

# REES F2 CS & T3 CS

A PAIR OF UNUSUAL ELECTRICS FROM A UK GUITAR BUILDER SHOW **DAVID GREEVES** SOME INTRIGUING OPTIONS 

**Rees Electric Guitars is a small company based in Cambridge. Having been suitably impressed by the Rees Rambler, a diminutive travel guitar that nonetheless features a long-scale neck (reviewed back in issue 86), we thought it was high time that we checked out a couple of Rees' full-size six-string offerings.**

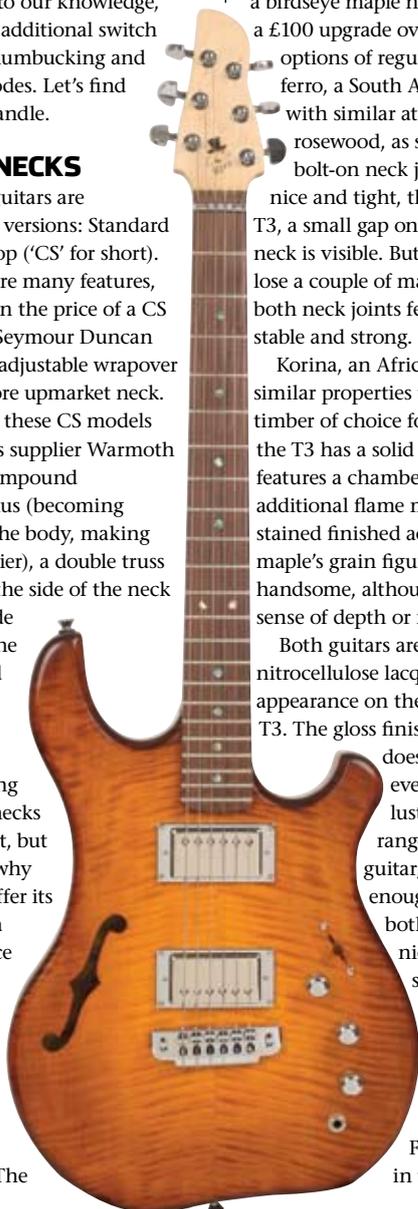
The company's various electric models offer an array of different construction features and hardware options. What ties them together, though, is an unusual double-cutaway body shape and, in many cases, extensive pickup switching options. Take the two we have on review here: while the F2, Rees' flagship model, sticks to a fairly conventional dual-humbucker setup, the T3 features a configuration of Telecaster-style pickups that is, to our knowledge, unique, plus an additional switch for single-coil, humbucking and out-of-phase modes. Let's find out how they handle.

**BODIES & NECKS**

All of the Rees guitars are available in two versions: Standard and Custom Shop ('CS' for short). While these share many features, the extra £200 in the price of a CS guitar gets you Seymour Duncan pickups, a fully adjustable wrapover bridge and a more upmarket neck.

The necks on these CS models come from parts supplier Warmoth and feature a compound fingerboard radius (becoming flatter towards the body, making string bends easier), a double truss rod adjusted at the side of the neck (in the treble-side cutaway), abalone dot markers and a Fender LSR roller nut.

You might think that buying in ready-made necks is a bit of a cheat, but it does explain why Rees is able to offer its instruments at a much lower price than most UK-built guitars. This is one of the most labour intensive bits of the guitar to build, after all. The



necks still need to be properly fitted and finished, however, and both of these guitars have smooth fret ends and properly levelled frets, though these are noticeable lower on the T3 than on the F2.

The T3 we're reviewing here features a birdseye maple neck and fingerboard, a £100 upgrade over the standard options of regular maple or pau ferro, a South American timber with similar attributes to rosewood, as seen on the F2. The bolt-on neck joint on the F2 is nice and tight, though over on the T3, a small gap on the bass side of the neck is visible. But though they might lose a couple of marks for neatness, both neck joints feel perfectly solid, stable and strong.

Korina, an African hardwood with similar properties to mahogany, is the timber of choice for the bodies. While the T3 has a solid korina body, the F2 features a chambered body and an additional flame maple top. An amber stained finish accentuates the maple's grain figure, which is very handsome, although it lacks any great sense of depth or movement.

Both guitars are finished in nitrocellulose lacquer, with a matte appearance on the F2 and gloss on the T3. The gloss finish on the latter doesn't display the evenness and glass-like lustre of a top of the top of the range nitro-finished guitar, but it's very smart enough nevertheless. In both cases, the finish is nice and thin and so shouldn't inhibit the acoustic properties of the wood.

As to the body shape, there are echoes of the Fender Stratocaster in the offset double

cutaways, while the shorter, squarer lower horn might point to PRS. However, when you add in the unusual hump in the lower bout, the overall combination is unlike anything else that's out there. Whether you take to the shape of these guitars or not, we can certainly say that it makes sense from an ergonomic point of view, and they feel comfortable and well-balanced whether played sitting down or worn on a strap.

**HARDWARE & PARTS**

As we've mentioned, these 'Custom Shop' models are equipped with Gotoh wraparound bridges. This excellent design offers the solidity and direct transfer of string vibrations to the body of a regular wraparound bridge, with the advantage of individually adjustable saddles.

Other 'CS' features include Seymour Duncan pickups – the JB and Jazz humbuckers on the F2 and Vintage Lead and Rhythm Tele-style pickups on the T3 – and Fender LSR roller nuts. Here, each string rests on a pair of small ball bearings, ensuring very low friction and allowing you to change string gauge without having to re-file the nut slots. Combined with a set of Grover tuners, this results in smooth and stable tuning on both guitars.

The F2's humbuckers are wired to a three-way blade-style selector switch and master volume and tone

**GBINFO**

**REES F2 CS**  
**PRICE:** £985  
**BUILT IN:** UK  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 648mm (25.5 inches)  
**NUT WIDTH:** 42mm (1.65 inches)  
**STRING SPACING AT NUT:** 35mm (1.38 inches)  
**BODY:** Chambered korina body with maple top  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**FINGERBOARD:** Pau ferro, 254-406mm compound radius (10-16 inches)  
**FRETS:** 22 medium  
**PICKUPS:** Seymour Duncan humbuckers; 1 x SH-2 Jazz, 1 x SH-4 JB  
**CONTROLS:** 1 x volume, 1 x tone, 3-way selector, rotary coil tap switch  
**BRIDGE:** Gotoh adjustable wraparound bridge/tailpiece  
**STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE:** 51mm (2 inches)  
**MACHINEHEADS:** Gotoh enclosed, chrome  
**WEIGHT:** 3.4kg (7.5lb)  
**FINISHES:** Matte nitrocellulose; see website for full list of options  
**CASE:** Not included; fitted Hiscox hard case available (£75)  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Yes, no extra charge  
**OPTIONS:** Standard model with standard neck, bone nut, non-adjustable bridge & Rees-specified unbranded pickups (£785); high-gloss finish (add £100), maple fingerboard (add £10), birdseye maple fingerboard (add £100)

**GBINFO**

**REES T3 CS**  
**PRICE:** £885 as reviewed  
**BUILT IN:** UK  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 648mm (25.5 inches)  
**NUT WIDTH:** 42mm (1.65 inches)  
**STRING SPACING AT NUT:** 35mm (1.38 inches)  
**BODY:** Korina  
**NECK:** Birdseye maple, bolt-on  
**FINGERBOARD:** Birdseye maple, 25.4-406mm compound radius (10-16 inches)  
**FRETS:** 22 medium  
**PICKUPS:** Seymour Duncan single-coils; 2 x STR-1, 1 x STL-1  
**CONTROLS:** 1 x volume, 1 x tone, 3-way selector, rotary single-coil/phased-coil/humbucking switch  
**BRIDGE:** Gotoh adjustable wraparound bridge/tailpiece  
**STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE:** 51mm (2 inches)  
**MACHINEHEADS:** Gotoh enclosed, chrome  
**WEIGHT:** 3.2 kg (7lb)  
**FINISHES:** Gloss nitrocellulose; see website for full list of options  
**CASE:** Not included; fitted Hiscox hard case available (£75)  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Yes, no extra charge  
**OPTIONS:** Standard model with standard neck, bone nut, non-adjustable bridge & Rees-selected unbranded pickups (£585); CS model with plain maple or pau ferro fingerboard (£785)  
**CONTACT:**  
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controls fitted with knurled metal knobs that nicely match the pickup covers, mounting rings and bridge. The third knob is actually a rotary coil-tap switch that puts both humbuckers in single-coil mode. We like the use of a rotary switch here, as it looks much neater than a mini-switch might have, though we have to concede that it does take fractionally longer to turn a knob than flick a switch in the heat of the moment.

Meanwhile, the T3's pickups are mounted on an unusual scratchplate made from 6mm-thick solid figured maple, another nice original touch. The T3 is fitted with a Telecaster-style bridge pickup, set at the fairly steep Tele-approved angle, and a pair of covered single-coils set slightly apart in the neck position. These are wired to master volume and tone controls and a three-way toggle switch, but an additional three-way rotary switch effectively triples the settings available.

You can opt for straight-ahead single-coil operation (the bridge pickup, the neck pickup or both together), 'phased'

a guitar with a 25.5-inch scale length. These same qualities are there in abundance once the F2 is plugged into a decent valve amp.

The sound is nice and full with plenty of bite in the top end. The Seymour Duncan SH-2 'Jazz' humbucker in the neck position is particularly tasty, turning out a thick yet lively tone that we can imagine using is just about any musical setting. The SH-4 'JB' at the bridge offers more output, geared towards pushing the amp harder for more overdrive, and we find it can sound a little hard-edged and unforgiving on cleaner settings. However, it will run the gamut of higher-gain sounds with ease and, like the neck pickup, the sound is big, bold and very immediate and up-front. We also find the coil-tapped sounds the F2 has to offer to be eminently useful and useable, certainly not the case with many a coil-tap-equipped guitar.

An acoustic strum of the T3 reveals yet more liveliness and sustain. Set in single-coil mode, the bridge pickup delivers a fair approximation of that trademark Tele twang.

It's not a dead-on imitation, lacking some of that high-end brittleness and sizzle, but some players may actually prefer this slightly smoother take on one of the all-time classic electric guitar sounds.

There's certainly plenty of muscle and grit here and the bridge pickup handles overdriven tones with aplomb. Switching to humbucking mode fattens up the sound considerably and rolls off a little of the pickup's treble brightness in a very pleasing way. The same goes for the neck pickup, which is already a little fatter in single-coil mode.

Switching to the out-of-phase settings brings a radical shift in tone, from full and fat to thin and brittle, accompanied by a large drop in

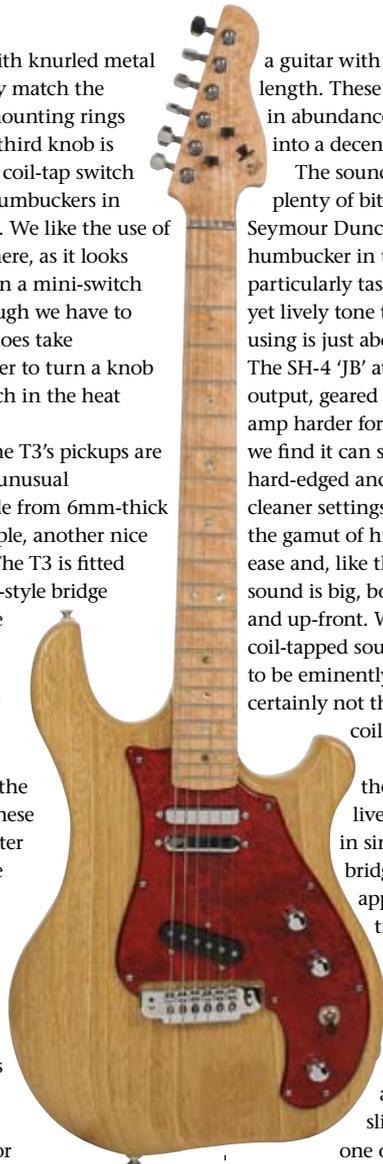


volume. In the case of the bridge pickup, we can just about find a use for this sound in a funk or reggae context, but the neck setting is just too thin and scratchy for our tastes. A bigger problem is that the out-of-phase setting is in the middle of the three-position switch, forcing you to pass through it on the way from single-coil to humbucking tones. This our one complaint of a guitar that otherwise offers a highly enjoyable and varied selection of tones.

**CONCLUSION**

One thing we can definitely say of these Rees CS electrics is that they are not your run-of-the-mill guitars. From the body shapes to the control and pickup layouts, the F2 and T3 are commendably original. You might say that the fact that these guitars are made in the UK yet priced under £1,000 is more unusual still. Although we don't necessarily feel the same 'wow' factor in terms of looks, finish and attention to detail that we'd demand from more expensive guitars, these remain good prices for individually-made guitars.

Whether the styling and slightly quirky and home-made aesthetic of these Rees guitars appeals to you will be very much a matter of personal taste. However, we think that most guitarist would agree that in terms of playability and tonal versatility, the F2 and T3 have a lot to offer. **GB**



**"THE SOUND IS BIG, BOLD AND UP-FRONT"**

operation (the 'middle' pickup is added out-of-phase) or humbucking operation (with the 'middle' pickup added in series). Rees says that several different humbuckers were tried during the development of this model but this setup, as well as being more versatile, was found to produce the most convincing 'humbucking Tele'-type tones.

**SOUNDS**

Before we get to these, however, let's take the F2 CS for a spin. Unplugged, the guitar has a loud acoustic voice with good sustain and plenty of the snap and definition we'd expect from



**GBVERDICT**

**REES F2 CS & T3 CS**  
**GOLD STARS**  
 ★ Original looks and design  
 ★ Great range of sounds  
**BLACK MARKS**  
 ● Some of the T3's out-of-phase sounds are not our cup of tea  
**IDEAL FOR...**  
 Guitarists looking for something different in a UK-made instrument  
**GBRATING**  
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