

FRET-KING FKV3CTSB ELISE CUSTOM | REVIEW



Published on March 17, 2023

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Fret-King FKV3CTSB Elise Custom

We're big fans of Fret-King here at Gi. They seem to have a knack for taking classic designs and filtering them through the lens of the "working pro player". The result is something familiar but with unique aesthetic touches and important upgrades to the playability and versatility without sacrificing the fundamental character of the instrument. **Nick Jennison** reviews Fret-King's FKV3CTSB Elise Custom.



The Elise is Fret King's take on the classic "ES" semi-hollow design. It has all the hallmarks of the instruments that inspired it, with a large body, f-holes, centre block construction, two humbuckers, a two-piece bridge and a 24.7" scale length. Even visibly, though, the Elise is anything but a straight copy of a classic design. The offset body horns look not only striking but also improve upper fret access, while the 6-in-a-line headstock provides straight string pull behind the nut and a unique visual that's a little like a Trini Lopez.

Construction is a little different to the classic "ES" recipe, too, with a maple cap over a chambered mahogany body, making for a lighter guitar than your typical maple-on-maple semi-hollow. The neck is mahogany, too, with a long neck tenon for better transfer of resonance between the body and neck. While it's almost impossible to isolate a single variable like this, the Elise is certainly plenty resonant when played unplugged and feels very "alive" under the hand.

Electronics come courtesy of a pair of Wilkinson-designed "Fifty Five" humbuckers. These vintage-voiced pickups have loads of detail and character, with the almost-single-soil clarity that defines the best PAFs on display in abundance. While most builders would settle for the traditional palate of three humbucker tones—or maybe a coil split if they're feeling fancy—Fret King has taken their usual "the more tones, the better" approach with the inclusion of a Varicoil knob. This variable coil-cut allows the player to go from full humbucker to tele-esque split-coil tones on a continuum, with a practically unlimited number of variations in-between. That's not all, though - there's also a push-push "out of phase" switch on the master tone control. This switch has no effect on the tone of either pickup in isolation, but in the middle position, it yields that classic "Peter Green" middle position sound, which is also killer for squawky funk lines or adding a gnarly, wiry character to a fuzz tone.

Playability is predictably excellent, with a slim "soft C" neck profile and 22 frets that Fret-King is calling "medium", but it feel more like "medium jumbo" to my hand. This makes for effortless string bends, and the flawless fretwork meant I could dial in my preferred action of 1mm on the treble side and 1.5mm on the bass side with no rattles, buzzes or dead spots. While this guitar is probably not intended to be a shred machine, you can definitely set it up like one if you so desire!

The Fret-King Elise Custom is a unique and highly versatile take on the classic "ES" recipe. There are a number of very useful "tweaks" to improve playability, versatility and reliability, but the "soul" of the classic design this guitar is inspired by remains 100% intact. If you want some of that timeless semi-hollow goodness with none of the drawbacks, this might be the guitar for you.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT
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Fret-King FKV3CTSB Elise Custom

The Breakdown

Vintage Modern
Specialised Versatile
Warm Bright
Affordable High-end

For fans of

Classic "ES" vibes
Unique looks
Tonal versatility

For more information, please visit:
https://www.jhs.co.uk/collections/all/brand_fret-king