



REES RAMBLER

THIS FULLY GIG-WORTHY TRAVEL GUITAR FROM BRIT BUILDER CLIVE REES GIVES **LOUIS THORNE** THE URGE TO ROAM

Travel guitars provide a neat and portable way of ensuring that you always have a fretboard close to hand wherever you are. The essential requirements of any travel guitar – that it's light to carry and small enough to fit into, say, the overhead compartment in an aeroplane – can often result in a lot of compromises, and many such instruments end up sounding less than brilliant and feeling awkward to play.

However, as Cambridge luthier Clive Rees shows, it is possible to build a compact guitar yet still retain a full-sized neck, a standard scale length and enough body to allow the instrument to be comfortably played while sitting. Hand-built and powered

by a pair of Seymour Duncan P-90s, we're hoping for some grown-up tones from the diminutive Rees Rambler.

BODY & NECK

The Rambler gets the same quality of woods and hardware as all of Rees' full-sized guitars. To that end we have a two-piece body made from Korina, gently contoured and shaped much like a standard guitar. Despite the lower bout being a bit under 25cm in width, the Rambler still sits on the leg very comfortably. It also proves to be very well-balanced when worn on a strap, thanks in part to the extended upper horn.

Korina has similar acoustic properties to mahogany and its pale hues are shown off nicely here under a thin satin nitrocellulose lacquer. Four



The Rambler features a pair of Seymour Duncan Vintage Soapbar single-coils

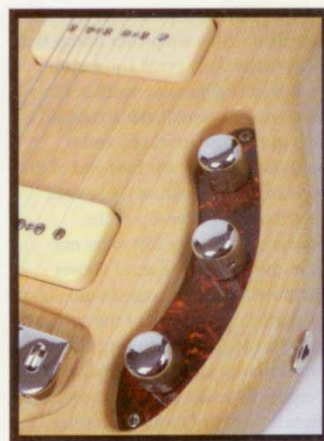
GBINFO

REES RAMBLER

PRICE:	£575
BUILT IN:	UK
SCALE LENGTH:	648mm (25.5 inches)
NUT WIDTH:	43mm (1.69 inches)
STRING SPACING AT NUT:	35mm (1.38 inches)
BODY:	Korina
NECK:	Maple, bolt-on
FINGERBOARD:	Pau ferro, 254 to 406mm compound radius (10 to 16 inches)
FRETS:	22 medium
BRIDGE:	Gotoh adjustable wrap-over bridge, chrome
STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE:	51mm (2 inches)
PICKUPS:	2 x Seymour Duncan SP90-1 Vintage Soapbar
CONTROLS:	2 x volume, 1 x tone
MACHINEHEADS:	Gotoh enclosed, chrome
WEIGHT:	2.6kg (5.7lbs)
FINISHES:	Blonde satin nitrocellulose (shown)
CASE:	Custom Trifibre padded gigbag available (not included)
LEFT-HANDERS:	Yes

CONTACT:

Rees Electric Guitars
PHONE: 07889 160660
WEB: www.rees-electric-guitars.com



recessed bolts secure the maple neck, which joins the body at the 16th fret on the bass side, while a deep treble-side cutaway allows unfettered access pretty much right the way up to the top fret despite a square heel.

The Rambler has a full-size, 25.5-inch scale length and the spacious-feeling pau ferro fretboard is fitted with 22 medium frets that are beautifully finished and rounded off at the edge, lending a real played-in feel to the guitar. The abalone fretboard inlays are similarly neat and tidy. The neck's satin finish and comfortable rounded profile, coupled with a compound fretboard radius, leaves the guitar feeling very inviting to play.

The small size of the Rambler – it's only 82cm (32 inches) long from end to end – means that the end of neck is a couple of inches closer to your body than on a full-sized guitar, but once

you have got used to this, it's very easy to forget that you are playing anything other than a 'normal' electric.

HARDWARE & PARTS

The Rambler features a pair of Seymour Duncan Vintage Soapbar single-coils controlled by individual volume pots and a master tone pot. These controls are recessed into the body. Their knurled metal knobs feel sturdy and are easily gripped, although the recess makes quick adjustments tricky for the more sausage-fingered plank spanker. However, the reasoning behind this, as well as for the choice of individual volume controls over an arguably more gig-friendly pickup selector switch, is to make the Rambler as immune as possible to the inevitable bumps and bangs that a travelling instrument will be subjected to over its lifetime.

In common with Rees' other hardtail guitars, the Rambler is equipped with a wrap-over bridge that locks to the body posts and features individually adjustable saddles. It's solid and substantial, which should help in the sustain stakes, and is positioned right at the butt end of the body in order to reduce the overall length of the guitar. Up at the headstock, a Fender LSR roller nut takes the strings to a set of Grover machines. The roller nut should allow frictionless movement of the strings when tuning or bending strings and this certainly seems to be the case. Despite the small, stubby headstock, there is plenty of room for getting your fingers around the tuner keys.

There's no case included, which is a shame considering that a travel guitar is not much good without something to carry it in. However, a semi-rigid gigbag padded with high-density



GBVERDICT

REES RAMBLER
GOLD STARS
 ★ A 'proper' guitar in a smaller package
 ★ Great tones from a handmade axe

BLACK MARKS
 ● Case not included

GBRATING
 ●●●●●



The wrap-over bridge features individually adjustable saddles.

foam, produced by the Trifibre company and custom-designed to fit the Rambler, is also available from Rees.

SOUNDS

Acoustically, the Rambler compares very well to a full-sized solidbody, with a decent amount of volume, good sustain and a sparkly top end that belies its diminutive size. The Fender-style 25.5-inch scale length no doubt helps add some snap and definition here, and the solid korina and sturdy bridge contribute to the sustain.

Plug it in and the Rambler sounds as grown up as any larger instrument. The Seymour Duncan P-90-style pickups provide a confident and clear voice that affirm the Rambler's status as a 'proper' guitar. The bridge pickup has a lovely clear and open sound, offering some bite without sounding too thin. The neck pickup is plummy and rounder in tone, but again with an openness and clarity to the sound that is great for



jazzy moments. Combine the two pickups and you get a great funky, hollow-sounding tone.

The Rambler is not afraid of rocking out and, with a bit of gain added, classic rock riffs come pouring out with an assured voice. Pile on the distortion and the Rambler can handle it comfortably, retaining plenty of punch and definition, while the full-sized neck provides plenty of widdling room.

CONCLUSION

Clive Rees has built a straightforward, sturdy and ultra-portable instrument that feels, as near as possible, like a full-sized instrument. The Seymour Duncan pickups, full-length scale and great construction mean that this guitar is full of classy sounds, and the Rambler is an eminently giggable proposition. Combined with a headphone amp, it's perfect for keeping your chops up to speed while away on holiday, and while it's not as cheap as some travel guitars, for a hand-built British instrument, the Rambler is very well priced. **GB**