



Ethos Washington £1,552

A new name on the Brit-making scene gets all woody and rather seventies on us by Dave Burruck

The rivals

Chris George	
	from £1,500
Hugh Manson	
M-ONE-D-ONE	£2,849
Nik Huber Dolphin II	
Redwood	£2,335

Chris George is a new name on the UK scene, but he impressed us so much with his custom guitar loaded with Variax electronics that we ordered one! He's a seriously good maker. Hugh Manson is from the old school and has a long list of pro clients. The guitars he's built for Matt Bellamy, not to mention John Paul Jones, really push the boundaries of electric guitar design. Nik Huber has moved on from his one-man shop to a very small production team making simply drop-dead gorgeous guitars – every maker should check his work

Paul Hancox, based in Redditch, Worcestershire, made his first guitar aged 16, and explains, “I’ve been dabbling with mods ever since, mostly hardware changes and re-sprays.” Then, after a Brian Kennedy concert in Wolverhampton in May 2004, Paul met American singer-songwriter Christene LeDoux (Brian’s support act). When Christene mentioned that she was looking for somebody to build her an electric guitar, the seed was sown and Ethos Guitars was born.

Like many makers in their early years, Paul has yet to settle on a specific style – he’ll make just about anything – but this Washington outline caught our eye with its seventies vibe. Using a neck-through construction of quarter-sawn mahogany with a small central zebrano fillet, the body wings are slab-cut mahogany. The guitar is topped – it’s pretty much half the thickness of the body – with this natural finished and highly stripy book-matched zebrano. The top isn’t carved like a violin, but has a sloping edge chamfer that at the tip of each horn becomes a little more rounded. The koa



The Washington's use of exotic timbers makes a welcome change

binding is wrapped around the outer edge – also mirrored along the fingerboard edges – and the thin nitro finish is cleanly applied leaving some sinkage. Overall the work is of a high

standard although, as with many new makers, there’s room for small detail improvements. The weight is also very good and there’s an appealing classiness to the overall look.



ETHOS WASHINGTON TEST RESULTS

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

■ **WE LIKED** Good design with unusual wood choice/specification; an attractive guitar with excellent sounds

■ **WE DISLIKED** Neck shape is a little flat-backed and fret ends too abrupt; minor cosmetic blemishes

The through-neck is reinforced with dual carbon fibre rods and uses the correct Gibson scale, which actually measures slightly under the quoted 24.75 inches. The fingerboard is Indian rosewood with neat markers: pearl dots with abalone centres (the side dots are smaller and look like aluminium rod with less contrasting pearl dot centres).

With a fairly generic-looking three-a-side back-angled headstock – again zebrano-faced and bound – the tuner layout means we don't get straight-in-a-line string pull, but that's of little consequence. It's a hard-tail design using a Tone Pros adjustable wrapover bridge and those Gotoh 510 tuners not only feel smooth but look it too.

However, the neck does feel a little flat-backed, the shoulders a little square. It's not bad by any means: just perhaps not as sexy as the overall design suggests. Fretting is generally good, from a medium gauge wire that has good height without feeling too flat, but the ends are left a little abrupt and, although quite nicely finished, are sharp to the hand. These ends need to angle in more – a few minutes' work – to again match the feel with the look. Let's see how it sounds.

SOUNDS: The electronics layout is simple with just a three-way toggle switch, neatly inset into the top, with quite closely placed volume and tone controls and a side-mounted barrel jack, again neatly inlaid into the wood. It's a pleasurable light guitar and, even with a slight neck pull, it almost disappears on the strap. Likewise those slightly

The Gotoh 510 tuners are smooth in look and feel




Tonally, the Washington doesn't let us down. The bridge humbucker kicks out a good, classic rock tone; the neck pickup is really vocal and smooth

sharp fret ends are less obtrusive while playing and the neck has a good dimension if only the shaping was a little more rounded. Another extra in the playing department is the Buzz Feiten Tuning System (Paul is a qualified exponent), providing that little extra percentage of 'in-tuneness' that we at Guitarist are great fans of.

Tonally, the Washington doesn't let us down. The bridge humbucker is a little sharp-edged in higher positions (it's very closely placed to the bridge, maybe moving it a few millimetres towards the neck would sweeten things a little) but kicks out a good, classic rock tone; the neck pickup is really vocal and smooth. The pickups' Abraxas name should give you an idea of the ballpark we're in, but overall it's a little more open sounding with a vibrant resonance than hallmark Carlos tone. Played clean with volume reduction it's again smooth and richly voiced, especially the dual humbucker mix. Some would no doubt like coil-splits, but use the volume and tone and

you'll be surprised at the tonal range.

Verdict

Yes, there's room for improvement, but this is a very cool little guitar. Its use of unusual exotic timbers makes such a change from the default maple, and its light weight ensures comfort and a good resonance. Tonally it's lively too, with a good range of quite classic tones – not as thick as a single-cut but certainly on par with instruments such as the PRS Custom in terms of tonal balance. We've been critical of the neck shape and those slightly abrupt fret ends but neither actually ruins the fun and, if he just hones his art in those areas, Paul is a maker to watch. Finally, along with the Buzz Feiten Tuning System the guitar has the Musi-traC micro-chip security system installed: 'peace of mind' for your investment and a nice pro touch on a very neat guitar. 

Ethos Washington

Guitarist RATING



ETHOS WASHINGTON

PRICE: £1,552 (inc case)

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: Double-cutaway, exotic-top solid body electric

BODY: Mahogany 'wings' with contoured zebrano top and curly koa binding

NECK: Mahogany/zebrano/mahogany through neck with carbon fibre reinforcement and two adjustable truss rods

SCALE LENGTH: 624mm (24.56-inch)

NUT/WIDTH: White synthetic/45mm

FINGERBOARD: Curly koa bound rosewood, abalone/pearl dots, 305mm (12-inch) radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: Tone Pros adjustable wrapover bridge, Gotoh 510 vintage tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: Two Bare Knuckle Abraxas calibrated humbuckers, three-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume and tone

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.2/7

OPTIONS: Ethos electrics start around £1,050 depending on customer spec. The Buzz Feiten Tuning System, as fitted here, costs £80; the Musi-traC identification chip (www.musi-trac.co.uk) is standard on all Ethos guitars – installed by Music Insure (www.music-insure.com)

RANGE OPTIONS: Other Ethos models include the double-cut Aphrodite and the small ES-175-style Little Pumpkin

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes

FINISHES: Our sample is finished in natural nitro-cellulose. A wide choice of colours available to order

Ethos Guitars
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www.ethosguitars.co.uk