



Round-Up: Modern Retro

Here are some recent electrics with one foot in the past and one eye on the future

1 PRS Vela £1,289
www.prsguitars.com

PRS's relatively affordable USA S2 line's Vela could just be the company's coolest model yet. Vintage Cherry finish, dots instead of bird markers, and a Tele-esque plate-style bridge contrast with the advanced electrics, which include a new Type D single coil, treble-bleed cap and coil-split switch on the bridge Starla Treble pickup.

We said: "It's a Rickenbacker, Gretsch, Dano... and quite a few others all rolled into one. A superb rhythm guitar but equally good for those crunchy SG-meets-Telecaster gnarly leads"

2 Peerless Retromatic 131 £899
www.peerlessguitars.eu

Aesthetically, it appears to owe a debt of gratitude to the styling of retro favourites, Duesenberg. But the Peerless Retromatic 131's archtop hollowbody combines with a P-90 neck and humbucker in the bridge to capably cover all the rock 'n' roll bases, while turning its hand to more blues/indie-rock duties. Plus, you'll have fun while you're doing it, too.

We said: "Loads of kitsch, Art Deco fun for jazz, rock 'n' roll, blues, or for exploring more evocative tonal textures"

3 Fender Classic Player Triple Tele £826
www.fender.com

For many, Fender's Telecaster is perfect as it is. Yet for a design so seemingly resistant to change, Fender has done an admirable job varying its tone for different musical styles on this triple single coil model with five-way, Stratocaster-style pickup switching that's a viable alternative to the Cabronita.

We said: "A lightweight 50s-vibe Tele with three Tele bridge pickups. Daft? Not at all – a great 'Strat' for the Tele player"

4 Gibson 2015 Les Paul Studio £899
www.gibson.com

Gibson always risks alarming the purists with updates to its ranges. But rarely has so much Les Paul been dealt out by the company to so many, for so few pounds. The new 2015 take on the low-end Lester retains the model's aura, but incorporates single-coil voicings via 'tuned coil-taps', medium density weight relief and the G Force automatic tuning system.

We said: "Excellent value, quality sounds – including the single-coil voices – this will sell by the truckload"

5 Collings 360 LT £3,525
www.collingsguitars.com

At this price, you'd demand flawless craftsmanship and pro-quality tone. But unlike many boutique creations at this lofty strata, the 360 LT practically begs to be gigged – from its offset body to its TV Jones pickups and Bigsby, this feels built for rootsy rock crunch from a classic valve amp.

We said: "If you like the idea of modern boutique guitars but don't care for fussy styling, give the 360 LT a whirl. A seriously professional-feeling rock 'n' roll guitar that really gets the heart pumping"

6 Case J2 Semi-Hollow Double Cutaway £3,500
www.caseguitars.co.uk

This UK-crafted laminate maple-top thinline may take some of its inspiration from semi-hollow classics of yesteryear, but in practice, the J2 has a thicker, less snappy tone than a vintage ES-335. It's perfectly capable of classic-rock raunch from those Bare Knuckle Rebel Yell humbuckers, too, alongside smooth-as-silk Larry Carlton lead tones.

We said: "Its tone is astonishingly good – woody, resonant, touch-sensitive and wailing... Simply a superb modern semi-solid"