



The Art of Tone

Teye Guitars Gypsy Queen

For Austin-based Teye Guitars, taking guitar construction to new artistic heights has been a basic tenet since their inception. Mastermind luthier Teye Wijnterp, an accomplished guitarist, forged his concept of playable art during years of touring. Today, players around the world, including Rich Robinson of the Black Crowes, Zac Brown, and Grammy-nominated guitarist Joe Taylor, know that Teye guitars are more than beautiful objects. These guitars sound great, and the latest addition to the line is an absolute workhorse.

At first glance, the Gypsy Queen is generally evocative of a Strat shape, but upon plugging in it quickly becomes apparent that there is much more to this contoured double cutaway. Available in both a wooden and striking hand-engraved metal top, the Gypsy Queen has a Spanish cedar body with a hand-rubbed finish. The bolt-on neck is select maple with a rosewood fingerboard. The reverse headstock, while a nod to the '60s, is also functional, making the low E the longest string, resulting in more even string tension. The overall evenness in notes is immediately noticeable, and the 24-fret, 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ "-scale neck provides familiarity that most players will appreciate.

Hardware is top-notch, with Grover Mini Rotomatics and a Trev Wilkinson tremolo bridge, as well as brushed control knobs that are a gorgeous addition. The metal body and headstock covers are laser-etched and then hand-engraved. There are basically

no limits to the design possibilities of these engravings, which makes each Teye truly unique. Buyers can also have the metal back plates engraved.

The Gypsy Queen sports four Lollar single-coils wired to Teye's specs. The guitar has Volume and Tone knobs along with Teye's secret weapon – their Mood control, a passive filter that acts similar to a low-/high-pass filter but with much more character and many useable tones. It is also an improvement over traditional rotary switches that may limit the player to a six-position switch or pre-selected tones. The Mood knob has no notches and even the most subtle turns yield new sounds.

For testing, we used the Gypsy Queen live and in the studio. While its striking good looks are apparent, arguably more important is the fact it's comfortable to play. A smallish, offset design emphasizes comfort and playability, and even the metal-covered body was surprisingly light, making it playable for hours. The Teye's body design sat perfectly when sitting and the neck profile felt like an old friend – the perfect marriage of a '60s Strat and a 24-fret shredder neck. The hand-rubbed finish also gave the neck a worn-in feel that made it comfortable for extended hours of use. Better yet, the Gypsy Queen's cutaway design provided easy access to all frets; an even more pleasant surprise was that it didn't neck dive as a result of the metal headstock cover.

The Gypsy Queen is surprising

acoustically, too. Though the even tension of the reverse headstock helps, the cedar-and-maple combination is an obvious hit. Of course, the proof is delivered when the guitar is plugged in; the Gypsy Queen did not disappoint. This guitar is a Swiss army knife. The pickup wiring gives it a '60s Strat spirit, but the guitar offers so much more. That Mood knob's diversity can catch one off guard. In the studio the Gypsy Queen delivered everything from Tele to Rick to Les Paul tones. Try that with other single-coils. The only drawback is remembering where the knob was set; dialing these sounds back up on the fly takes practice. And the brushed knobs, while gorgeous, are tricky to see in low lighting, so again it's best to find those favorite tones and stay there or spend some quality time with the guitar beforehand. Either way, it's worth the effort.

All in all, a spectacular offering from Teye and arguably the most versatile instrument they have offered to date from a performance perspective. The Gypsy Queen is not a cheap instrument, but for an extremely well-built custom with oodles of tone and character, one need look no further.

– Sean O'Bryan Smith VG

TEYE GYPSY QUEEN

Price: \$4,400 (as tested with metal top)

Info: teye-guitars.com

