

VINTAGE ADVANCE SERIES AV2

SOLID-BODY ELECTRIC GUITAR

This humbucking take on a classic is another notch on Vintage's belt. By Craig White

WELL, it has been a few years since Vintage popped onto our radar in this country, and though the brand has been common in Britain and the rest of Europe for quite some time, we have joined the story for the most exciting part, it would seem. You will recall we took up the tale with the first models to come out of the then-new relationship between John Hornby Skewes, the company behind Vintage, and guitar design guru Trevor Wilkinson, who was engaged by JHS to tweak the existing range of Vintage electric guitars. While we had no context in which to judge the appreciation this union had engendered, we knew well enough to see that, regardless of the origin of the range, the contemporary Vintage models were very good at their price point – indeed, the V6, their version of the classic American bolt-on model employing three single coil pick-ups and a tremolo bridge, was excellent. Recognising how successful this collaboration had been, JHS retained the services of Wilkinson to design a new range. While the original project had been all about ensuring that models adhered to the template provided by the classic models upon which they were based, the new range would take those classic designs as their inspiration, freeing Wilkinson to incorporate modern design elements, presumably to enhance their performance, though the resulting 'Advance Series' also introduced a few stylistic developments, which are subtle and uniformly tasteful.

IT'S SHORT FOR NOTCHIBALD

For example, there is a wonderful variation that is similarly employed on both our review model, the AV2, which is based on a classic bolt-on single-coil single-cutaway design, and the AV1, which is based on a classic set-neck dual-humbucker single-cutaway. In both instances, a small notch in the body above the neck distinguishes the body shape as unique, and it's surprising how such a small element does so much to make these old workhorse body shapes seem modern.

More importantly, the Advance Series sets out to re-invent these designs from a functional standpoint, and the AV2 features several such enhancements. Like the AV6 we reviewed in issue 59, the AV2 features a bubinga block at the heel of its maple neck, which is intended to create a more solid neck/body join, or, in the language of the company's literature, to provide enhanced mechanical coupling".

Also in common with the P90-equipped AV6 we reviewed, the AV2 features a proprietary "roll" control, which in this case rolls back the tone of the neck pick-up from humbucker to single coil. This is quite an impressive trick, and in operation the control sweep renders an intriguing transition from one to the other, with a great many points of interest along the way, where one or the other tone predominates, but is subtly coloured by various degrees of the other.

WITH SEX YOU GET EGGROLL

With a pleasant unplugged tone thanks to its chambered alder body, and a neck that (like the AV6) feels a little more contemporaneous than the standard series equivalent, hopes are high as we take it out for its first big jam session, and it is a pleasure to report that the AV2 performed admirably. Like all the Vintage guitars we have played, it stayed beautifully in tune, and was a lot of fun to play.

It may well take a little time to get used to incorporating the "roll" control, but when you do it is a very powerful tool. On this model it works exclusively on the neck humbucker, and in tandem with the single-coil bridge pick-up, has some interesting tones to offer in the transitional positions, maybe even more so than the AV6, which was configured so that the roll control worked on all three pick-ups.

THE BOTTOM LINE

It is no secret that we are fans of the Vintage range here, and we are quickly becoming even bigger fans of the Advance Series. While his original work with the Vintage range proved him to be an efficient historian, researching the classic models to produce effective replicas, the Advance Series shows Trevor Wilkinson to be an equally adept futurist. With the Vintage range in the ascendency both in this country and overseas, the Advance models may well become the cornerstone of the range, providing both an upgrade path for intermediate pickers schooled on Vintage student guitars, and quality, affordable semi-professional models for working musicians.

SPECS

- Made Vietnam
- Price \$849
- Body American alder (chambered)
- Top American alder
- Neck Maple (with Bubinga heel extension)
- Fingering Rosewood
- Scale 25.5"
- Frets 22 (medium jumbo)
- Bridge Wilkinson WTB
- Pick-Up 1x Wilkinson WVC humbucker (neck), 1x WVOB single-coil (bridge)
- Tuners Wilkinson WJ05
- Nut Ivory/graphite
- Controls 1x volume, 1x tone, 1x roll control (humbucker to single-coil)

CONTACT

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WHAT WE RECKON

PROS

- ▲ Roll control is a great proprietary circuit that I expect we will see on a number of Vintage guitars in the future
- ▲ The notch in the body gives it a contemporary and classy look
- ▲ Keeps tone wonderfully, as do all contemporary Vintage guitars in our experience

CONS

- ▼ There doesn't appear to be a version with the classic two-single-coil configuration

