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Guitar

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RETRO SOLIDBODY ELECTRICS

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Modern life getting you down? Experience the sound of yesteryear without the excruciating vintage price tag with these old-school rockers



The electric guitar is not yet 100 years old but already we are forensically scouring its history in search of authentic tone from a bygone era. Already we're sighing, "They don't make 'em like they use to." But they do. Take the Danelectro DG67-YL, a banana milkshake yellow electric, its design straight from 1967. With a pair of lipstick pickups and asymmetrical masonite semi-hollow body, it has an oddball quality, unmistakably Dano. But if you think the Dano's weird, wait until you see the Hagstrom Retroscape H-II. An aggressively horned double-cut with an arcane switching system and

dainty vibrato, the H-II is a real curio that promises an easy ride courtesy of that famed Hagstrom neck profile. Then there's the Supro Jamesport. This minimalistic, super-cool electric takes the unique Supro Ozark bevelled body from the 60s, plants one Gold Foil single coil pickup somewhat past the bridge position, and sounds like a decades-old echo from rock 'n' roll history. Rounding out this issue's quartet is the Gretsch Electromatic G5438 Pro Jet; with a swanky gold finish and pearloid pickguard, it's as handsome a single-cut as you'll see, and promises 'that great Gretsch sound' – a trademarked guarantor of old-school tone.

HEAD TO HEAD

Which of our retro axes belongs in your future?

No two guitars here are alike. You've got the studied refinement of the Hagstrom, the majesty of its Aged Sky Blue finish, the weirdness of its switching system. Then there's the auric splendour of the Gretsch Pro Jet, a stunning singlecut with that breeding, that Gretsch DNA. Then there's the Danelectro 67, its voice even louder than the yellow finish, uniquely lightweight, full of skronk and attitude from deceptively powerful pickups. And there's the Supro with its classy minimalism, that finish and tailpiece hard to beat.

In terms of playability, the Hagstrom nicotine-yellow neck is incredible, and even though the bridge is a little squeaky, the Tremar vibrato a stiff ol' wobbler, it still feels like the Hagstrom is on your side. The Danelectro, well, that invites all sorts of abuse; it's a joy for rock 'n' roll rhythm playing and disgoring a chaotic, shambling lead break. Some might

THE SUPRO'S TONE WILL CATCH YOU OFF-GUARD; THAT SINGLE COIL IS WARM AND RICH

find the Pro Jet off-balance when playing seated, but there is no quibbling with its clubby neck profile, which comfortably seats the hand, offering plenty support. The Supro, too, enjoys a clubbier neck profile, but with a satin finish that helps you glide across it.

The Supro's tone will catch you off-guard; that big humbucker-sized single coil is deceptively sharp, but warm and rich, dynamic, and there is a lot of range in that tone knob.

While the Hagstrom's cleans are untouchable, remember that Kurt Cobain once played one; so while its distorted tone won't be tight, it can be a little muddy, it nonetheless has a lovely feral character to it. The Danelectro's pickups are wired in series, so the middle position with both pickups selected has some real oomph, perfect for hot-rod rock. The Gretsch, meanwhile, well, its tone is so hot you could grill hamburgers by wafting it in front of the speaker cone. Tex-mex shuffle, country, blues, jazz, rockabilly... You name it, and it'll play it.

FINAL VERDICT

Which old-school electric is the right one for you?

With guitars like these, you've got to assess your needs. What are you going to be playing? If the answer to this isn't death metal, then one of this group is going to make a very persuasive case for being 'the one'. For those with a little extra cash and don't mind shelling out the extra £200, then the Supro offers a truly unique piece of American vintage guitar. It's a player and a workhorse; its pickup position finds a sweet spot somewhere past the bridge, and brings both brightness and warmth. The ideal surf rock guitar? Maybe, but then you've got the Danelectro, which is just begging for a Fender Twin and a little tremolo for a spot of surf action, and then, with a more svelte neck, its off-kilter looks, and a little more tonal range, it might be a better bet.

The sophisticates might boil this test down between the urbane Swede, the Hagstrom, or the classy American hot-rod, the Gretsch. If you're looking for a guitar with unbeatable cleans, then go for the Hagstrom, but if you wanted that versatility and the kudos that comes with a Gretsch, well, we wouldn't think ill of you. Indeed, it's hard to look past that finish, that build, and that tone.

Ultimately, you can't go wrong here. Without breaking the bank, you could get yourself some old-school tone, old-school cool. And you know what they say about the classics: they never go out of style.



The Supro's unusual looks are enhanced by the 'wave' tailpiece.

SUPRO JAMESPORT

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★	

SUPRO JAMESPORT

The bronzed Adonis

Supro? Super... er, who?

More famous for its amps, the likes of which were used by Hendrix, Jimmy Page and Albert Lee, Supro was no slouch when it came to putting a guitar together back in the day either. While the Jamesport is the most expensive guitar here, it offers some serious vintage quality and spec. And that finish has to be seen to be believed.

What era are we talking?

The Jamesport is a bolt straight out of the swinging 60s. Its body is based on the Supro's Ozark body shape and has a bevelled profile



for comfort. Pretty darn suave, but hinting at some serious power underneath the hood...

What does it sound like?

Surprisingly versatile despite having only one humbucker-sized Gold Foil single-coil pickup, a tone and a volume knob. There's a lot of play between the sharp 60s hippy jangle, and an aggressive rock bite. Named for the coastal town of Jamesport, New York, and part of the Island Series, we're happy to report that there is plenty of gnarly chew here that makes it perfect for surf rock.

AT A GLANCE

KEY FEATURES: Alder Vintage Ozark solid body with set maple neck, 25.5" scale, 50s wiring volume and tone controls, 1x Vintage Gold Foil single coil, Wave tailpiece

FINISH: Bronze [as reviewed], Antique White, Jet Black, Tobacco Sunburst, Blue Metallic

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