

Price: £1950



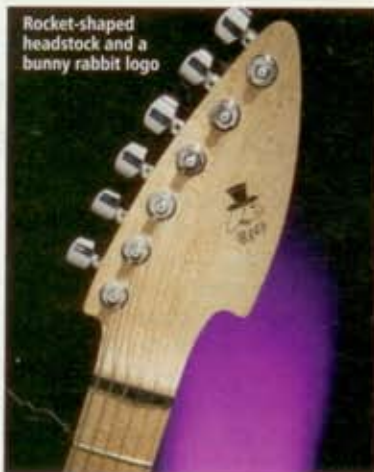
Pink Floyd, Robyn Hitchcock, Rees guitars: Cambridge and weird rock just go together. Huw Price checks out a maker with a different slant

Rees

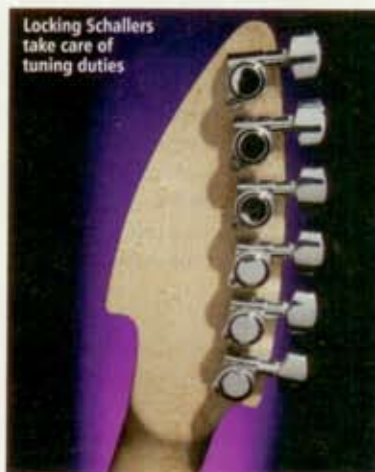
F7S Electric Guitar

Fantasy guitars often seem to be an amalgam of features from various classic instruments, and that's certainly the case with the Rees F7S. You get a stunning bolt-on birdseye maple neck with a chambered mahogany body with an f-hole and a hand-carved flame maple top. Hardware includes a wrapover Schaller stop tail bridge recessed into the top and an 'electrics for all seasons' arrangement of two Seymour Duncan Trembuckers with a Duncan Quarter Pounder single coil in the centre, each with its own volume and tone and individual switching that includes coil taps for the 'buckers. This might all look a bit much – but the 'S' in F7S stands for 'Studio', and Rees also makes a regular F7 for stage use with a much simpler control layout.

The necks are actually bought from Warmouth, and Rees cuts out his own headstock shape before applying the water-based finish and dressing the frets. The mahogany back has an unusual chambered design: it's solid around the neck joint, beneath the bridge and between the lower cutaway and the controls, but hollowed out



Rocket-shaped headstock and a bunny rabbit logo



Locking Schallers take care of tuning duties

You get a stunning birdseye maple neck, a chambered mahogany body and a hand-carved flamed maple top

beneath the pickups, and there's a U-shaped chamber that extends from the upper cutaway around the back of the bridge into the control area. The idea is to decouple the working core of the guitar from the rims to minimise the vibration-dampening effect of a player's body or clothes. Like the control cavity, that hollow space beneath the pickups has a mahogany cover. Removing it allows you to unplug the pickups and replace them without removing the strings.

Another Rees quirk is the neck joint. The neck has 24 frets but the last two sit on an extension of the maple fingerboard cap, so the neck actually

joins a very thin mahogany ledge, protruding from the body, at the 16th fret. Three carbon fibre strips strengthen the ledge, and there's a small brass plate for the two front screws, while the rear two are set into gold-plated cups.

The idea is to improve access to the upper frets, but this ungainly arrangement isn't really much of an improvement on a regular Fender-style joint; the chamfered-style three- or four-bolt joint used by Music Man and many others feels and looks a lot better. If the neck was solid all the way to the 24th fret Rees could have used a more conventional four-bolt

FACTFILE

REES F7S

Description: Semi-solid body electric guitar. Made in the UK

Price: £1950 inc. case

Build: Flame maple capped chambered mahogany body with bolt-on birdseye maple neck, 24-fret rosewood fingerboard, Schaller bridge, Schaller locking tuners

Electrics: Two Seymour Duncan Trembuckers and one Duncan Quarter Pounder. Three 3-way switches, individual dual concentric volume and tone controls

Left-hander: No

Finish options: Just ask

Scale Length: 25.5"/628 mm

Neck width: Nut 42mm
12th fret 51.5mm

Depth of neck: First fret 20mm
12th fret 21mm

String spacing: Nut 36mm
Bridge 53mm

Action as supplied: 12th fret treble 2mm
12th fret bass 2mm

Weight: 3.1kg/6.8lb

Contact: Rees Guitars
☎ 07889 160660

Web:
www.rees-electric-guitars.com

First Impressions

Luscious maple, a plethora of switches and a very individual sense of style

THE COMPETITION

MAYONESS

SeGTM Lizard

A double cut with a similarly rough-and-ready vibe that oozes tone

RRP: £770

MELANCON

Custom Artist T

A mahogany/maple sandwich with a pair of DiMarzio humbuckers and split/series/parallel switching options plus a bolt-on mahogany neck

RRP: £2494

PRS Hollowbody 1

Built in a similar manner with a solid block under the bridge, a flame maple top and carved-out mahogany back and sides with a set 22-fret neck

RRP: £2995

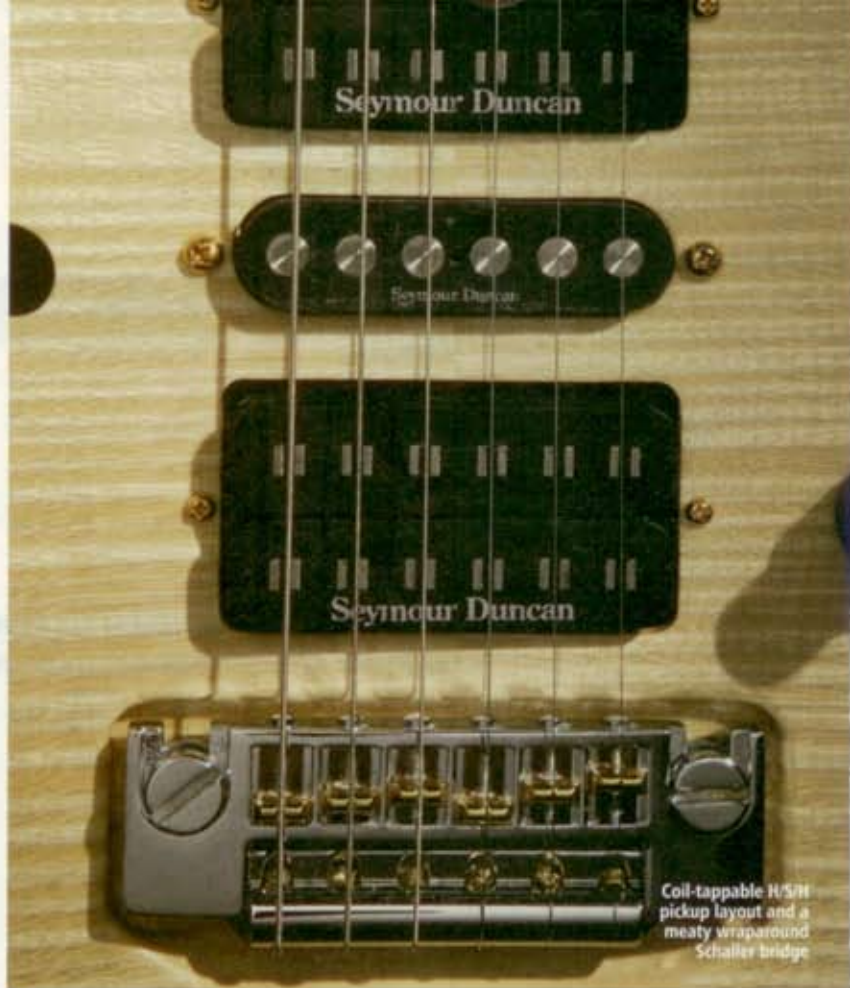
arrangement with a 19th fret joint... but at least this design means you can swap the neck for any S-style replacement. The good news is that the F75's neck has a fantastic wide C-shaped profile that feels pleasantly chunky, and the frets are very well dressed and polished.

This guitar has some optional extras including two bands of brass inlaid around the sides studded with abalone rectangles, and an Earvana compensated nut for improved intonation. Rees usually fits Fender roller nuts as standard. Since the body is very light the added weight of the locking tuners makes the neck a tad heavy on the strap, but it's fine when played in a seated position.

This guitar has issues. The accuracy of the mahogany back covers is poor, the carving around the mahogany heel extension is a bit shoddy, and the matt black paint inside the pickup and control cavities has been applied with very little care. The pickup circuitboard is crooked and loose on one side, and the body's polymer finish looks like it has been wiped on with a cloth. It's a job that any DIY-er might justifiably be proud of but it doesn't stack up against other guitars in this price range. It's odd considering the excellent quality neck finish, but we hear that Rees is now using a different finish method for the maple cap.

SOUNDS

The unplugged tone is excellent with magnificent sustain and clarity and a warm, full-bodied resonance. Even high single notes on the unwound strings have the thickness and body you'd associate with a quality acoustic guitar. Better still, the amplified tone is just as good. This guitar really sings,



Coil-tappable H/S/H pickup layout and a meaty wraparound Schaller bridge

This guitar really sings, and despite its 'studio' name it can also dish the dirt. It's no executive blues guitar

and despite its 'studio' name, it can also really dish the dirt. If you're looking for one of those 'executive blues' guitars, this isn't it.

The bridge Trembucker is fat and loud with a big midrange. The acoustic character adds considerable bass wallop and the high frequencies cuts through cleanly. Although it's well voiced for distorted rock, this pickup also offers fine clean tones with plenty of compression and bark. The neck humbucker is cleaner, brighter and clearer; more of the acoustic tone comes through, and rolling off the treble gives a convincing jazz tone. In combination with the bridge, the neck feeds in some natural playing dynamics and adds a bit of high-end sparkle.

The single coil matches the neck for volume and it's not too bright with an amp set up for humbuckers. This position gives you a flavour of S-style quack but the snappy highs are tempered by a degree of warmth and woodiness in the low mids. Things get even more Stratty when you start combining the 'buckers with the single coil; for a '50s tone use them coil tapped, and for a '60s sound switch back to double coils. Most sounds outside pure jazz or super-sharp country are within the

F75's capabilities, and the knobs and switches provide a huge variety of tones. Our only gripe is that the treble rolls off too quickly when you turn down the volumes, rendering the tone knobs surplus to requirements.

VERDICT

Despite its fit and finish issues, the F75 has considerable charm. It's one of the nicest-playing and best set-up guitars to have passed through *Guitar & Bass* in quite some time, and it sounds excellent. As a recording engineer I think the concept of a 'studio guitar' is questionable, but Rees has succeeded in creating something unique and special. If you value tone and playability more highly than clinical build quality and a flawless finish, you really should try one out.

FINAL SCORE	
Build Quality	12/20
Playability	19/20
Sound	19/20
Value for money	13/20
Vibe	15/20
TOTAL	78%
Good for... metal, blues rock, jazz, funk Look elsewhere... for big-bodied jazzbox and chicken-pickin' country tones	



Unusual 'stepped' neck to body joint, reinforced with carbon-fibre

Guitar

