

LAVA Music Blue Lava Touch

Smart acoustic guitars are becoming more and more accessible; Lava's ME3 guitar showcased the concept of an all-in-one solution for playing, recording and jamming, and now its new Lava Blue model brings the technology at a lower price. While the ME3 was carbon fibre, Lava Music has opted for an HPL body for good resistance to changing temperatures—this is a guitar you'll probably want to travel with, after all. **Sam Bell** tells us more.

BEGINNER Guitarists are by far the biggest demographic in the Guitar Manufacturing world. The spread of COVID encouraged thousands to take up a six-string hobby. So naturally, many companies want to appeal to that demographic, leading to some great ideas and some not so great ideas. In this review I'll be looking at the 'Blue Lava' Guitar from Lava Music, which hopes to be a big hit with beginner guitarists and intermediate alike.

First of all, it's important to state that this isn't any ordinary guitar. What you're effectively paying for is the built-in touch screen/app which we'll go into. However, the guitar itself is a half-scale steel-strung acoustic guitar, making this perfect for budding guitarists from 5 to 90 years old. The tuners are high quality, which may seem like a standard point that most would expect on a guitar, but for most beginners starting out, often one of the frustrations is cheap guitars with cheap tuners that don't hold pitch. The Blue Lava doesn't have this problem in the slightest. The guitar feels good; it's perfect for someone starting out with their playing journey.

On opening the box from Lava Music, you're presented with the guitar in a soft case, a guitar pick, a USB C Cable to charge the screen/app and a useful instruction manual. The manual shows how to start up the guitar, how to navigate the app etc. But it also shows the user things such as how to tune, re-string and even adjust the neck. (I'd highly recommend getting a professional to adjust the neck if you're starting out on your guitar journey, but re-stringing and tuning is a must for all musicians!)

The guitar's built-in touch screen is on the side of the body, right where the user would be looking 'down' when strumming. The volume and power on/off button can be accessed via the unique sound hole. The screen has a built-in speaker and recorder. You can also plug the guitar in via a ¼ inch jack.

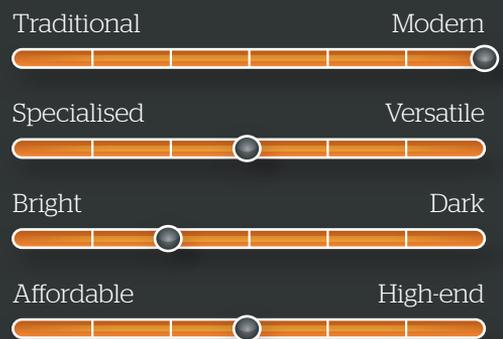
When setting up the app, the user must sign up to the 'Blue Lava Guitar' app which is available for Android and Apple. The app helps track the usage of the practice apps on the guitar; the app also has a 'tik tok' like video stream of lessons and performances from other Blue Lava users. »



LAVA Music Blue Lava Touch

MSRP: (UK) £719 / (US) \$649

The Breakdown



For fans of

One-stop-shop for on-the-go playing

The latest technology

For more information, please visit:

lavamusic.com

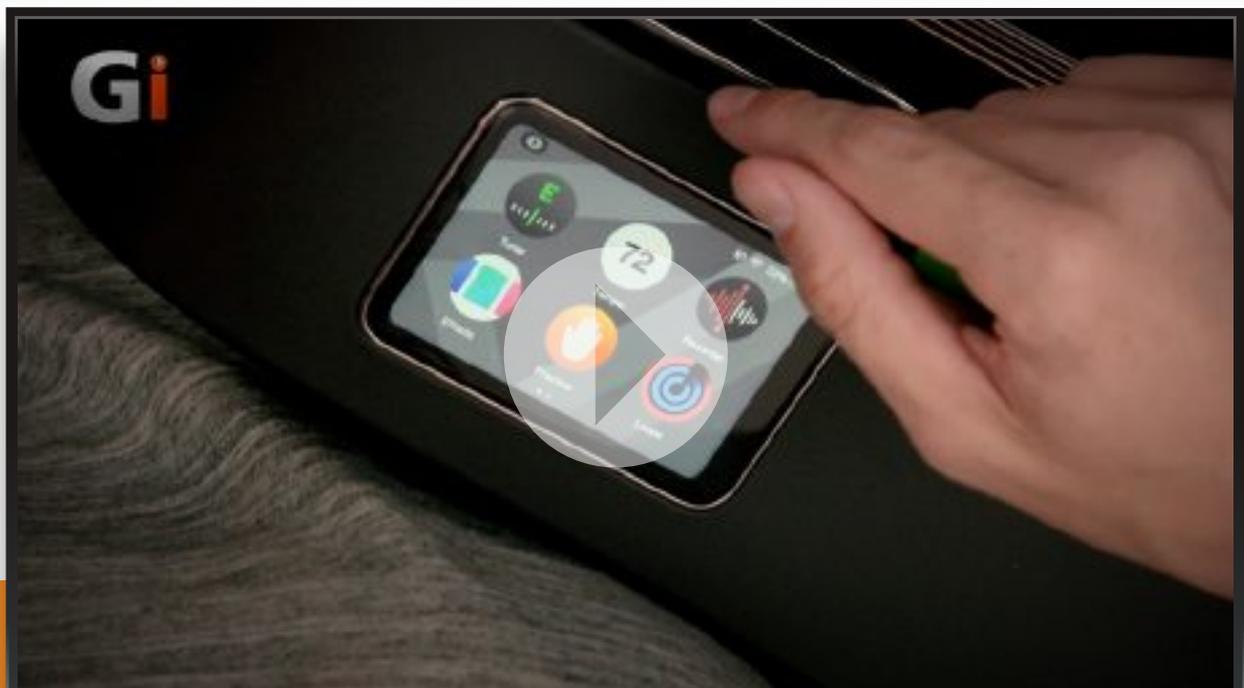




You don't need to stare at your phone however to use the Blue Lava app. The screen on the guitar gives you access to a super user friendly tuner, metronome, recorder, effects app, practice trainer and drum loop app. You can also access your recordings on the screen as well.

What I like most about the app is the practice feature, it has chord changing, strumming, scale position and ear training exercises which are quite open for the

user to use (check out the video to see these in action!) This helps the musician that's starting out develop their technical ability on the instrument. The other side of the equation is the looper app, this gives users drum loops in the style of popular songs, then the user can change the tempo or add their own playing to the loops, this is superb for fun practice and developing solo performances. (Again, check out the video of me making some mistakes and creating a loop!) »



LAVA Music Blue Lava Touch



These two main tools of the Blue Lava help to develop the musician in a well-rounded way, focusing on timing, basic fretboard knowledge, performance, technique and creativity. The only downfall is the lack of 'direction' given on the app, I feel that having a tutor or a course to follow would help someone make the most of the Blue Lava guitar/app system.

There is also a cool effects feature; you can have things like chorus, delay, pitch shifting, reverb added to your sound, which adds a fun element to the guitar and gets users acquainted with standard effects in a easily accessible way.

I think Lava Music have got it just right with this, sometimes the app can slow down, you do have to charge it for a while on the first use, the phone app also seems quite new and in developing stages. Coming in at around £679 it might be expensive for most people who are 'testing guitar out for the first

time. There are 'standard' high-quality guitars on the market for less than this, also with the advent of YouTube, online courses, and guitar tutors around every corner; you may be tempted to look elsewhere. But with the Blue Lava, you're paying for an all-around educational package that will guide you and hopefully last a few years and give you a good foundation.

From a distance, some may feel that this is gimmicky, but on picking it up even after playing for many years, I think this will be a winner for many starting out their journey if they can afford and stick to it. However, the guitar and the training 'games' themselves are super fun and I can imagine in combination with a tutor, this package would give the student a great start on their path to musicianship. It is great to see guitar education evolving and technology moving with it.

END «