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THE SWEDISH THING

Hagstrom Swede

BY CHRIS GILL

HAGSTROM GUITARS ENJOY cult appeal among players looking for something different. Former Foo Fighters guitarist Pat Smear appeared in this magazine with a Hagstrom Viking about 10 years ago, and dead rock stars like Frank Zappa and Elvis Presley played Hagstroms as well. Hagstrom initially ceased production in 1983, but in 2006 the company returned with reissues of several offbeat models and some bold new designs.

FEATURES

THE SWEDE IS A single-cutaway model with roots that reach back to the early Seventies. It looks like a more voluptuous version of a Les Paul, and like a Paul, it features a laminated top. In the case of the Swede, however, the top is mahogany, rather than maple, so the tone is warmer, darker and bigger. The Swede's body and neck are made from this tonewood as well.

HAGSTROM SWEDE

LIST PRICE: \$750.00
MANUFACTURER:
Hagstrom,
hagstromguitars.com



PRO

COOL CULT APPEAL,
GREAT CLEAN TONES,
DELUXE HARDWARE

CON

MAY BE TOO QUIRKY FOR
MANY; DISTORTED TONES
CAN BE VERY DARK

Hagstrom's Custom '58 humbuckers are wound to the same specs as the Seventies versions, and there is even a three-position tone filter (similar to the tone toggle on a Gretsch) in addition to the three-position pickup selector and individual tone and volume controls for each pickup. With its large block fingerboard inlays, five-ply top binding, bound fingerboard, elevated pick guard, "stair-step" tuners and immaculate workmanship, the Swede boasts features and construction similar to guitars starting at \$2,000.

PERFORMANCE

WHILE MOST ALL-MAHOGANY guitars sound rather dark, the Swede delivers surprisingly complex highs and snappy mids, which really shine when the guitar is played through an amp dialed in to a clean, undistort-

ed tone. The neck pickup sounds almost like a ballsy SRV-style Strat—perfect for blues and Hendrix-style classic rock (no wonder: Hendrix bassist Noel Redding played a Hagstrom). While the tone filter is nice for vintage completists, it rolls off too many highs to be useful to anyone but moody jazz guitarists.

The neck has the hefty feel of a Seventies-era ax, but the action is enticingly low and smooth, and the fretwork shows that considerable care and detail went into the construction of this guitar.

THE BOTTOM LINE

THE HAGSTROM SWEDE is a great choice for players who desire an instrument that stands out from the crowd both in terms of looks and sound. 🌟

