



## Teye Guitars **Electric Gypsy "La Perla"**

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PHOTOS BY MICKEY DOBO

### THE TEYE ELECTRIC GYPSY "LA PERLA" BASS

is a unique piece of playable art that is supremely functional as well. Teye, who is originally from the Netherlands, has been building instruments in Austin, Texas since 2005. Having carved out a niche in the boutique guitar market, he has branched out into making basses, and is taking the same painstaking approach that have made his guitars so desirable. This bass is a stunner, with the musical muscle to back up its beautiful looks.

The breathtaking inlay work on the top of the aptly named bass is the first thing to grab your eye. The single cutaway's shape is outlined in abalone, and the interior inlay is composed of dozens of mother of pearl slivers that shimmer and shine. The "skinny Les Paul" body and the ornate metal carving on the headstock, bridge and elsewhere, are both somewhat reminiscent of the Zemaitis guitars often played by Ronnie Wood and Keith Richards. Despite all the hardware, this bass is not overly heavy and balances very well.

While the top is the primary visual attraction, the rest of the bass is beautiful as well. The sides and back are beautifully grained Korina wood with a gorgeous reddish brown finish, and a sword-shaped metal belt protector adorns the back of the bass. The bridge, saddle, and pickup surrounds are miniature metal sculptures

that are easily and accurately adjustable. Even the truss rod cover is intricately laser engraved to match the headstock.

The medium 32" scale is an interesting choice, (Teye also offers a 34" option) and marries the best of both worlds with its effortless playability, punchy tone, and solid feel. The walnut neck's flat and slightly wide profile makes for easy double stops and chordal playing, and the gently curved heel where it joins the body is one of many small touches that add up to a very classy instrument.

The Electric Gypsy packs a solid punch with two MM-style pickups mounted side by side. The passive electronics feature two volumes, a single tone control, and a mysterious "mood" knob. Closer inspection reveals it to be a subtle tone shaper that works through manipulating the relationship between the pickups double coils in a variety of ways. When you sweep the mood knob while blending the two volumes, a surprisingly wide range of tones come out. It's very easy to dial up a variety of full-range hi-fi sounds, but La Perla can go many other places with a little experimentation. Finger funk sounds snappy, reggae gets thick, and a little dirt really brings out the nastiness in the midrange.

This is the top of the line Teye, and at this price, the La Perla may not be for everyone, but if it's any consolation, its beauty is much more than skin deep, and the quality factor is high in Teye's less expensive basses as well. Though it's hard not to be distracted by its dazzling appearance, this bass is even more fun to play than it is to look at. This is a fine instrument made with extraordinary craftsmanship. **BP**