

Slide Heaven

Eastwood Airline H44 DLX

IF THE NAME CALLS TO MIND Dirty Harry, you have something in common with Mike Robinson, President of Eastwood Guitars.

Robinson named his company one evening while sitting in a hotel room working on purchase orders. The TV was on, and Robinson was deep into a Clint Eastwood movie marathon. The next morning, when a supplier asked for a company name to invoice, he blurted the first thing that popped into his head, and Eastwood was born.

Robinson's initiation to guitar building began when he got into buying guitars, fixing them up, and re-selling them. His focus was off brands like Airline, EKO, Norma, Teisco, and Domino. Working closely with these classics inspired him to start re-creating old guitar designs, but with modern twists and improvements. One of Robinson's new models, the Airline H44 DLX, is based on the original 1950s Harmony Stratotone H44, with improved pickups, a more stable (and adjustable) set neck, better body wood, and a better finish.

The H44 DLX is a stout little guy, weighing in at a "hefty" seven pounds. It's solidly built, with an ash body, maple neck, and rosewood fingerboard. The neck is baseball-bat fat, as on the originals, with 20 small frets. Fretwork is very nice, as is the action and the overall neck adjustment. Binding on the neck is near-perfect, as was the beautiful Metallic Copper finish on our tester. The guitar's two mini humbucking pickups are controlled via a three-way selector and adjusted with a volume and tone control for each. The tuners are traditional open-gear three-on-a-plate type, and work smoothly. The tailpiece is heavy-duty, and the floating bridge has a compensated plastic saddle (a spare higher-set saddle is included in the package).

To give the H44 DLX a trial run, we plugged it into a Peavey Penta all-tube head running into a 4x12" cab, and a reissue Fender '59 Bassman reissue 4x10".

Starting with the Bassman set for clean tones, the H44's pickups produced a full, fat sound that retained a good bit of high-end sparkle; a little darker and less mid-rangey than standard humbuckers, but with fuller low-end. Very pleasant-sounding in all positions. Plugging into the Penta set for higher gain, the bridge pickup made some downright *nasty* tones, with huge low-end with scooped mids – again, fatter than a standard humbucker and with plenty of sustain. The

neck and middle positions followed suit, producing a darker, full bottom with less midrange, and (still) smooth top-end.

Bottomline: this is a slide guitar. So no test run would be complete without slipping a piece of glass or brass on a finger and jamming an open tuning. Apart from the fact it plays like a dream, when one plays the H44 DLX, their focus will most likely be on the guitar's tone, which is *sublime!* No matter which pickup is used or how one sets the tone or volume knobs, this axe coughs and hollers with some of the nastiest, coolest slide tones you'll hear *anywhere*, and with sustain to die for. Backing off the gain doesn't phase the tone or sparkle whatsoever, but puts the guitar into a great blues breakup.

The H44 DLX is an exceptional guitar, with tones that can take you to slide heaven at a price that won't send your wallet you know where. – **Bob Tekippe**

EASTWOOD AIRLINE H44 DLX

Price: \$499 (direct)
Contact: Eastwood Guitars, 348 Guelph Street, Unit # 14, Georgetown, ONT, Canada L7G-4B5; phone (416) 294-6165; eastwoodguitars.com.



ASHER ELECTRO-HAWAIIAN

Asher Guitars' Electro-Hawaiian Junior has a 25" scale, two humbucking pickups, three-way selector switch, and volume and tone controls. Its neck and body are made from solid mahogany and available in Tobacco burst, Antique White, or Cherry Red finish. Learn more at asherguitars.com.



BBE MIND BENDER, SOUL VIBE

BBE Sound's Mind Bender is a dual-mode vibrato/chorus pedal that produces a range of chorus, vibrato and rotating speaker effects. BBE's Soul Vibe is an analog effect modeled after phase-like rotary speaker effects. See them at bbesound.com.



DEAN 30th ANNIVERSARY MODELS

Dean Guitars' 30th Anniversary ML and V have solid mahogany bodies with redwood tops, white binding, and a mother-of-pearl 30th anniversary crest at the 12th fret of their ebony fingerboards. Read more at deanguitars.com.



G&L TRIBUTE, LEGACY LEFTIES

G&L's Tribute Series Legacy Lefty has a maple neck with rosewood fingerboard, three G&L Alnico V single-coil pickups, 5-way pickup selector, volume control, and G&L's PTB system. The Tribute Series Lefty L-2000 bass has a maple neck with rosewood fingerboard and two G&L Magnetic Field Design humbuckers. Learn more at glguitars.com.