

# RED LEADER

## Charvel Guitars have hit the country...

**T**here's no mistaking the new Charvel range. The body shapes are reminiscent of other American guitars and the headstock shape may have been recently copied in the Far East, but there's something about the look and the sheer quality of this model 3 Charvel which excites me. As soon as I picked it up, I knew it was right up there with the greats.

## Construction

OK, let's take it from the top. As I've said, the headstock is distinctive. In fact you could do somebody a positive disservice with it, so be careful to stand on the left of the stage. The splay of the strings behind the nut may be enough to put strain on the string, but that didn't matter too much on this model because it was fitted with a three Allen bolt nutlock to complement the Kahler tremolo. That means that the angle of the string won't constantly be moving through the Phenolic nut, at least. Machine heads are specially made for Jackson, finished in black chrome. The truss rod cover is a chopped triangle fixed with three screws; Charvel/Jackson boast that their dual action truss rod is the best available today. I didn't take the guitar apart to have a look, because it was so nicely set up. Leave things alone until they go wrong, I reckon...

The neck is two pieces of Rock Maple, joined behind the first and second frets in a diagonal joint; you wouldn't know the joint was there by feeling the neck, as it's absolutely smooth. The fingerboard is of quarter-sawn Rosewood, fitted with dot white plastic fret markers. The fretwire is 18% Nickel Silver, fairly chunky and very comfortably finished.

The body is Basswood, but I can't tell how many pieces because the finish is so good. The paint job is beautifully done, in a deep dusty scarlet which Charvel are pleased to call Red. Black and Pearl White are the other basic options although if you work at it (and pay for it) there are custom finishes available. The four bolt neck to body joint is smooth enough, and a steel back plate is fitted.

## Circuitry

Two single coil J100 pickups are fitted in the fingerboard and middle positions. These are described as magnetically-corrected, Vintage-type single coils with Alnico V magnets. The bridge unit, however, is a J90C 'ultra high output, distortion class, accentuated low frequency humbucking pickup with ceramic magnets for 'clearer' distortion. Got that?

The theory behind this apparent contradiction in terms is that Alnico, (a mixture of Aluminium, Nickel and Cobalt) produces a warmer sound; mid/low frequencies predominate. Ceramic magnets, however, are more sensitive with greater output particularly in the treble range, and very good upper harmonics.

The options, therefore, are a bright sound coming off the bridge humbucker together with strong mid-range off the middle and neck pickups. These are controlled by one volume and one tone and a Strat-type five way switch.

## Conclusions

One has to be slightly cautious in recommending Charvel unreservedly, of course, because this is the first one that's arrived, and it's obviously important that it makes the right impression. But...

Before this guitar arrived, I thought that possibly as a result of the advance publicity that has been given to the range, or because of the famous names already associated with the marque, Charvel had achieved a reputation which would be hard to sustain. I was wrong. This may be a particularly nice example or it may have been given special attention, but this guitar looks lovely and feels very nice to play. What's more, the price of £419 seems very reasonable indeed for an instrument of this quality.

The only word I can use to describe the quality of the Charvel is charisma; an indefinable charm which defeats all objective judgement, and just makes you want to keep playing it. The guitar is well designed and made, plays beautifully and has a great sound. I'm sorry if that's OTT, but I think I'm in love...

RRP; £419

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