

HIDDEN TREASURE

The Prestige Classic TBK

One of the best-kept guitar secrets, Prestige is a small Vancouver-based operation that has flown under the radar for 18 years. The company farms its own tonewoods, which are shipped to Korea, where the guitars are built then shipped back to British Columbia, for finishing and hardware installation.

Its Classic TBK model is a slimmed-down reimagination of an ubiquitous single-cut design. It has a solid mahogany body and neck, pau ferro fretboard with a 14" radius, and 1¹¹/₁₆" nut width. Tone is supplied by two Duncan SP90-1 Alnico single-coil pickups. The top of our review instrument was finished in a classy flame maple with a transparent black stain. A generous belly cut helps relieve weight on this well-contoured guitar; strapped on, it feels significantly lighter than others of its type – a gift for those with aging shoulders. The Classic TBK is also perfectly balanced, sitting or standing.

Prestige focuses on quality components – Tusq nuts, Bigsby vibratos, TonePros bridges and tailpieces, Grover and Gotoh tuners, Alpha pots and switches, and pickups by Seymour Duncan and Fishman.

Plugged in, the Duncan SP90-1 pickups roared when played wide-open through a vintage National tube amp, but cleaned up nicely when rolled down. There was some 60-cycle hum, but that's not surprising. The fretwork was impeccable, fit and finish masterful, the neck straight, and action exceptionally low with no dead spots or buzzes. Straight chord work was a breeze, and bending notes was effortless.

Given the light weight, this is an electric you could heft all night, playing just about any type of music. It's a versatile workhorse at an extremely attractive price point. Let's hope more people get hip to Prestige instruments. – **Bob Cianci**

Price: \$999
www.prestigeguitars.com



Price: \$289
www.drybell.com

BALKAN BOOST

The DryBell Unit67

DryBell Musical Electronic Laboratory has been kicking out great pedals for a few year, with clients like Mike Landau, John Mayer, Steve Stevens, and Joe Perry, to name a few.

Designed and made in Croatia, DryBell's Unit67 is an 1176-style compressor, EQ, and Rangemaster-style boost designed to help guitarists push their amplifiers to tonal splendor. Its Boost knob controls the level, while mini switches boost or cut frequencies, and a Sustain knob produces dry or compressed sounds. The EQ and multi-flavored boost add up to 22.4 dB.

The Unit67's separate sections are engineered to work as a team, thickening signal with grit, sustain, and natural attack. Combining the EQ and Boost offers a maximum of 41 dB in the midrange spectrum. Dialed in while testing, the DryBell added sizzle to rhythm parts and turned lead guitar sounds into arena-rockin' idolatry. Single-coil players will dig the chime and punch while Brit-rock humbucker players will get a kick out of mutant Rangemaster tones. Upscale bark is available, but the EQ section also enables scooped goodness and lots of colorful contours.

The DryBell Unit67 adds just the right amount of magic sauce to push a rig to the next level. Powered by a nine-volt adapter, it's addictive, too; you'll find it wants to be "on" all the time. – **Oscar Jordan**