



Vintage Guitar[®] Gear Reviews

magazine

Goin' "Old-Store"

Eastwood's Airline Bighorn

Most everyone has seen a department-store-catalog guitar (or two!) from the '60s or '70s. With their funky, cool body shapes and smorgasbord of knobs and switches, their looks grabbed ya'. Trouble was, they were usually plagued with cut-rate hardware and electronics, low build quality, and crude playability. The latest creation from Eastwood, the Airline Bighorn, pays homage to one of those department-store clas-

sics while leaving to history all of its shoddiest elements.

The Bighorn stays true to its roots, with features like a cool, '60s-style slab-cut basswood body (available in Green, Sunburst, or Red), bolt-on maple neck with rosewood fretboard, large dot inlays, retro pickguard and knobs, and classic Airline headstock and logo. Gone is the short-scale neck with its tiny (and poorly installed) frets, open-striptuners, non-adjustable bridge, thin-sounding single-coil pickups, and funky slide switches. In their

place is a 25¹/₂"-scale neck with large, polished/leveled frets, Kluson closed-back tuners, a hardtail bridge with height and intonation adjustments for all six strings, a pair of high-output Airline Argyle Diamond pickups, and a three-way pickup selector.

Eastwood head honcho Mike Robinson found inspiration for these pickups in the original DeArmonds used in guitars that carried brand names like Kay, Airline, and Silvertone, and updated them with wax potting to control squeal and feedback. The Bighorn offers excellent playability, with low,

EASTWOOD AIRLINE BIGHORN

Price: \$399 (street)

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short-scale vintage pieces, which also typically used archtop-style/floating bridges.

Plugged into a Fender reissue Super Reverb (12AX7/6L6) 4x10" combo with a Homebrew Electronics Power Screamer overdrive pedal, the Bighorn's pickups had a classic, crystal-clear single-coil tone – punchy in the bridge and throaty-sounding at the neck. Engaging both produced lush jangle, and the well-voiced Volume and Tone controls for each allow good flexibility when dialing in tone, falling between traditional Strat pickups and P-90s, with snap, sizzle *and* stronger output/midrange punch. Even though the pickups are true single-coils, they are surprisingly quiet and hum-free, even with the overdrive pedal engaged. The 1³/₄" thick basswood body (³/₄" thicker than most of the bodies on old-school catalog guitars) along with the tight, well-fitted neck and hardtail bridge gave the Bighorn a surprisingly resonant tone acoustically and electronically, with a bigger, bolder sound than expected.

Anyone whose first guitar came from a department-store catalog in '60s or '70s will be es-

buzz-free action, a comfortable C neck shape, and a nice body chamfer that makes it comfortable on the forearm, while the neck heel is less bulky. Its longer scale and hardtail bridge make it comfortable to play compared to the

pecially impressed with the Airline Bighorn. It's a funky retro axe with great tone, excellent build quality, easy playability... it's just plain fun! – **Phil Feser VG**

