HH features a cut-off T-style hardtail bridge with three compensated brass saddles and a pair of Wide Range-style HV72 Entwistle humbuckers. Available in Blueburst (pictured) and Fiesta Red.

VISION

This model – shown here in Trans Orange and also available in Black and Two Tone Sunburst – is based on a previous Alan Entwistle design that he conceived for Revelation Guitars. This maple bolt-on one uses a full 648mm (25.5-inch) scale length with 22 frets and a single-bound and block-inlaid jatoba fingerboard. It also features those Burns-inspired Astrosonic single coils. Under the cut-down T-style bridge is the Transonic spring cavity, another Burns-inspired feature, to add resonance.

SURFMASTER THINLINE TWIN

This thinline (in Arctic White as here, Greenburst and Trans Orange) uses a Fender scale length. It has a chambered, double-bound okoume body, Filter'Tron-style Nashville Classic 'buckers and the same vibrato and roller bridge as our reviewed Trio. The other thinlines in the range are the Surfmaster Quad with four Astrosonic single coils, Surfmaster Thinline 12 (a hardtail 12-string with three Astrosonics), and Surfmaster 90 solidbody with dual P-90-style single coils).



DELUXE

The only S-style instrument in the REVO range (although it has a quoted scale length of 628mm), this Deluxe model recalls a Burns creation from yesteryear, with its block inlaid bound fingerboard, not to mention Greenburst (pictured) and Cappuchino (sic) finishes. Its vintage-style vibrato is the Wilkinson WVS, and fitting the style are three Astrosonic single coils. The dual tone controls are similar to those found on the reviewed Custom Supreme. So not quite your normal S-style at all, then!



INTEGRA

This is a string-through hardtail offset, but it has two open-coil Entwistle X3 dual-rail humbuckers, recalling 70s style more than 60s. In fact, the whole build is rather 70s, with multi-laminate maple/mahogany neck-through construction and ash 'wings'. However, we get two coil-split slide switches on the scratchplate and Entwistle's chickenhead knobbed ATN5 'Variator' control for added tonal flavour. Choose from Natural Satin (pictured), Amber Burst or Green/Yellow Burst with colour-matched reversed headstocks.



SUPERTHIN

If the Custom Supreme nods to that old UK-made Grimshaw, the Superthin pays homage to the popular German-made Höfner Verithin, a bit of a classic back in the day. Of course, it's gone through the Alan Entwistle mangle so we get another trio of pickups, this time the mini-humbucking HFS 63s, plus the same vibrato/bridge that's used on the Custom Supreme. Like that guitar, there are three on/off pickup switches but two tones and a bass-cut switch. Available in Cherry Red (pictured), Amberburst and Natural.