

Richmond Empire

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

THE EMPIRE IS THE LATEST ENTRY IN THE RETRO-LOOK lineup from the newest realm of the Kingdom of Godin—the two-years-young Richmond Guitars. Its single-cutaway body with contoured edge presents a take-away impression that one can't help comparing with PRS's pricier Mira model, or you could call it "an SG minus one horn." Either way, hardware and appointments are appealingly simple: a wraptail bridge with compensated saddle stays solidly '60s, while Kluson-style tuners and a pickup-suspending pickguard complete the vibe. Its bolt-on neck takes us on a swift departure, though, as does the low-noise Rick-cum-DeArmond-looking single-coil pickup in the neck position (7.42k Ω). Its partner is a more traditional medium-wind Godin humbucker that reads a chunky 9.92k Ω .

The Empire's slender 1.5"-thick body is constructed with a silverleaf maple core and poplar wings, resulting in a modest overall weight, and its two-piece mahogany neck (with scarf-jointed, back-angled headstock) wears a thin satin finish that



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Gear

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feels extremely tactile in the hand. I find its rounded C profile with the slightest hint of V'ing toward the center of the neck back extremely inviting, and overall it's an easy and effortless guitar to play.

Plugged into a Dr. Z Z-28 combo, the Empire's no-nonsense simplicity and straight-ahead tones prove instantly appealing. Its bridge-position humbucker does a little of everything you might turn an SG to, while still offering plenty of poppier chime and shimmer when required, and no end of meaty grind through a Barber LTD overdrive pedal.

The real sweetheart here, for my money at least, is the neck pickup—a blend between a Rick toaster-top and a P-90, tonally, that's capable of coaxing anything from throaty blues to jazz to biting R&B. Selected together, these pickups provide a round, snappy, yet plummy voice that also offers plenty of possibilities. It all adds up to making the Empire a hip little number that's a tasty performer for the money. **E**

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT	Richmond Guitars; richmondguitars.com
EMPIRE	
PRICE	\$499 street
NUT WIDTH	1 21/32"
NECK	Mahogany, two-piece bolt-on
FRETBOARD	Rosewood
FRETS	22 medium
TUNERS	Kluson-style vintage tuners
BODY	Silverleaf maple core with poplar wings
BRIDGE	Godin wraparound bridge
PICKUPS	One low-noise Godin single coil, one medium-output Godin humbucker
CONTROLS	Single Volume and Tone, 3-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	Godin High Definition, .010-.046
WEIGHT	7.6 lbs
BUILT	Canada
KUDOS	An appealing simplicity of style and function. Good quality for the price.
CONCERNS	Some slightly rough fret ends (likely caused by climatic changes due to the extensive travel this review model was subjected to).

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