

EASTWOOD

AIRLINE 2P DLX



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SRP £449.00
All prices incl VAT

CONTACT:

No official UK distribution as yet but Eastwood guitars are available in a number of UK stores. Just Google Eastwood guitars for more information.

W: eastwoodguitars.com

WHAT IS IT?

Part of an all new series of Korean-made guitars celebrating the oddball but nonetheless highly collectable instruments originally manufactured by long-forgotten US manufacturer, Valco.

WHY SHOULD I WANT ONE?

Besides the guitar's unique vibe and cool sounds, the Airline also comes with a top quality hard case, complete with heaps of case-candy; including stickers, and a demo CD.

Do guitars come much cooler than this? The Airline 2P DLX heads for take off...

Our first encounter with the Airline 2P DLX stirs up some strange and unfamiliar emotions.

Imagine meeting an old friend that you haven't seen for years and finding yourself staggered by how much they've changed. The changes might not necessarily be unpleasant but they still illicit a powerful response when we are faced with something once so familiar that is now almost completely transformed.

It's a bit like the Invasion of the Body Snatchers; you wake up one day to find everyone is still there but somehow they seem, well, different.

This Airline guitar strikes you in a very similar way. It is a guitar, Jim, but maybe not quite as we know it. All of the familiar parts are there but nothing appears to be quite as it should be.

And it feels good.

Flight Reaction

Compared to the more common electric guitar shapes the Airline's angular design is so utterly different that it feels like a hurricane strength blast of fresh air.

The current generation of Airline guitars are made by Canadian based

company Eastwood Guitars, which has resurrected the Airline model along with a host of similarly quirky designs that are mostly based on instruments manufactured between the late 1950s and late 1960s by US manufacturer, Valco.

In accordance with the adventurous spirit so prevalent in electric guitar manufacturing during that period, the Airline harks back to the so-called 'Jet Age'. In those pre-space flight times anything to do with jets or air travel was considered seriously cutting edge and most of the big guitar manufacturers weren't slow on picking up on the pervading sense of technological progress (hence the Fender Stratocaster taking its name from the early jet pioneers daring exploration of the upper Stratosphere). If you think about it, this was a generation who, having lived through the austerity of WWII, were keen on anything that signified a fresh start. Cars, architecture - even furniture - were undergoing a revolution and with electric guitars being all the rage; it was only natural that guitars like the Airline would briefly capture the spirit of the age.

Jack White from White Stripes is the best known modern guitarist who has helped to bring the Airline's profile to the attention of a whole new generation of players, courtesy of his 1964 JB Hutto Airline. Valco's quirky little fibreglass guitars gained a passionate cult following amongst vintage guitar collectors and an original National, Supro or JB Hutto Airline in good condition could set you back upwards of two Grand; that's if you can actually find one!

Eastwood Guitars state that their aim is to faithfully recreate the appearance of the vintage designs whilst ditching the vintage models somewhat iffy build quality. Most of the original models were generally lashed together using whatever materials the factory could lay their hands on, which doesn't necessarily detract from their charm but Eastwood can definitely claim to have the edge in consistency and playability.

But before we get bogged down in a history lesson, let's hop on board the new Airline and take it for a test flight, shall we?

The mahogany body is partly hollowed out with acoustic tone chambers which, besides helping to reduce the overall weight, boost the guitar's resonance and sustaining capabilities and even a cursory unplugged strum reveals that the Airline is indeed a responsive little beastie.

The bolt-on maple neck has a very comfortable profile; it feels rather like Gibson's modern interpretation of their slim 60s pattern, with a flat fingerboard and a super-comfy 'C' shape at the back. If you prefer you necks small and relatively nimble, we reckon that you'll like this one. The 20 skinny vintage style frets are fitted over

Hollow, Man

The current generation of Korean-manufactured Airline guitars feature mahogany bodies instead of the plastic 'Res-O-Glas' moulds used on the vintage guitars but the thick gloss finish nevertheless conveys the correct period feel of the original Airline's striking aerodynamic form.

inlays are fitted dead straight, with no unsightly traces of filler. The top nut appears to be accurately cut and although the asymmetrical headstock splays the strings out, as opposed to modern designs that tend to maintain a straight string pull for more accurate tuning, the Airline's

With both pickups selected, the volume controls shift the bias towards either the neck or bridge pickup, resulting in some very cool sounds; spiky treble, a smooth if not overly powerful bass and a strangely hollow sounding slightly scooped mid, depending which pickup is highest in the mix.

and the whacky but it is certainly never, ever bland.

Conclusion

So what type of music best suits the Airline 2P DLX? Well, if pushed it is probably capable of just about anything but to be fair we think that the Airline is at its most comfortable

The bottom line is that the Airline straddles a fine line between the conventional and the whacky but it is certainly never, ever bland.

The headstock facia features a cheesy white gloss finish and a raised 'Airline' logo that feels entirely in step with the retro mood, as does the truss rod cover's 'Eastwood' logo, which is a brilliant pastiche of a typical 1960s pop-art font.

The Airline's hardware combines modern efficiency with an endearingly naive-looking control layout that accurately captures the original's futuristic aspirations, which mainly appear to hinge on a philosophy of 'the more knobs the better'.

The master volume control located down near the input jack socket

The tone pots appear to have an interactive feel and a much wider sweep than most conventional tone controls; instead of merely muting the guitar's tone, they seem to function more like a parametric EQ, shifting the frequencies up and down whilst enhancing the Airline's already distinctive mid-range honk.

You definitely need to live with the Airline for a while because it doesn't feel particularly intuitive but if more conventional humbucking tones are your bag the Airline also sounds surprisingly modern. Even played through a fairly heavily distorted amp, the Airline feels lively and responsive - it loves to be coaxed into feedback, for example - yet it remains easily controllable.

There is an underlying brightness to the Airline's nature that maybe doesn't lend itself to the heavier end of the spectrum but to be honest what metal player in their right mind would be seen dead with one of these? No. The Airline is more about tattoos and quiffs than biker boots and piercings but part of its charm is that the Airline doesn't limit itself to one sound or one style. Indeed, there are so many great tones on tap that it's difficult to pick one out as a favourite.

The bottom line is that the Airline 2P DLX may be a guitar that straddles a fine line between the conventional

pumping out edgy overdriven rock 'n' roll or blues. Jack White's simplistic riffs, usually beefed up with mountains of vintage fuzz-tone distortion, are the Airline's stock in trade. I'd hazard that the squonky mid-range poke and cutting treble would also lend itself brilliantly to doling out a nifty bit of slide guitar too, but the thing that we like best about the Airline is that this guitar inspires you to play in new ways that your everyday guitars don't and for that reason alone we welcome it with open arms. **PU**

the rosewood fingerboard's crème edge binding and the standard of the overall set up is very impressive. The fret-ends are all smooth and neatly dressed and the block marker

governs the overall output, leaving plenty of scope to experiment with the three-way bladed pickup selector and individual tone and volume controls located above the pickups.



Or you could buy

The Airline 2P DLX is part of a six-strong series that forms a significant part of Eastwood's huge range of retro-styled guitars. If you fancy something slightly more conventional - if conventional is a suitable description for anything from Eastwood - the Airline Coronado STD has two humbuckers and a more traditional control layout whilst retaining the fiercely individual streak that makes Eastwood guitars some of the most refreshing and eye catching instruments we've seen in years. **PU**