

Cat's Whiskers

The word 'feline' conjures one of two images. Jordan McLachlan wonders whether this brace of guitars is going to be graceful, poised and elegant, or arrogant and likely to scratch his eyes out...

Some people think that going to a guitar builder and having them craft an instrument for you is an odd thing to do. After all, there's no shortage of choice from the big (and smaller-scale) producers is there? And think about the resale value – it's far easier to shift a model from one of the big brand names than it is something that's been put together to suit your own peculiar requirements. And it costs a fortune doesn't it? Far better to just pick something off the shelf and relax in the knowledge that if everyone else is using them, it's got to be a sound choice, right?

On the other hand, despite the huge choice of off-the-shelf designs on offer, many of us still spend time and money changing components to our 'own peculiar requirements'. And on the subject of resale value, it becomes far less of an issue as your tastes are refined over time and you feel ready to specify a guitar that you'll keep for the long-term. And as for it being a hideously expensive exercise? Well, no it's not actually – many custom

FELINE TABBY

GOLD STARS

- * Thoroughly 'pro' in every respect
- * Particularly characterful take on a classic

BLACK MARKS

- Headstock a bit 'modern' for this guitar

Ideal for...

Those with a penchant for classic design, but after more modern performance and individuality

compromise, and up-to-the-minute locking Sperzel tuners.

The Duncans fitted to the Tiger comprise a Custom Custom in the bridge and a neck position Alnico II Pro, but here the pickups and controls are configured as you'd expect. The tried and trusted three-way toggle, individual volume and tone controls adhere faithfully to old-school principles. Tailpiece duties are admirably taken care of by a Schaller STM roller bridge, utilised to reduce friction over the saddles, and an aluminium tailpiece. The latter is intended to improve tone and, as Feline points out, its use reflects Gibson specs during the 50s and 60s.

SOUNDS

The initial impression given by the Tabby and Tiger is that the pair are well-thought-out, tastefully revved-up versions of classic faves and their sonic performance does little to diminish this. Neither are tackily over-powered with tone-sapping magnetics, but both are certainly nice and spicy on the output front.

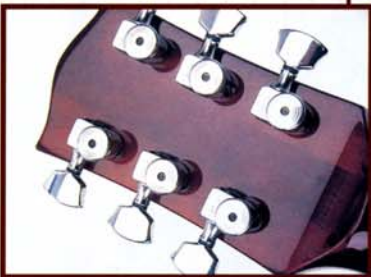
The Quarter Pounder is a fabulous choice for a Tele bridge and here, with the Tabby's thru-body stringing and well-balanced blend of timbers, the unit delivers poky, muscular tone that retains plenty of clarity without ever wimping out. For energetic, stinging blues or fat, slightly compressed rhythm parts it's a beaut. The 59 Classic Cover in the neck is considerably less plummy and cloying than neck humbuckers tend to be in set-neck guitars and is all the more usable as a result. Wooliness is avoided and both arpeggios and strummed chords come off well – it's not exactly Hendrix-y, but it's flutier than you might expect.

Predictably, the LP-inspired Tiger is a different tonal animal entirely from the Tabby, and yet there are aspects of its sonic character that it shares with its stripy sibling. Rather than being a vintage recreation, the Tiger has a



DETAILS

AGREEABLE AESTHETICS?



Aesthetics are a very personal thing – as far as we're concerned, there's almost nothing to gripe about where these two are concerned. The woods are fab, the Tiger's top is gorgeously vintage-y and everything works together beautifully. So is it us, or would the Tabby be nicer with a subtler headstock? And could those logos be a little more elegant? Mmm.

THE LOWDOWN

FELINE TABBY

Price: £1600

Built in:	UK
Scale length:	650mm (25.58-inch)
Nut width:	43mm (1.69-inch)
Body:	American red alder
Neck:	Flame maple, bolt-on
Fingerboard:	Rosewood
Frets:	22 Dunlop 6100 jumbo
Pickups:	Seymour Duncan Quarter Pounder (bridge), Seymour Duncan 59 Classic Cover (neck)
Controls:	Individual volume controls, master tone, three-way toggle selector
Bridge:	Wilkinson by Gotoh T-type
Machineheads:	Satin-buttoned locking Sperzels
Case:	Feline/Hiscox Liteflite hard case included
Finishes:	Myriad options – call for details
Left-handers:	Yes

Contact:	Feline
Phone:	020 8680 9131
Web:	www.felineguitars.com

GB RATING

FLEXIBLE FRIEND

Jonathon Law is keen to make getting your hands on a Feline as easy as possible, and as such offers an 'easy payment' plan to customers. No credit agency is involved, it's just a case of leaving a deposit and arranging to pay the balance over a set period while the guitar's being built (typically five-12 months). If you can't quite make a full payment one month, no probs – Jonathon's happy for the arrangement to be flexible. Provided the full amount's paid before the instrument leaves his premises, of course.





distinct, sophisticated hot-rod thing going on, with plenty of power on tap and tons of defined midrange from the Custom Custom. The peak in the centre of the frequency band is enough to ensure solos are articulate and crisp (if played that way!) without adding too much in the way of honkiness or harshness for chords. The beefed-up nature of the Custom Custom is at odds (in a good way) with the softer Alnico II Pro in the neck, which supplies just the right amount of warm fluffiness in the lower regions and a nice, responsive snap at the top end. Lovely for slower lead lines, it's a super-expressive little sweetie.

CONCLUSION

As far as I'm concerned, these Felines strike a near perfect combination of the factors that make classic designs so enduring and some subtle, clever design tweaks to update and enhance the playing/listening experience. And that bodes well for the rest of their output – here's a manufacturer who clearly knows how to create sympathetic, cohesive instruments that perform at the most demanding levels. Of course, given the company's custom nature, scrutiny of their instruments can only serve as a clue as to their competence – if the Tabby and Tiger don't crank your handle then just ask them to build you something else. We have a feeling you won't be disappointed with the results.



DETAILS

CH..CH..CH..CH..CHOICES



Feline describes the available options on these guitars as 'too many to list'. Just tell 'em what you'd like and they'll do it if they can. And they can do a lot – Jonathon reels off sapele, koa and Australian backwood as sound choices for the top on a Tabby. And lefties are well-catered for too, with Feline's Southpaw range. So don't be shy to ask.

THE LOWDOWN

FELINE TIGER

Price:	£1900
Built in:	UK
Scale length:	626mm (24.63-inch)
Nut width:	43mm (1.69-inch)
Body:	Mahogany with flame maple cap
Neck:	Mahogany set
Fingerboard:	Ebony
Frets:	22 Dunlop 6100 jumbo
Pickups:	Seymour Duncan Custom Custom (bridge), Seymour Duncan Alnico II Pro neck
Controls:	Individual volume and tone controls, three-way toggle selector
Bridge:	Schaller STM roller bridge
Machineheads:	Locking Sperzels
Case:	Feline/Hiscox Liteflite hard case included
Finishes:	Myriad options – call for details
Left-handers:	Yes
Contact:	Feline
Phone:	020 8680 9131
Web:	www.felineguitars.com
GB RATING	

WELL-GAUGED

Rather than slap the same set of strings on each instrument, Feline has fitted different gauge D'Addarios to the Tiger and Tabby. The Tiger has a set of 10-46 that makes for a nice, chunky-but-manageable feel, while the Tabby comes with XL120+ strings that go from a 0.0095 to a 0.044. This slightly-heavier-than-9s option gives the Tab a tad more fight and stronger tone.

