



GRETSCH G5220 ELECTROMATIC JET BT



£432

Has Gretsch just thrown down the gauntlet for single-cut value in 2018?

We all have our preconceptions about guitar brands and models; players and styles we associate with tone and aesthetic. But Gretsch has been taking some interesting steps to give serious pause for anyone who only thinks of them as the home of aspirational rockabilly daddios and country gents. In 2016, Gretsch's Streamliners graced TG's cover for good reason; the range brought the undeniably cool Gretsch style to double-cut hollowbodies and semis that appealed to new players in look and sound. And, crucially, the price was very right. Could

a V stoptail bridge brings its own dose of Gretsch aesthetic.

There's a care and attention to the aesthetic that Gretsch brings throughout its line and it's here in healthy doses. Closer inspection confirms a guitar that could pass for one a couple of hundred pounds above its price. Okay, it's a CITES-friendly walnut 'board rather than rosewood, but that's a necessary compromise and it's dark enough here to pass for ebony. Playing it acoustically, there's a projection that suggests good things ahead, but do they manifest when it's plugged in?

The Gretsch Broad'Tron pickups here soon get us excited. And they

“CLEANS RING PIANO CLEAR WITH A SIDE ORDER OF VINTAGE”

these Jets now be the *Empire Strikes Back* to their *New Hope*?

This is certainly a finish Lord Vader would approve of. And no matter how much we dance around it, looks matter with guitars. And the G5220 looks great; slim by the standards of the Gretsch line but satisfyingly thick in depth, this is a mahogany single-cut that offers a genuine alternative to the Les Paul approach without trying to ape it. It feels good on the strap, where the Streamliners could be neck-heavy, and because it's chambered it's lighter than it looks (just under 8lbs for our test model). The Bigsby-toting black/silver chrome Duo Jet was favoured by icons such as Cliff Gallup, Chris Cornell and George Harrison (see boxout overleaf), and the colour and the shape is echoed here, but

reveal themselves to be a key factor that takes this guitar beyond the preconceptions it's just a new, good-looking entry level Electromatic. The Broad'Tron is a humbucker-sized Filter'Tron-style (PAF warmth and single-coil brightness) and if you wrinkle your nose at some of the darker character in humbucker-loaded single-cuts, these could be a surprising treat. Cleans ring piano clear with a side order of vintage twang and even the neck pickup has some chime where a 'bucker might get woolly, while the bridge really jangles and cuts. The responsiveness of the Broad'Trons here yields impressive harmonic detail when we test it with both tube amp drive and a Tube Screamer – for expressive, sustaining violin-esque lead work it's inspiring and touch-

1 MASTER VOLUME

Each pickup has its own volume control and there's a master tone, but there is a master volume, too. It has a treble bleed circuit to give you easily accessible control over your sound

2 CONTROL KNOBS

The chrome G-Arrow control knobs not only look the business, they're tactile and digit-friendly in practice, too

3 ALL IN THE DETAILS

The silver plexi pickup surrounds match the scratchplate and the screw-in strap buttons add to a classic Gretsch aesthetic

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE: 625mm (24.6")

FINGERBOARD: Walnut

FRETS: 22

PICKUPS: Broad'Tron

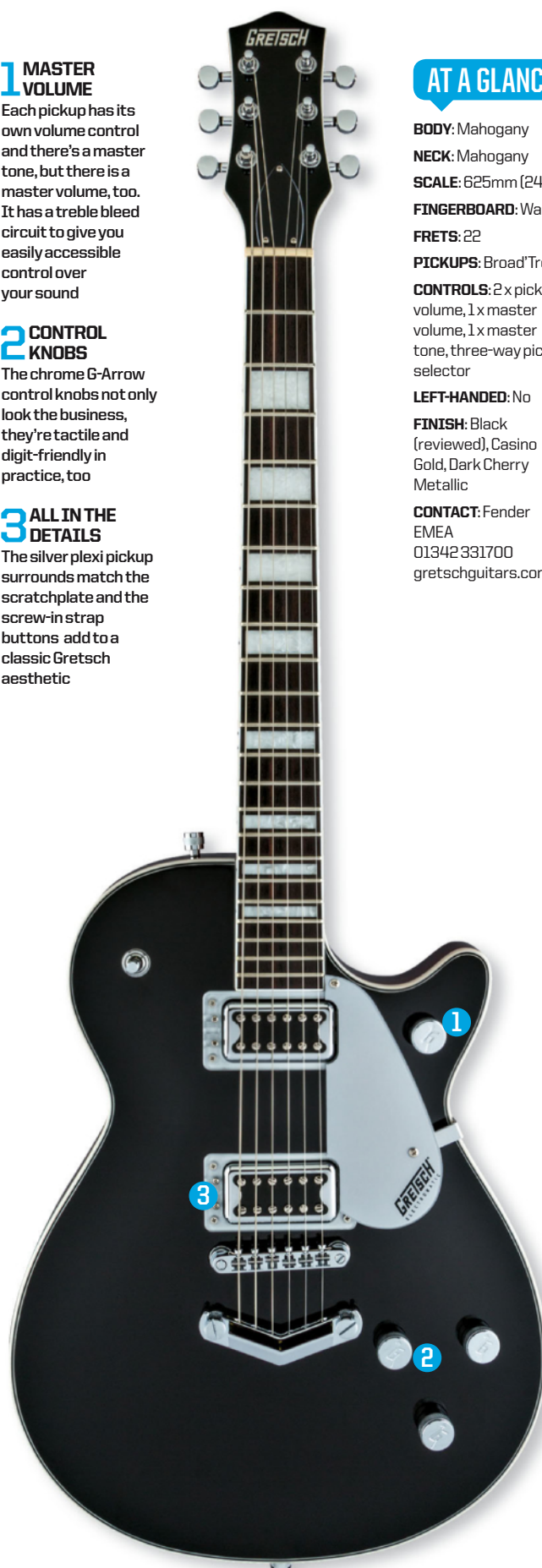
CONTROLS: 2 x pickup volume, 1 x master volume, 1 x master tone, three-way pickup selector

LEFT-HANDED: No

FINISH: Black (reviewed), Casino Gold, Dark Cherry Metallic

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Jet Powered

Know your Gretsch Jets

Gretsch released the single-cut black top-finished 6128 Duo Jet way back in the middle of 1953 after Fender's Broadcaster (followed by Tele) and Gibson's Les Paul model. The sparkly Silver Jet followed in 1955. Both Jet models were chambered but they were distinct from Fender and Gibson's models in other ways too; pickups were supplied by DeArmond's high-output Alnico V models (later called Dynasonic), while variations would come with a Bigsby tailpiece and those with a tone switch (instead of a master tone knob) would come with Gretsch's own Filter'Trons.

The Jet isn't just a single-cut machine: Malcolm Young hammered AC/DC's rhythms home with a double-cut 1963 Jet Firebird – the G6131 that took off in 1956 but didn't become a double-cut design until '62.

sensitive. But get into traditional AC/DC and even metal territory and eyebrows start raising; it sounds like something that can really chase a Les Paul in the fat-but-articulated stakes. This thing has a meat and confidence with ringing chords and riffs that puts a broad smile on our faces.

The low action and friendly tension on our test model certainly encourages that as well, but the low-end rhythm remains tight on the bridge. The USP here is that this Jet's bridge pickup can confidently chug in higher gain with beefy bass where a Filter'Tron



The Broad'Tron pickups are the stars of an impressive showing with the G5220



may not, bringing edge and character to open-string rock rhythm, too. And that means players who may not have wanted a Gretsch before may consider joining the Jet set.

Some may be unconvinced of the master volume in addition to the individual pickup volumes on spec, but in practice this might just be the solution to those thrown by making on-the-fly changes with the traditional Gibson, four-knob setup. Because not only is the master positioned on the easy-to-reach upper horn, the textured arrow knobs are very tactile in use.

So it's effective for making changes on the fly mid-song.

Gretsch has pulled a classic style into the present here with wider potential appeal, because the sheer versatility and finish quality for the money makes this the kind of deal that you'll always find space for in the house.

Rob Laing

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

ALSO TRY...

PRS SE 245

£775

A similar scale to the Gretsch at 24.5", this 2018 iteration features the more recognisable two volume and tone control layout, a wide fat neck and SE 245 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers.



EPHPHONE LES PAUL STANDARD

£399

A classic single-cut design with a longer 628mm (24.75") scale than our Jet. It's not chambered, so expect weight, but the Alnico V pickups pack a punch!



GRETSCH G2622 STREAMLINER CENTER BLOCK

£420

This semi-hollow double-cut further underlines Gretsch's commitment to winning over players by packing its guitars with value.

