

CHECK 1.2

PRODUCT: ST BLUES MISSISSIPPI BLUESMASTER GUITAR

REVIEWER: SHANNON BOURNE

DISTRIBUTOR: KURT JACOB & CO 02 0636 7111

I first stumbled across the St. Blues guitars whilst walking the aisles at this year's Australian Music Association Convention in Melbourne. I was immediately struck by the classic but original body shape. This instrument looks like a Les Paul that made love to a Telecaster®...or if you can cast your mind back to the Gibson Nighthawk Series. Whilst at the show I had the fortune of meeting the St Blues Director of Sales and Marketing who went on to give me the story of St Blues and how it came to be. I shall recount some of that story to you now.

The roots of St Blues began with two people, Tom Keckler and Mike Ladd who ran a guitar repair shop in Memphis. Jimmy Page, one of their first famous customers, was so impressed by Tom's adept knowledge at refurbishing instruments, that he had Tom completely service all of his own instruments! Another of their other famous customers was Elvis Presley. The instrument which Tom provided to him was the custom guitar that Mr Presley can be seen playing on the "Elvis, Live In Hawaii" concert.

Time moves on and things change, Tom went to work with Schecter Guitar Research and Mike opened another shop in Memphis. The first prototype for the Bluesmaster was created in 1985 and gained attention from Eric Clapton, Billy Gibbons and many players of this ilk. Unfortunately, St Blues had to finish up operations due to the fall of the American dollar against the Yen. But, now St Blues are back and sounding great and ironically, assembled in an Asian country.

The guitar I was offered to review is the Mississippi Bluesmaster. It is a double humbucking guitar with a single tone and volume control for all applications. I love the simplicity. The humbuckers feature exposed bobbins which all in all, give the guitar a more bright, aggressive and clear tone. The body is made of select grade mahogany and features single binding and a slightly flamed, red/brown finish. The fretboard is made of Indian rosewood and features abalone inlays.

An interesting feature is the headstock. Whilst being a Les Paul style guitar; it features a quasi-Telecaster® shaped headstock with 6 in line kluson styled Wilkinson machineheads. Another feature of this interesting amalgam is the bolt-on neck which gives the guitar some of that cool workman-like Fender® image, whilst still retaining some of the visual elegance that adorns many of the Gibson models. Like I said ... a Les Paul/Telecaster® love child.

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Upon plugging this guitar in, I was struck by the bright and spanky tone that it produced. Interestingly, for a double humbucking, 24 inch instrument, it features none of the muddy tone that usually accompanies guitars of this physical makeup. I would like to mention that this guitar came perfectly set up... almost too perfect and that the neck is truly awesome. I think you would call the neck profile wide/thin. It was wide enough to make me feel as if I was holding a serious piece of wood in my hands and yet still thin enough to zoom all over the neck with great ease.

The in between pickup setting was sparkly and solid for jangly pop sounds and skanky enough for reggae and funk rhythm playing. There seems to be an overall immediacy and attack that accompanies this guitar. The neck humbucker features a beautiful and "woody" tone but is still bright enough to not get lost in the mix. The back humbucker has plenty of "snark" without driving your amp into mega-drive. Next, I decided to try it with a few different overdrives/distortions. With this guitar, in any application, is hard to make a sound that isn't musical! Even through the most over the top



SPECS

- **BODY** Select grain mahogany, bound front & back
- **SCALE LENGTH** 24 3/4 inch
- **PICKUPS** Dual St. Blues custom wound HB Humbuckers or SB P-90S w/3 way toggle switch
- **NECK** "C" shape mahogany or with AAA Indian Rosewood slab fretboard
- **FRETS** Medium size 18% nickel silver
- **BRIDGE** Nickel custom steel hardtail
- **TUNERS** Nickel 15:1 ratio vintage style tuners
- **RRP** \$1,720

fuzz sound, this guitar retained all of its clarity, articulation and tone ... this is the kind of instrument you could easily throw in to a gig bag and cut any kind of gig with. Chances are, that it would still be tune when you next pulled it out for a show.

So, all in all, if you want a guitar that feels great, stays in tune, has versatility in bucket loads and looks good, then this instrument is just for you ... and at a price of \$1,720, you couldn't get a better balanced and more toneful instrument.