

EMG SLV single-coils and an EMG-85 humbucker, and active electronics with an easy-access battery compartment.

With its hum-sing-sing pickup armament, the Lukather is designed to deliver a wide spectrum of tonal colors. I knocked back to the humbucker for a pop-punk raunch, flipped to positions 2 and 4 for a taste of Knopfler-esque bell tones, and used the neck single-coil for some chunk-heavy blues and hard-rock work. Whether run clean, overdriven, or massively saturated, the Lukather exhibits excellent clarity without sacrificing vibe. Lukather himself acknowledges that not every guitarist embraces active pickups, but this arrangement never sounded cold, clinical, or too “clean.” The only weirdness is that the output of the middle and neck pickups is a bit less than the bridge pickup, and the bridge pickup seems to sit pretty low under the strings. [Dudley Gimpel states, “The guitar is set up this way because that’s the way Luke likes it. The EMGs are pretty potent, and the bridge pickup has considerably more output than the neck and middle, so the height difference helps dial in some balance. It’s easy to raise the pickups closer to the strings using washers as shims if that’s desired by the user.”] While the Lukather gets me as close to playing Luke’s guitar as I’ll ever get, I was disappointed that it didn’t help me play as fabulously heroic as he does. Arrggh. But, at least, it helped me play much better Molenda stuff, and I guess that holding a guitar that makes you play better is one helluva victory. —Michael Molenda

MUSIC MAN BALL FAMILY RESERVE JOHN PETRUCCI 6 SIGNATURE

Co-designed by Dream Theater’s shred-eriffic guitarist, the John Petrucci 6 (\$3,999 retail/\$2,799 street) is a high-end instrument with the tone-enhancing feature of a mahogany block that runs inside the alder body from bridge to neck pocket. The 25½"-scale mahogany neck is gripped in a razor-tight 5-bolt joint

and features a rosewood board with 24 polished, high-profile frets. The shield-style pearl position markers look classy, and the short headstock with its 4+2 tuner arrangement helps keep the instrument at a compact 37" length. The “C”-shaped neck plays amazingly easy—though fans of vintage “baseball bat” necks will probably find it too thin—and the slick fulcrum vibrato bridge is buttery smooth, light to the touch, and stays in tune very well.

The Petrucci’s electronics include two humbuckers and an active piezo bridge system. A Magnetic/Stereo jack is provided for sending a blend of passive magnetic and buffered piezo signals via a TRS-enabled cable (not included). There’s also a Piezo/Mono jack that can deliver either a mix of mag and buffered piezo signals (when a mono cable is connected) or a piezo-only signal when you’ve got a separate mono cable connected to the Magnetic/Stereo out (in which case it provides only a passive mag signal). The 3-way pickup selector gives you a choice of neck humbucker, inside coils of both pickups (in series or parallel via the push-pull Tone pot), or bridge humbucker. A Mode switch on the upper horn provides magnetic, piezo, or “both” selections. You also get Volume and Tone knobs for the magnetic pickups and a separate Volume control for the piezo pickup.

Sonically, the Petrucci is extremely cool. The piezo sound is very warm and free from plasticity artifacts, and the magnetic pickups offer a surprisingly broad spectrum of sounds. In particular, the middle setting absolutely sparkles with the coils in parallel, while the blended magnetic and piezo sounds are amazing in their richly detailed stereo presentation. If you want big tones from a multi-amp rig, the John Petrucci 6 is a most worthy starting point.

—Art Thompson

Revival RG-27

BUDGET ALLOWING, IT’S ALWAYS PREFERABLE TO BUY AN acoustic guitar made from solid woods. Plank for plank, laminates don’t resonate as nicely as solid woods and they don’t improve much with time either—ever heard anyone touting the sonic properties of aged plywood? So a guitar like the RG-27 (\$649 retail/\$519 street), which features a solid Englemann spruce top and solid mahogany back and sides, would seem to be a pretty swinging deal right off the bat. The RG-27 is a decently made dreadnought with a gloss finish and lots of lightly

figured maple binding on the body and fretboard.

Some of the miters aren’t perfect, but the look of the contrasting woods is very eye catching. The abalone rosette and pearl headstock logo are precisely inlaid, as are the small shell dots that grace the 25¼"-scale rosewood board. The two-piece neck has a comfy “C” shape and a maple-capped heel, and the 20 medium frets are properly crowned and seated, although not highly polished.

The RG-27 plays well despite its action being a tad on the tall side, and it pumps out an impressive amount of volume with abundant lows and a bright top. The sweet, punchy midrange response that you expect from a high-end dreadnought (such as a Martin D-28 we used as a reference) is less discernable in the RG-27, but this guitar still sounds very good. It actually delivered more bottom than our slighter lighter Martin (4.6 lbs vs. 4.7 lbs), a quality that helps make the RG a satisfying player for bluegrass and folk. The hollow mids of the RG-27 make it a little less inspiring for solo playing, but this guitar has what it takes to be a good lead/rhythm axe for an acoustic band, and is a particularly cool choice when you don’t have a lot to spend. —Art Thompson

REVIVAL RG-27
KUDOS Solid wood construction. Crisp and loud with excellent bass response.
CONCERNS Lacks midrange complexity.
CONTACT Revival Acoustics, dist. by Major Music Supply, (888) 996-2567; revivalacoustics.com

