

GBINFO

FELINE
KORINA V

PRICE: £1850

BUILT IN: UK

NUT WIDTH: 43mm
(1.69 inches)

SCALE LENGTH: 628mm
(24.75 inches)

BODY: Idigbo

NECK: Idigbo, set

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
305mm radius
(12 inches)

FRETS: 22 Dunlop 6100

PICKUPS: 2 x Bare Knuckle
VB-2 humbuckers

CONTROLS: 2 x volume,
1 x master tone

BRIDGE: Gotoh tune-o-
matic and stop tailpiece

MACHINEHEADS: Gold-
plated Sperzel

WEIGHT: 3 kg
(6.6lbs)

CASE: Hardshell
case

FINISHES: Natural

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes

CONTACT:

Feline Guitars

PHONE: 020 8680 9131

WEB:
www.felineguitars.com

Nice Kitties

UK BRAND FELINE GUITARS HAS PUT THE MOGGY AMONG THE PIGEONS WITH ITS INTERPRETATIONS OF CLASSIC AXES, BUT IT'S NO MERE COPYCAT. **TIM SLATER** LOOKS AT THE LATEST MODELS LOOKING TO GET THEIR CLAWS WELL AND TRULY INTO YOU

Way back in issue 41, we reviewed a controversial Strat/Telecaster hybrid built by the much-lauded Fender Custom Shop; a guitar that continues to provoke prolonged and heated debate in the *GB* letters pages. At the risk of provoking more outrage from our readers, we're only too keen to bring you a similar instrument from the workshop of ace UK luthier Jonathan Law of Feline Guitars, who was so intrigued by the Fender hybrid that he was inspired to conduct his own experiments with the concept.

Secondly, as a lifelong devotee of Gibson Flying Vs and the sterling guitar work by the brothers Schenker, Law has invested a lot of love into his tribute to Gibson's pointy legend.

Rather than merely cloning these famous designs, the Felines set out to balance things with several unique construction details that set these custom-built specials apart from the original guitars that served as such a powerful source of inspiration.

BODY & NECK - HYBRID

Exactly why this particular body styling raises some peoples hackles so much remains something of a mystery. In practical terms, there's little to criticise about the way that

GBINFO

FELINE HYBRID CUSTOM

PRICE:	£1600
BUILT IN:	UK
NUT WIDTH:	43mm (1.69 inches)
SCALE LENGTH:	648mm (25.5 inches)
BODY:	Swamp ash
NECK:	Birdseye maple, bolt on
FINGERBOARD:	Rosewood 305mm radius (12 inches)
FRETS:	22 Dunlop 6155
PICKUPS:	3 x Bare Knuckle Irish Four single-coils
CONTROLS:	1 x volume, 2 x tone
BRIDGE:	Gotoh vintage vibrato bridge with Graph Tech String Saver saddles
MACHINEHEADS:	Sperzel locking, gold-plated
WEIGHT:	3.6 Kgs (7.9lbs)
CASE:	Hardshell case
FINISHES:	Ordered on request
LEFT-HANDERS:	Yes, extra charge on left-handers only if extra tooling or specialist hardware required

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DARK DESTROYER

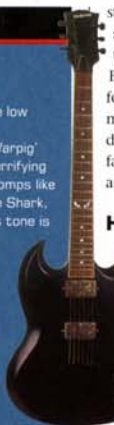
GOTHIC SHOCK ROCKER

■ The Gothic Warpig has a slightly tongue-in-cheek feel about it, but make no mistake, this is a serious metal weapon.

An ultra-strong three-piece mahogany neck is joined to a mahogany body that's thicker than the traditional twin-cutaway design (it's based on, greatly improving the overall balance. The 635mm (25-inch) scale length is designed to improve the guitar's stability during drop-tuning. As Jonathan Law explains, "A Gibson's shorter scale length can make the lower strings sound muddy when they are drop-tuned, but the Gothic Warpig's slightly longer scale

length has more string tension, which gives the low notes more bite."

Twin Bare Knuckle 'Warpig' humbuckers deliver a terrifying 22.5k output, that chomps like a ravenous Great White Shark, but the Gothic Warpig's tone is impressively focused and tight. While the Gothic Warpig isn't officially affiliated to Black Sabbath or Tony Iommi, it nevertheless remains a tribute to both, an ominous presence that will inexorably attract devotees of the doom-laden riff. Lovely.



string bending. The flatter radius feels slightly unusual when your brain is telling you that you're playing a Fender-influenced guitar, making it feel somewhat more refined and modern. The whole thing is slick and distinctly pro-feeling, thanks to Law's fastidiousness in the impeccable build and finish process.

HYBRID & PARTS – HYBRID

As recent converts to Bare Knuckle pickups, Feline has fitted the Hybrid with a set of 'Irish Tour' single-coils, and the name alone should offer a major clue regarding these pickups' particular flavour.

With DC resistances of 6.5k for the neck and middle pickups, and a fatter-sounding 7.65k for the bridge unit, they're inspired by the muscular but musical-sounding Strat tone made famous by the likes of Rory Gallagher and Stevie Ray Vaughan. The middle pickup is reverse-wound to work in hum-cancelling mode in positions two and four of a standard five-way Strat selector switch.

■ The Feline's unusual contours allow great access to the upper echelons of the neck



to help tame the treble pickup's somewhat more edgy moments.

The gold-plated Gotoh vintage-style vibrato bridge has been upgraded with a set of Graph Tech String Saver low-friction bridge saddles to aid tuning stability, with a Graph Tech nut and Sperzel locking tuners playing a vital supporting role up at the headstock. The scratchplate is a tight fit against the edge of the bridge, and during a few early plays repeatedly caught the edge of the bridge when using the vibrato, stopping the bridge from returning smoothly to its original position. The problem resolved itself after a while, but it was definitely a concern for a little while.

both parents' genes flow together so well; it looks and feels very natural.

Where Fender's own Custom Shop Hybrid takes the majority of its body styling from the Telecaster, the Feline Hybrid leans more toward a Stratocaster influence. The lower horn is more S than T in origin, and consequently a standard Strat-style scratchplate fits directly to the Feline, instead of the mongrel version that has to be custom made for each Fender Strat/Tele. The body is made from swamp ash, and has the full complement of body contours. The timber isn't the lightest example of its type, but this is more than adequately compensated for by the luxurious comfort offered by the smooth forearm contour and deep ribcage scoop on the rear of the body. The grain is visible beneath the translucent black finish and looks knockout combined with the classy-looking tortoiseshell scratchplate.

The bolt-on birds-eye maple neck's slender 'C' shape feels very close to the thinner necks often found on late 1960s or very early '70s Fender Strats; not quite Ibanez dimensions, but it would nevertheless give either one of Teri Hatcher's pins a run for their money in a skinny contest. The body features a reduced neck-heel area that provides an easy platform for scaling the upper reaches of the neck and, like the Korina V, the Hybrid's rosewood fingerboard features Feline's 12-inch compound radius, that flattens very slightly towards the highest frets, a great aid for easier

"THE NECK FEELS VERY CLOSE TO THE THINNER NECKS OFTEN FOUND ON LATE 1960s OR '70s STRATS"

The control layout is a conventional Stratocaster-style arrangement, with a single master volume and a pair of rotary tone pots. The bottom tone control is also linked to the bridge pickup – unlike vintage-style Strats –

SOUNDS – HYBRID

The Bare Knuckle Irish Tour triple with exactly the right sort of rebellious tone that high-energy blues rockers can use to prod the front end of a tube amp until it growls threateningly in

LOGO OR NO-GO?

A MATTER OF OPINION

■ Currently one of the UK's most interesting and controversial independent luthiers, Feline Guitar's achievements in the workshop are occasionally undermined by its logo in many players' eyes.

In some people's opinion, Feline's logo looks more like the type of script that one might find on a generic Far Eastern-made copy than a beautiful hand-made guitar, but Feline's top cat Jonathan Law explains it thus. "We admit that our logo looks a bit big, but we want people to be able to tell our guitars easily from a distance. We experimented with a smaller curly script logo but then people accused us of trying to pass our guitars off as copies

of originals. We settled on our logo because it is modern, the trend being to use lower-case letters instead of capitals, and we wanted to avoid accusations of doing what other people have done before."



• Highest-quality hardware has been used throughout both guitars' construction



response. The fairly modest output means that the Hybrid sounds sweet and glassy on lower gain and clean settings, with the pleasing individuality to each pickup that makes this configuration so untouchably versatile. The neck pickup has the classic, loose and rubbery tone that the likes of SRV and Hendrix used so effectively on cleaner, quieter tunes. Add enough overdrive, however, and the tone fattens up, for a convincing stab at Yngwie-style shredding. The bridge pickup is an aggressive little beast, but nothing beats a Strat treble pickup when it comes to classic rock screaming lead tones.

The Irish Tour treble pickup's slightly hotter output helps to give it a bit more kick for more biting solo screams, but like its stablemates at the middle and neck, you can tame it to cut a bright and articulate dash during calmer moments. The swamp-ash body also adds extra punch down at the low end, enhancing the Strat pickups' naturally seductive purr with a velvety undertone that makes the Hybrid feel muscular as well as versatile. The unmistakable wild scream is still there, but the ash body's extra resonance just seems to make the whole thing feel a bit less shrill and easier on the ear, especially when distortion is bought into play.

BODY & NECK - KORINA V

The body and neck of the V guitar are both constructed from idigib, a member of the mahogany genus that goes under the

generic name of 'Korina', in deference of course to Gibson's classic Flying V. A lot of effort has gone into strengthening the V's neck, after Law became concerned that a standard truss-rod alone wouldn't keep the neck stable under tension. The process of reinforcing the neck involves chopping a block of timber from the middle of the main shaft of the neck, and reversing it through 180 degrees so that the grain runs in an opposite direction to the two outer sections. The opposing grains dramatically reduce flex, and Law has also braced the truss rod with a pair of carbon-fibre rods that he believes contribute to the guitar's tone by speeding up the overall attack, as well as helping to strengthen and balance the neck.

The headstock shape is the rounder style, more commonly seen on mid-1970s Vs, and is strengthened with a similarly 1970s-style volute at the vulnerable area, just above and behind the Graph Tech faux ivory 'Tusq' nut. Along with many of Feline's own unique touches (see separate 'Arrow There' box-out), this V also combines several key features from the original Gibson Vs of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The in-line control layout, Korina body and gold hardware are clearly influenced by the original '58 Gibson Flying V, while the rounded 'shoulders' at the neck/body join are similar to those seen on '67 Flying Vs. The large 'blunt' headstock, tune-o-matic bridge and stop tailpiece look more influenced by mid-1970s specs, but overall the Feline V looks convincingly consistent and very cool.

HARDWARE & PARTS - KORINA V

Where the original Gibson Korina Flying V loaded the strings through



• The tune-o-matic bridge continues the modern/retro styling

the rear of the body, the Feline V uses a standard stop tailpiece and a modern-style tune-o-matic bridge. The six individual saddles are adjustable for intonation, while the string height is set with two adjustable posts with screwdriver slots to set the string height, and a pair of thumbwheels to lock everything in place afterwards. Chrome-plated Sperzel locking tuners do their dependable thing up at the headstock, and the slim 1960s profile neck is fitted with 22 Dunlop 6100 frets.

Humbuckers are very much part of the classic V tone, and this V uses a pair of Bare Knuckle VH-2 pickups with nickel-plated covers. Based on the vintage Gibson PAFs that Eddie Van Halen rewound himself for his 'Frankenstein' lash-up guitars, the VH-2s use Alnico V magnets and are wound with offset coils (the twin coils of each humbucker have unequal turns of wire and are wound slightly unevenly for a more open, less overblown tone than some modern humbuckers). The control layout requires some getting used to, due to the dual volume controls, but you'll soon be having tons of fun by rolling off one of the volume pots and using the selector switch to toggle between pickups for machine gun-like staccato effects: pure Randy Rhoads.

'ARROW, THERE

SUBTLE UPDATES HELP STREAMLINE THIS PRETTY KITTY

• Still amazingly futuristic and brimming with attitude nearly 50 years after it's debut, the V-shaped body here is made from two symmetrical pieces of Korina like the original 1950s Gibson Flying Vs.

The Feline also seeks to overcome some of the less practical shortcomings of the radical shape. The Fender Strat-style jack socket is located inside the guitar's upper V, to help tuck guitar cables out of harm's way, and two flush-mounted Dunlop strap-lock sockets enable you to reposition the guitar at a choice of angles for different heroic HM poses. Twin strap buttons located at

the wing tip of each V means you can flip the guitar for lefty playing as well, of course, as doubling up as a handy built-in guitar stand.



DETAILS

CUSTOM QUIRK AT A FAIR PRICE: SUPERB QUALITY AND UBER TONE ON TAP



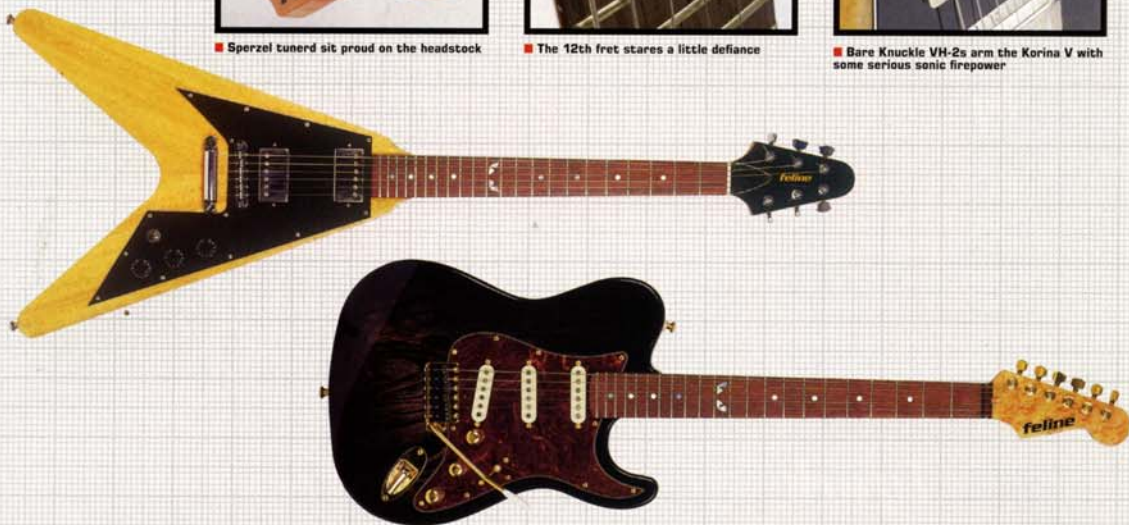
■ Sperzel tuners sit proud on the headstock



■ The 12th fret stares a little defiance



■ Bare Knuckle VH-2s arm the Korina V with some serious sonic firepower



GBOPINION

FELINE GUITARS HYBRID

GOLD STARS

- ★ Interesting variation on a usual theme
- ★ Great sounds
- ★ Excellent build quality

BLACK MARKS

- Scratchplate catches on vibrato bridge

IDEAL FOR...

Brown country rockers and blues players who are prepared to take the flak from non-believers

GBOPINION

FELINE GUITARS KORINA V

GOLD STARS

- ★ A classic sexy design
- ★ Great build quality
- ★ Great hardware

BLACK MARKS

- Not for everybody, but if they don't like it, sod 'em!

IDEAL FOR...

Cutting the ultimate dash on stage. Nothing makes a statement like a 'V'

SOUNDS – KORINA V

Today, the Flying V is more often than not associated inextricably with heavy metal, and while there's 'nowt wrong with that, modern Gibson Flying Vs pander to this mindset by featuring fire-breathing ceramic humbuckers. The twin VH-2s sound much closer to the bright, ringing tone that made the original Gibson Flying V so unique, but the Feline's slightly tamer output is still capable of delivering a pleasing choice of flavours beyond pure knuckle-dragging crunch. When played through a clean amp, the V sounds plump yet sweet, and the neck pickup is just about perfect; so warm and jazzy that it's almost a cliché. Dig in, and a warm, burnished edge begins to cut through.

Compared directly to a typical Les Paul, the V's middle and bridge pickup tones sound thinner, but it's fairer and more accurate to describe the V as having a similar bite to a Les Paul, but with a less overbearing but equally effective low-end; more articulate, we'd say.

Powerful overdriven sounds prove this Feline to have sharp talons tucked away beneath its velvet paws but the

sound is almost panoramic in its scope and breadth.

The Feline V is an incredibly exciting guitar to play, and the balance between the superb neck, virtually limitless access to the upper frets and the powerful, yet transparent tones explain instantly why long-term V players rarely defect to anything else. Unusually shaped it may be, but a tone like this speaks for itself.

GBRATINGS

FELINE GUITARS HYBRID

BODY & NECK	★★★★★
HARDWARE & PARTS	★★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★★
SOUNDS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
GBVERDICT	★★★★★

GBRATINGS

FELINE GUITARS KORINA V

BODY & NECK	★★★★★
HARDWARE & PARTS	★★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★★
SOUNDS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
GBVERDICT	★★★★★

GBCONCLUSION

CUSTOM-MADE GUITARS THAT OFFER EXTREMELY HIGH QUALITY

■ Feline Guitars' tie-in with Bare Knuckle Pickups certainly seems to be a successful match, and while controversy will doubtless rage regarding the supposed sacrifice of the Hybrid concept, there's no denying that this guitar sounds superb. For that reason alone, there's no reason why it shouldn't appeal to virtually anybody with a good set of ears and a relatively open mind.

The Korina V will always attract a certain type of guitarist, usually a complete show-off, and flamboyant Justin Hawkins-types will find it absolutely irresistible. This is more than a scary HM weapon, however, and its warmth and shimmering presence will surprise and delight plenty of players who can live with the shape but don't necessarily do all their shopping at Spandex-R-U's. Good stuff Feline. **GB**