



// Instrument News & Reviews

David Gallant checks out the latest jazz-related instrument and technology launches

Fret King Gordon Giltrap, Black Label Series

Finding the perfect onboard pickup configuration to exploit the maximum potential of the electric guitar has become the holy grail of many a luthier over the past half century. Many have tried but few have succeeded. The latest offering from Fret King expands the envelope further by using a chambered body as the basis for fitting a piezo bridge pickup to offer acoustic-like timbre and tone, which can then be mixed as required with the traditional P90 and a humbucker.

Specially built for Fret King in a small luthier type factory in Korea, the Gordon Giltrap model (the master guitarist collaborated on the design) sports a slimline double-cutaway body with a single f hole and comes with solid mahogany back and sides from which the chambers are routed. The top table is carved both inside and out from a slab of solid maple, to which has been added a flame maple veneer cap. The shallow C mahogany set in an all-in-one neck supports a super smooth rosewood board fitted with 22 medium jumbo frets. Wilkinson individual tulip tuners have been used on the distinctive Fret King headstock, which means that the guitar bears a strange resemblance to the 1960s Gibson Trini Lopez model (remember?). Electrics come in the shape of a Wilkinson Alnico 5 P90 in the neck position, while the much revered Wilkinson classic PAF humbucker sits next to the tune-a-matic style bridge with its fitted piezo. The generously spaced strings lock into an adjustable hardtail. The lower bout is fitted with a standard three-way toggle switch together with tone and volume controls for the P90 and 'bucker, while beyond and beneath these are the piezo volume control, a three-way mixing switch and separate EQ controls for bass, midrange and treble. As you might expect, there are myriad sonic possibilities and we tested the instrument through the house

Peavey Studio 12 and our recently acquired SR Jam 100 Acoustic amp. Needless to say, the SR produced beautifully warm and rich acoustic tones from the piezo pickup, but when we plugged into the Studio 12 this instrument came alive. With the amount of colour and character that's been built into the electric mix, it's almost impossible not to find that unique sonic quality that you'd always imagined was out there somewhere. It's taken almost half a century, but this is as close as it gets to the ultimate electric instrument – for now.

For more info www.fret-king.com



Fret King
Gordon
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Jazzwise August 2012



"I love playing both acoustic and electric guitar, and my Black Label Elise GG model brings together the best of both acoustic and electric worlds. I loved the whole process of working with Trev Wilkinson to design a guitar for my needs, and it looks like we've given birth to a classic and innovative design which will find favour with discerning players looking for the ultimate semi-acoustic hybrid guitar."

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