

Un Guitare Andalou

Teye Guitars Electric Gypsy La Mora S Plus

TEYEGUITARS' NEWS-PLUS series are no less aesthetically striking than the company's renowned A-series instruments. But where the As have engraved metal tops, hand-worked bridges and tailpieces, and intricate Southwestern-inspired inlay, the S-Plus, designed for the more budget-conscious player, has laser-etched designs and TonePros hardware. What remains untouched are Grover Imperial tuners, hand-wound Lollar humbuckers, proprietary wiring, and the same hand-rubbed finish applied over carefully chosen mahogany. And where the A guitars are made by Teye Wijnterp from start to finish, the S-Plus series relies on a small, in-house crew.

From the S series, the Teye La Mora has a black-anodized top surrounded by an ebony mosaic with turquoise and mother-of-pearl inlays. Speaking more to the custom nature of the instrument rather than shoddy workmanship, there are filler gaps between a few of the trapezoid-shaped ebony pieces adorning the top. The black finish over the mahogany neck and body give the guitar an elegant, sexy appearance. Its mix of gold, chrome, and silver lend a fetching look by juxtaposing the gold pickups, bridge, and tailpiece with the exposed aluminum of the top, chromed inlays on the pickup surrounds and the silver of the control knobs.

Despite the guitar's gorgeous appointments, it makes no concessions when it comes to tone. Teye prefers the sound of thin finishes over lightly pore-filled mahogany, so each guitar leaves his shop finished accordingly. And despite the ornate appointments, he doesn't seem worried about visual perfection. So while there may be light sand marks in a few spots, Teye focuses on making guitars "right."

Weight-wise, the La Mora follows a not-too-heavy/not-too-light credo; its wood was chosen for its tonal qualities, not weight. A rounded edge on the treble side of the neck-body joint allows

unfettered access to all 24 frets, keeping the thumb out of site. The unbleached bone nut is cut cleanly, and the fretwork on the ebony board is spot on. The La Mora came out of the case ready to play, set with medium action, while the Graphtech saddles were positioned so chord shapes were played in tune across the neck.

This guitar really pops unplugged. Sounding almost compressed, it offers up a little bit of swell after the initial attack. Plugged in, this effect is more pronounced. And coupled

TEYE ELECTRIC GYPSY LA MORA S PLUS

Price: \$4,700
Contact: Teye-guitars.com.

with the just-right Lollars, this is one exceedingly expressive machine. The five-way switching system manages the broad range of tones; position one (down) is bridge pickup, two offers bridge plus middle, three is bridge and neck, four delivers middle plus neck, and five is neck solo.

While the La Mora doesn't lack traditional humbucker muscle, the delightfully interactive controls – Volume for whichever two pickups are selected, master Tone and Mood knob – allow it to bop back and forth between single-coil-like sparkle and dual-coil chunk, all with plenty of definition. The Mood control is essentially a "thick" knob; in positions two and four with the Tone maxed and Mood at zero, the La Mora dishes out tight, three-dimensional out-of-phase tones. Sounding great clean, adding some dirt resulted in even deeper sounds. Cleaning things up a bit and switching to the bridge pickup delivered kick-ass twang textures that became delightfully spitty and snarly as the Volume increased.

The straight-up humbucking tones – achieved with the Mood knob at 10, Tone past five and Volume to taste – are sublime. In



GEARIN' UP



3RD POWER HLH100

3RD Power Amplification's HLH100 amp employs hand-wired circuitry and the company's DirecDRIV tube preamp section. It produces 100 watts output through its three triangular HLH 312 cabinets, each of which has three Celestion Vintage 30 speakers wired in parallel. For more, go to 3rdpoweramps.com.



ANTHOLOGY GEAR WEAR

Anthology Gear Wear guitar straps are made of full-grain leather from the top layer of the hide, with all the natural scrapes and scars. They are backed with high-density padding on the shoulder side of the strap. See them at anthologygearwear.com.



CRAZY TUBE EFFECTS

Crazy Tube Circuits line of effects pedals includes the Starlight fuzz, Vyagra Boost, the Time delay, and the Black Magic overdrive. They are all hand-built using Wima/Panasonic capacitors, metal-film resistors, Alpha pots, Neutrik/Cliff jacks, 3PDT switches, hand-selected transistors, and Burr Brown/Texas Instruments op-amps. Check them out at crazytubecircuits.com.



CRUZTOOLS GROOVETECH STRING CUTTER

The CruzTools GrooveTech String Cutters is made using an induction-heat-treatment process. It has a high-leverage handle, vinyl grips, and a compact design. Learn more at cruztools.com.

this context, it's apparent Jason and Teye play well together. The bridge pickup is tight and ballsy while the middle unit solo—accessed in positions two and four by rolling down the unwanted pickup's volume—sounds great on its own and even better blended with the bridge or the neck, particularly after some Tone and Mood twiddling. The neck pickup is a thing of beauty, delivering the requisite fat textures while retaining definition. Even with the Mood and Tone controls at zero, the neck pickup retained clarity, producing a delightfully nasally woman tone or, with less

push, a convincing jazz tone. You can also select all three pickups by finding the sweet spot between positions two and three, a la old school, three-way Strat switches.

Despite this flexibility, the La Mora's focus isn't so much about mimicry, but creating the right sound for the moment. If you want a thinner or thicker tone, play with the Mood knob. Want brighter? Turn up the Tone. If softer is in order, roll back the Volume. The controls are incredibly easy to use, becoming intuitive almost immediately.

Deities like Jimi and Stevie continu-

ally rode pickup, tone, and volume settings—the La Mora begs for the same treatment. Set your amp to its sweet spot and play the entire guitar, controls and all—there are no bad sounds. Every input—no matter how subtle—offers a great response. This thing is as happy and effective feeding an overdrive as it is pushing an amp. The guitar's mahogany/humbucker construction means its voice will remain familiar, but it does so through Teye's filter. The La Mora is one of those rare gems that consistently take your playing beyond its limitations. — James Egnoff

Low Wattage, Big Tube Tone

Mack Amps' Heatseeker and Skyraider

MACK AMPS IS PART OF a new wave of boutique builders turning out excellent pieces of gear at prices that won't kill ya'. Even their tagline alludes to that idea: "Virtuoso tone without the Prima Donna Price!" So what's the real deal with these amps?

Mack's Heatseeker HS-18 is a nice, simple head producing 18 watts of tone. Its construction and layout are pleasantly straightforward and approachable. Look through the clear plexiglas front and you'll see two 12AX7 tubes (one for the preamp, the other for the phase

inverter), and a pair of cathode-biased EL84 power tubes. The specs add that the amp is "Handmade, hand-wired using an eyelet circuit board with Teflon wire and lead-free solder" and has "Solidstate rectification with 'sag' circuitry." Ampsmith Don Mackrill adds that the Heatseeker derives much of its tone from power-amp distortion, giving a British-voiced tone. "Think Marshall meets Vox," he says.

Out front, you get two knobs, Volume and Tone, as well as a selector offering Hot, Burn and Melt settings. Mackrill says that the lack of bass and middle controls doesn't give you as much tone-shaping capacity, but reduces signal loss because the fewer passive controls in the signal chain, the larger the signal getting to the phase inverter and power section. Of course, the Hot, Burn, and

Melt settings offer more tonal dimension and you get more sonic choices when you put a good overdrive, fuzz, or distortion pedal out front.

The Skyraider SR-15 has a similar layout, but with 6V6 power tubes. Mackrill says this amp is more Fender meets Vox, as the 6V6s produce warmer cleans and still-plentiful midrange. Turning up the volume, they offer darker overdriven and distorted tones.

Like the Heatseeker (and other good tube amps), the Skyraider offers all sorts of dynamics based on volume level, pick attack, and other variables. Again, a stompbox adds new dimensions of tone. Both amps have solidstate rectifiers, instead of those vaunted tube rectifiers that offer the classic tube "sag." But Mackrill says the circuitry duplicates this effect, and at a substantial savings over a tube circuit.

Using a Strat and a PRS through a Mack 1x12 closed-back cab with an Eminence Redcoat "The Wizard" 12" ceramic speaker, both heads offered a variety of classic tones, from twangy country to blues to jazz flavors. Add grit, and there's a big spectrum of dirtier blues inflections and nasty roots-rock. And of course, stompboxes delivered an even wider palette of useful sounds. The best sounds, though, came from simply play-

MACK AMPS HEATSEEKER/SKYRAIDER

Price: \$949 (Heatseeker head)/\$974 (Skyraider head).
Contact: Mackamps.com



GEARIN' UP

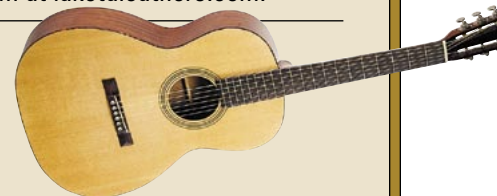


JOHNSON SOLARA, TRAILBLAZER DELUXE

The Johnson Solara Special has a solid basswood body and bolt-on maple neck, two open-coil humbuckers, and controls for volume and tone. The Johnson Trailblazer Deluxe travel guitar has a solid spruce top, 24³/₄" scale length, 22 frets, and a rosewood fretboard, mahogany sides, and an arched mahogany back. Visit the musiclink.net.

LAKOTA LEATHERS STRAPS

Lakota Leathers guitar, banjo, and mandolin straps use native Bison and Elk hides and are handmade by members of the Lakota Sioux nation. See them at lakotalathers.com.



RECORDING KING ROS-06

The Recording King ROS-06 is a 12-fret 000-style guitar with solid spruce top, mahogany back and sides, rosewood fretboard, bone nut and saddle, and tortoiseshell body binding. It has a 1¹³/₁₆" nut width and 25.4" scale length. Read about it at recordingking.com.

TAYLOR ARMREST GUITARS

Taylor Guitars' 35th Anniversary XXXV-GS Armrest Series guitars incorporate Taylor's Grand Symphony body style, and use exotic tonewoods. An armrest on the bass side of its lower bout applies a useful aesthetic touch. Learn more at taylorguitars.com.



WARWICK CORVETTE FRETLESS SPECIAL EDITION

The Warwick Corvette Fretless Special Edition has white fret lines adorning its ebony fingerboard, and a high-polish Snow White finish. It uses MEC pickups and electronics. Visit warwickbass.com.