

VINTAGE VE2000GG

Gordon Giltrap Signature

JHS has collaborated with guitar virtuoso Gordon Giltrap and UK luthier Rob Armstrong to create a highly individual and affordable electro acoustic...

Words: Tim Slater

Gordon Giltrap is something of a guitarist's guitarist; the British virtuoso is rightly regarded as one of the UK's most accomplished and prolific practitioners of his craft and his impressive list of LPs and TV credits is a testament to the unassuming Londoner's abilities as a player, writer and arranger.

Now, a guitarist of Gordon Giltrap's calibre can play any brand of guitar that he likes, which makes his collaboration with the budget Vintage brand particularly interesting. "The thing that attracted me to the idea of collaborating with JHS was the idea of a Signature guitar that was affordable," says the affable guitarist, "I already owned a Vintage Tri-cone resonator guitar that I used on a track on my new album *Shining Morning* and I've always been a great enthusiast of their products because not only is it good value, its

good quality!"

The new Vintage Gordon Signature guitar is a striking looking design. The tightly tucked in waist has the visual effect of further exaggerating the striking contrast between the wider Grand Auditorium/Jumbo style lower bout and the more squashed looking 000 style upper bout, it looks unconventional but also very elegant once you begin to grow accustomed to the unusual proportions. The scale length of 25.27-inches is similarly individual, falling in between the standard Grand Auditorium scale length of 24.9-inches and the traditional 000 style 25.4-inches. The Vintage GG's unique design is closely based on an original guitar made in 1980 by British luthier Rob Armstrong, an instrument that Gordon Giltrap has owned for several years and still refers to as one of his favourite guitars. At Gordon's insistence Rob Armstrong was drafted into the Vintage Signature project early on to lend his input into the design, helping to make sure that it sticks as closely as possible to the original hand built guitar's specs whilst also slotting into an affordable price range. "Rob deliberately chooses not to charge big bucks for his guitars," Gordon insists, "A lot of high end guitar makers wouldn't want to go down that road but Rob has always wanted one of his designs to be available for the mass market, and I've been looking for many years to open that situation to him. The end result is what we see today."

Construction

The body comprises a solid North American red cedar top and laminated mahogany back and sides. Rather than being included to help the guitar make its price point, the laminated back and sides are elements that Rob Armstrong also tends to favour on his own hand made acoustic instruments, as Gordon Giltrap explains "We've included laminate back and sides because Rob's guitars are all laminate, it's actually harder to make a laminate guitar but Rob favours it because of



VINTAGE VE2000GG

SRP £479.00

All prices include VAT

CONTACT

JHS Ltd

T: 01132 865 381

W: www.jhs.co.uk

its strength; the top needs to move freely to give you the sound but the back and sides need to be strong."

Visually the VE2000GG looks very striking; the pale cedar top makes a splendid contrast with the orangey mahogany back and sides trimmed with pinstripe edge binding and dark brown coachwork. A single strip of parquetry runs down the centre of the two-piece laminated back before it meets the strap button located on the base. The neck is a chunky 'C' section with a 20 fret rosewood fingerboard sporting abalone dot fingerboard inlays and a stylish wing shaped inlay at the 12th fret, leading the eye naturally toward the distinctive Rob Armstrong-derived elongated headstock with its wooden truss rod cover bearing Rob's trademark 'A' signature. The simple soundhole rosette finishes off what is a very smart looking guitar that oozes confidence. The look and feel of a quality instrument is maintained throughout and Gordon and Rob's input notwithstanding, the overall standard of finishing is very impressive considering this guitar's affordable price. Aside from a lone smudge of glue where a section of the internal curving meets the inside of the back the internal finishing is also very tidy, the wires for the built-in preamp/microphone are tied back fairly neatly too.

Sounds

"Rob's guitars have got incredible character to them," Gordon says, "No other guitar sounds like them. They have an inherent English sound and tone, it is an all singing, all dancing guitar; you can pick it or play power chords on it and it sounds great. There aren't many guitars that can do that."

Gordon's enthusiastic endorsement



Perfect partners: Gordon Giltrap and his new Signature Vintage VE2000GG

The Vintage VE2000GG comes with a good quality fitted case (12 string model pictured)



of Rob Armstrong's skills left us curious to find out how much of the distinctive clarity and range that Rob builds into his instruments has managed to translate into this

designed guitar with a great sound. The unusual body shape seems to conspire to help form a well balanced and warm tone that combines the projection of a 000

button, low battery indicator, three-band EQ and volume control, as well as a built-in digital tuner.

The battery housing pivots on an easy-access housing but battery

The unconventional body shape forms a well balanced tone that combines the projection of a 000 style guitar with a Jumbo's smooth expansive bass...

admittedly low cost Chinese-made guitar but interestingly we ended up coming to more or less the same conclusion. The VE2000GG sounds markedly different to the majority of affordable steel strung acoustic guitars that we've experienced, largely thanks to its remarkably well balanced sound. More often than not, the treble register is where the majority of low cost acoustics tend to fall down; their top end often sounds raw and shrill, sometimes even bordering on distortion. Less frequently you'll come across an inexpensive Far Eastern made acoustic with a preponderance of low end thump but by contrast the treble sounds thin and brittle. Not so here, the VE 2000GG has a sweet-yet-mellow treble that sits perfectly against a bass that is deep and sonorous but not overbearing. It's maybe not the most powerful low end but it still projects well enough and the fact that the bass frequencies don't overpower everything in sight also contributes to the general sense that, tonally speaking, this is a very skillfully

style guitar with a Jumbo's smooth, expansive bass. Even thrashed aggressively ala Gordon's hit single Heart Song the VE 2000 GG still sounds easy on the ear. Plugged in, the VE 2000GG uses a Fishman system comprising a Sonicore undersaddle pickup linked to a Fishman Presys Blend preamp, which features a built-in microphone with mic blend control, notch (anti-feedback) control, phase control

changes shouldn't be too often, Fishman reckons that battery life is over 80 hours and the system generally very user-friendly, with the tuner coming in especially useful.

Compared to the unplugged sound, the amplified tones can be quite a handful and require a little more work to replicate the natural acoustic smoothness but the mic/Piezo blend is still a very powerful and flexible setup. **PM**

SHOULD I BUY ONE?

If you are in the market for a good electro acoustic but counting the pennies is never far from your thoughts – and let's face it, we all need to be mindful of spending in these thrifty times – then we couldn't recommend the Vintage VE2000GG highly enough. This guitar reflects the input – and by that we mean genuine hands-on input – invested by a top class luthier, a world renowned guitarist and a manufacturer/distributor that knows their market. It even comes with a quality fitted case. Looking at what it offers in terms of pure bang-for-buck the Vintage VE2000GG stands out as the best value for money that we've seen in any product in any category in 2010.