



Vintage Guitar[®] Gear Reviews

magazine

Spanish Castle Magic

The Teye El Torero/Le Guitana R Series

Every once in a while, a guitar comes along that stops you in your tracks. The guitars of Teye Wijterp do just that. A Dutchman who played rock and roll as a teenager, then later moved to Spain and learned flamenco, today, he builds guitars in Austin, Texas.

A common first reaction to Teye guitars is, “It reminds me of a Zemaitis.” And yes, Teye was a friend of the late guitar builder Tony Zemaitis. But Teye strives for a more-refined guitar that expresses his personal preferences, which most notably include simple electronics and a 24-fret heel-less neck (like a flamenco guitar).

On looks alone, Teye’s El Torero is impressive. Its engraved aluminum body, pickup rings, tailpiece, and headstock face are admirable works of craftsmanship – there are few corollaries in guitar-making. Add an intricate proprietary bridge, cool knobs, and an oiled mahogany body (with no pore filler), and you have a guitar that scores high, visually. Other elements include three Lollar humbuckers, a five-way selector, Grover Rotomatic tuners, two-piece mahogany neck, and a bound, 24-fret ebony fingerboard with 25½”

scale and mother-of-pearl inlay. There’s also an ornately shaped rear plate – Teye leaves no stone unturned. Teye’s La Guitana model is similar, but with two humbuckers and (instead of the body face plate) a crimson-tinted padauk top that continues the Spanish vibe.

These guitars stand apart thanks mostly to their necks and electronics. When you pick up either one, you immediately notice the wider nut and modest taper down the neck. This

is a direct result of Teye’s years playing flamenco, a genre whose guitars feature a wider neck profile many guitarists find more comfortable. Teye ported this idea to his solidbodies and the result is a singular-feeling neck, especially around the first three frets. We quickly became accustomed to its feel. Add its astounding low action and overall fast neck setup, and you have a fingerboard as sharp as a cowboy’s whip.

Also cool are the Tone and Volume pots. They’re very sensitive and able to draw an abundance of interesting colors from the El Torero and La Guitana you don’t find when you leave knobs on

10 all the time. And there’s another twist; Teye adds a Mood knob, which controls a proprietary circuit that aims for single-coil sounds. As you roll it off, you can hear a less-bassy sound emerge that speaks to Fender-like tones, especially when you tweak it with the Volume knobs. Combining the neck and bridge pickups on the La Guitana produces a Peter Green “out of phase” sound. Many guitar builders try to achieve this, and thus, reviewers tend to be rightfully skeptical, but the Teye nails that nasal, throaty sound. On the three-humbucker El Torero, you can use the middle pickup only, or run all three pickups by lodging the switch between the middle and fourth position. Sweet!

Plugged in, both guitars cover all the bases, from blues to all manner of rock to country and more. The necks are certainly different – you won’t play many guitars that have a nut as wide, but it sets them apart from the crowd.

Weave in their stunning looks and “hand-made in Texas” pedigree, and you have incredible pieces of guitar luthiery. –

Pete Prown VG

TEYE EL TORERO/LE GUITANA R SERIES

Price: \$3,750 to \$4,650

Info: teye.com.

