



Vintage Guitar[®] Gear Reviews

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A Pair of Player's Delights

D. Allen TomCats, CS Series Pickups

A relative newcomer to the world of pickup manufacturing, David Allen is somewhat old-school. His pickups use hand-wound bobbins with laser-cut fiber flatwork, hand-beveled Alnico magnets, scatter winding, wax

potting, fabric tape, and U.S.-made cloth-wound wire. Complementing his use of traditional materials, Allen also employs traditional designs like the TomCats humbuckers and Custom Shop series pickups for bass that he recently sent us for a once-over.

Allen's TomCats humbucker line is designed to offer a medium-hot

output that retains articulation. The neck pickup uses 42-gauge Formvar and is wound to 6.88K-ohm resistance, while the bridge pickup measures 8.8K-ohm, allowing ample distortion for most styles. Both utilize Alnico II magnets and have four-wire conductors for custom wiring options.

In both the bridge and neck positions, the TomCats do indeed offer noticeably improved articulation versus stock/mid-grade pickups. Live and in the studio, the TomCats render a very pleasant warmth that yields a sense of vintage, but with an attack that takes them up

a level. Picked lines jumped from the solidbody we used to test them, with a warmth and articulation that certainly would help smooth any instrument that might be naturally boomy.

A hint of drive through a nice tube amp helps extract an inherent high-end sparkle from the TomCats; overdriven tones come to life without being too muddy. As more drive is dialed in, the pickups maintain their tone, articulation and high-end shimmer. The difference in output between the neck and the bridge is pleasing – and convenient. If one must make a comparison to vintage, you could say they have a late-'60s feel, but are considerably more open. And their high-end makes them stand out.

The Custom Shop P-style bass pickup is assembled using much the same technique and materials. Wound hotter than most passive pickups, it's a traditional-style replacement that, while it does not attempt to emulate any particular predecessor, is laden with classic vibe. It renders a very open sound with notes that blossom.

Both of these pickups/sets do a very good job of bridging the gap between vintage and modern. They sound wonderful and are extremely versatile.

– Sean O'Bryan Smith VG

D. ALLEN TOMCATS/ CS SERIES PICKUPS

Price: \$119.95/ \$224.95 (retail)

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