



Instrument News & Reviews

David Gallant reviews the latest instruments, sheet music and accessories for professional musicians

Fret-King Elise Custom Guitar

The Fret-King Elise Custom is the latest upgrade in the Elise range, following on from the John Etheridge signature model which appeared some years ago.

An offset double cutaway with a semi-acoustic chambered body, the Custom model comes with a 'straight pull' headstock to aid tuning stability and intonation. It is also fitted with two very special 'Fifty Five' Trev Wilkinson pickups, which give this instrument tremendous punch and power.

Our sample came in sunburst livery, beautifully finished in a gloss lacquer. The carved (and tuned!) flame maple two-piece cap is very striking and in marked contrast to the mahogany back and sides of the instrument. The 'f' holes have been streamlined and there is a heavy cream binding to the rims. The set neck with its shallow heel and extended tenon joint into the body not only gives the instrument constructional integrity, but also a very solid feel. The neck itself is mahogany and is nicely angled with a soft 'C' profile. The fretboard is premium rosewood with a comfortable 10" radius and carries the 22 medium nickel silver frets. The straight pull headstock is fitted with Wilkinson WJ04 machine heads for maximum tuning stability. Back at the sharp end, there is a Tune-o-Matic bridge and a stop tailpiece, which helps to anchor the bridge securely to the body. To get the most out of the Fifty Five pickups,

there is a 3-way toggle switch, a master volume, a master tone with a push-push out of phase switch and a Variocoil, which rolls either one or both pickups progressively from double to single coil.

Although the Elise Custom is marketed as a light guitar, it is in our opinion more in the medium weight bracket. Slung over the shoulder, it is well balanced, and the straight pull headstock is a breeze to tune (hence the popularity of Fenders!). Having all the controls lined up on the lower rear bout is also a definite benefit, as they can be easily accessed from the playing position.

We plugged the Elise into the house DV Mark Little Jazz and were pleased to see that the jack socket on the Elise is recessed into the rim and is firmly fixed. The neck is smooth and fast, and the general playability over the fretboard is excellent.



The push-push out of phase system on the tone control works well, but the real game-changer is the Variocoil control which effortlessly shifts the sonic palette from one end of the tonal spectrum to the other: from bright, sparkling single coil, to the full, fat tones of double coil. There are also, of course, a myriad of tonal and timbral options in between. We reckon that the Elise Custom has all the qualities that make for the perfect journeyman musician's workhorse.

Shipped in a Fret-King DeLuxe gig bag, with its adjustable back harness, front face zippered lead/accessory pouch and top zippered string pocket, we were left wondering why there wasn't a neck restraining strap and a front face grab handle. After all, this is marketed as a DeLuxe gig bag! The RRP of £979 places the Elise in a crowded marketplace amidst a plethora of Gibsons and Fenders (the latter slightly cheaper).

However, the Elise holds a sizeable trump card in the shape of its two Trev Wilkinson Fifty Fives and its Variocoil. If you're looking for sonic versatility with some serious delivery, then this is your baby.

www.Fret-King.com