

THE SUPER HAS LANDED

Mike Ryde (aka MikeRedSpecial) gives a short review of the new Brian May mid-range Red Special guitar.

Well, I have been waiting for this guitar with much anticipation. It is billed as the mid-range RS by the Brian May Group (BMG) so I knew it wasn't going to be in the same league as a Guyton or KZ Pro. However, I was pleasantly surprised, mainly by its phenomenal tone!



The Pickups It's worth buying this guitar for The Fryer/Adeson pickups alone. They really are that good! I've been very impressed with the standard Adeson (BM spec.) pickups for some time and over the last few weeks I've been using them (on a KZ Pro) quite extensively. I was also lucky enough to try out the new pickups on the Guyton prototype, when I met up with Andrew last August. We had the Prototype plugged into a Pete Cornish TB83 and the straight into a Vox AC30 TBX, wound-all the way up. Heaven! Anyway I digress; the new Fryer/Adeson pickups retain the detail and



earthiness I'd come to recognise in Brian's tone but also they had a little more power and saturation. The difference really became evident when the AC30 was wound-up (without any attenuators).

The Neck

It's BIG so beware (definitely not for the faint-hearted)! The mahogany neck sits somewhere between a Guyton and a KZ Pro in profile. It seems to have more of a 'V' than the KZ Pro, which I find is slightly bulkier than the Guyton's I've played. I feel this profile adds to the feel and obviously to the tone; with 8's or 9's it feels great. There are no 'Fryer' stripe markers on the side, just the original dots, but they're clear and neat. The neck glues precisely into the body with the very tidy binding finishing it off.



The machine heads are locking Gotohs with pearl tips and work very well (once you get used to them!). They certainly look the business.

The fingerboard is ebony, not the black painted lacquered oak found on the 'Old Lady'. However, as I understand it, BMG have decided to paint and lacquer the ebony fingerboard on all production models.

The bridge is a nice Wilkinson model which has been shimmed, as this guitar has a 7.25" radius fingerboard (as it should be). The Wilkinson bridge was intended for a larger radius, but again, this is being rectified on the production models.

The Body

The solid mahogany body is thicker than the Guild replicas from the 1980s and 1990s at 39.75mm (1984 Guild - 36.75mm, 1993 Guild - 37.25mm) and is marginally thinner than the KZ Pro (40mm). It doesn't feel much different in weight to the Pro however it does look substantially thinner (although there's probably less than 0.25mm in it)! I think this illusion is down to the grain and colour of the KZ Pro. The Super is certainly 'redder' than most KZ Pros and Guytons, but not as red as the standard BMG/Burns RS or Guilds (this is difficult to see in the photos but in the picture below, the Super is in the middle, the Pro to the left and the Guilds to the right). The cavities certainly appear to be close although there are some differences when compared to the



original and the more expensive replicas, as expected. When I ordered my KZ Pro from Kazutaka at the beginning of this year, I asked him to make a couple of modifications so that it would be slightly closer to the original; namely an aluminium switch plate (as opposed to the plastic one) and brass wiring posts. I'm glad to say that at least one of these modifications has made it into the Super, I'll let you workout which one!



Playing the Super

Well it's early days and I'm still adjusting to the guitar. But the first signs are that this really is a top quality instrument. I currently have Optima 9's (from A-Strings) adorning the guitar, reasoning that this is a modern replica and also Brian is currently using the Optima 9's. To be honest though, I've come to prefer 8's these days (damn you Mark and Martin it's all you fault!) and I find it easier to achieve Brian's Queen tone with the lighter gauge. The guitar is 'comfy' (as are most RSs) and the action, as factory set, is just about right. The tremolo system looks great but I was a little disappointed with its range. It did not seem to go anywhere near as low as my Pro, although aesthetically I could see no difference. This could be a setup problem but I'm not sure. The Pro can dive bomb to 'floppy string territory', the Super stops just short (although it can go a little further than the '93 Guild).

The tone of the guitar is sublime, it sounds fabulous. Although this guitar is filling a difficult niche in the market, I believe the tactics adopted are sound; i.e. making the compromises in some of the build techniques (and some under-the-hood construction details) but putting extra R&D into the aspects which affect the tone. This has paid off....big time!

Hats-off to Greg, Kaz, Pete, Barry and the rest at BMG; they really have done Brian proud!

