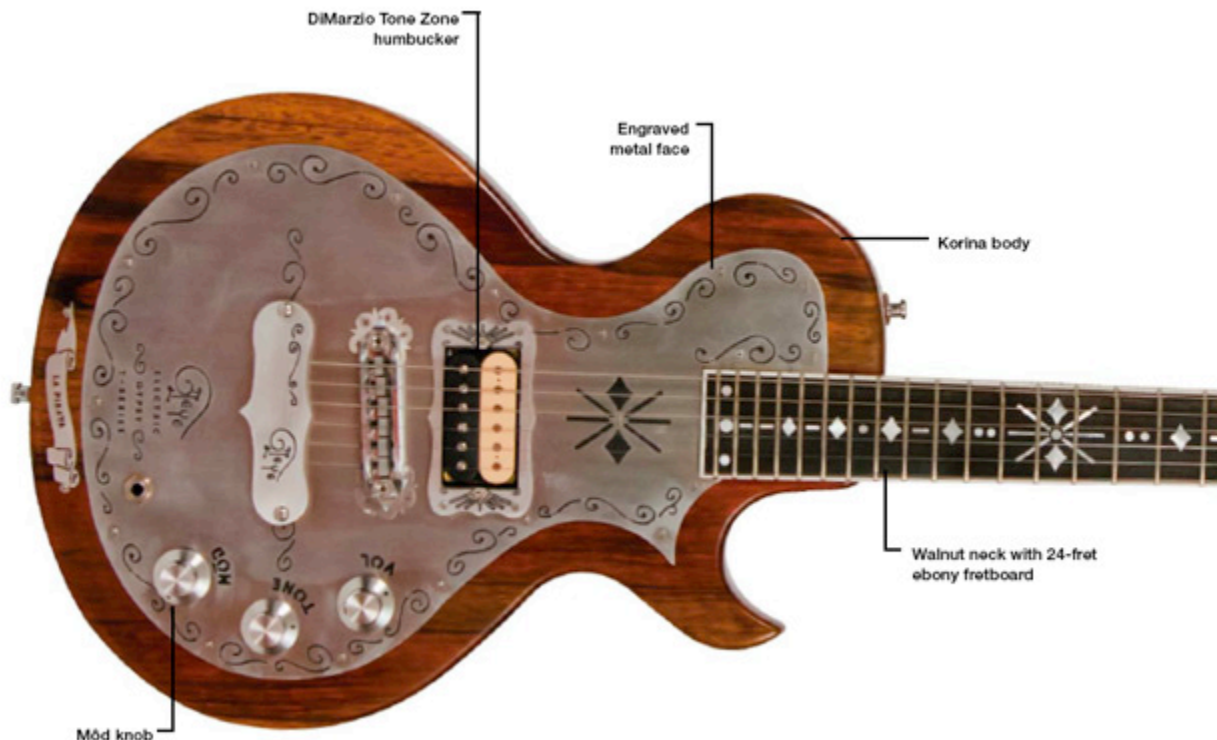


Teye Guitars La Pirata Custom Plus Electric Guitar Review



At first glance, a Teye guitar could easily be mistaken for one of the rare metal-faced guitars that made Tony Zemaitis a legendary luthier in the 1970s and a favorite of elite players from Keith Richards to Chris Robinson. But though the design homage is clear, the resemblance is mostly superficial. Thoughtfully designed in all aspects—from their proprietary hardware and electronics to handrubbed finishes—Teye guitars occupy a singular place in the world of boutique instruments.



[Download Example 1](#)

Mood Control on 0



[Download Example 2](#)

Mood Control on 10

Clips recorded directly into a Line 6 DT50 112 amplifier mic'd with a Shure SM57 into ART Tubeamp Studio preamp into Garage Band.

These excellent axes are the creation of Teye, a Dutchman who resides and works in Austin, Texas. As a rock 'n' roll-loving teenager, Teye began tinkering with his electric guitars under the direction of his engineer father. Eventually, the two got into guitar making together, creating a Lucite instrument so that Teye wouldn't have to take a beloved see-through Dan Armstrong to gigs.

Teye studied classical guitar at the Netherlands Conservatory of Music and devoted 25 years of his life to playing flamenco guitar. But he remained connected to the electric guitar, and in the 1990s, after acquiring two Zemaitis guitars, he became inspired to make a metal-topped solidbody of his own that drew from what he'd learn about sound production and analysis of the construction of his flamenco instruments.

In 2006, Teye starting building guitars like the stunning, triple-pickup Electric Gypsy La India and La Mora models, each of which now sells for just under \$10,000. More recently, though, Teye introduced the T-Series—including La Pirata, El Platero, and Media Noche— which are made by a team of three luthiers that he oversees, and which range in price from \$2275 to \$2950. The La Pirata (“the Pirate” en Español) reviewed here is so named because it has a single pickup instead of the customary pair or trio—a configuration Teye likened to the plight of a peg-legged buccaneer. But, like a crafty pirate of the high seas, the Pirata is no less dangerous for such limitations.

Super Stylish and Solid

Our review La Pirata, a Custom Plus, came with a number of upgrades—a korina body and walnut neck (standard models use mahogany for both), an elaborate “Bedouin” fretboard inlay pattern, neck binding, and a handrubbed finish—that doubled the its base price.

Our Pirata is undeniably cool looking, especially in terms of the metalwork, with its Southwestern-inspired motifs. The back control cover, an undecorated piece of metal extending diagonally between the upper and lower bouts, is fittingly shaped like a sea creature.

The woods were also visually appealing. Devoid of filler, and handrubbed with a light, violin-style finish, the black-spalted korina body was deeply grained and luminous. Choice wood specimens and careful wood selection were also evident in the flawless ebony fretboard, walnut neck, and walnut headstock overlay.

Most of the hardware on the Pirata was designed and machined by Teye himself. The bridge has a rigid aluminum construction, as do the tailpiece, pickup ring, truss-rod cover, and headstock logo—all of which are artistically shaped and engraved. Besides being visually appealing, Teye says these components add vibrancy to the guitar’s sound. The only non-proprietary parts on the



guitar are the Grover Imperial tuners (which are reminiscent of those on fancy old archtops), the Schaller strap locks, the DiMarzio Tone Zone humbucker, and the control knobs.

Even more compelling than the Pirata's hardware are its proprietary passive electronics, which were designed with purity of tone and ease of operation in mind. The guitar's single DiMarzio humbucker is controlled by three knobs—Volume, Tone, and M \acute{o} d—from which you can coax an impressive spectrum of sounds, from single-coil twang to humbucking roar. Overall, the craftsmanship on our review model was excellent. The fretwork was faultless and the setup was spot on.

Streamlined and Lively

Our La Pirata was much lighter than its appearance would suggest, at just 7 3/4 pounds. It's also nicely balanced between the neck and body, and it was equally comfortable to play standing or seated.

As a longtime Gibson man, I'm accustomed to that brand's standard 1 11/16" nut and 24 3/4" scale. However, I found the Pirata's larger dimensions—a 1 3/4" nut and 25 1/2" scale—quite inviting. The mediumsized, C-shaped neck was similarly comfortable and easy to navigate, and with the wider neck and longer scale, it feels quite balanced.



Even playing the Pirata unplugged, I was struck by its liveliness and sustain, which are likely helped by the guitar's thin finish and the bright, reverberative qualities of its metal parts. Notes rang true and clear, even in the uppermost regions of the fretboard where tones can sometimes get thin and buzzy.

Teye guitars are clearly designed with the oldschool player in mind, so I plugged directly into some valve amps—a mid-'60s Fender Vibrolux Reverb and a Line 6 DT50 112. Using the enigmatically named M \acute{o} d knob—whose workings aren't fully disclosed by Teye—I was able to get a staggering assortment of tones. More, in fact, than on a few twin-pickup guitars. With the Volume, Tone, and M \acute{o} d controls maxed out, the guitar had a thick, beefy sound with just a bit of spank—a combination of qualities that might be aided by the guitar's walnut neck. Conversely, with Volume, Tone, and M \acute{o} d set at around 2, 10, and 0, respectively, the Pirata sounded almost like an acoustic-electric. Turning the Volume up to around 8 gave the Pirata a warm but biting country twang.

Needless to say, it was incredibly satisfying to get such an assortment of sounds not by switching guitars or fiddling around with an effects processor but by simply tweaking the guitar's smoothly responsive knobs. And all of the tonal variations were extremely inspired. Although I tried, I could not coax an unlikable sound from the Pirata.

The Verdict

Teye's La Pirata Custom Plus is a killer boutique guitar that provides an uncommonly wide range of tones from a single humbucking pickup. It is highly playable, and its engraved metal parts add brilliance to the sound and an exotic flash to the appearance. Indeed, if you're the adventurous sort, the Pirata Custom Plus is the kind of guitar you will likely play, keep, and treasure for a long, long time.

Buy if...

you want a single, lightweight, extremely versatile guitar to gig with, and you're inter-ested in making a visual statement with that axe.

Skip if...

you're a foe of the unusual.

Rating...

Street \$4000 - Teye Guitars - teye-guitars.com