



Vintage Guitar[®] Gear Reviews

magazine

Ready, Set, Play!

The Hottie 429

Portland-based Hottie, Inc. is not the first guitar company to use cars as an inspiration for instruments. But where most builders employ a simple hot-rod-style finish with a rally stripe or cool graphics, Hottie guitars are more a *melding* of guitars and cars, with elegant body shapes, smooth contours, and clean, stripped-down look.

Hottie instruments are designed by Jean-Claude Escudie and hand-built (using no CNC) by luthier Saul Koll. They boast outstanding attention to detail that complements their custom/hot-rod vibe – from the glass-like flawless finish, meticulously finished frets, recessed jack plate, precisely fitted components, and hand-cut Corian

pickup ring all make this guitar look fast and muscular.

The Hottie 429 has a one-piece Honduran mahogany body, carved maple top with a nitrocellulose lacquer finish over Daytona Blue paint, a hand-carved set mahogany neck with a soft V profile (C profile also an option), a 12" radius ebony fret board with side markers only (no inlays), 1¹¹/₁₆" bone nut and TonePros nickel hardware.

Under the 429's analogous hood is a single proprietary bridge-position humbucker with Alnico II magnets, vintage-correct enamel wire, and wax potting, mated to CTS Volume and Tone pots and a Switchcraft jack with a ElectroSocket cast jack plate. The 429 has a great feel, low action with

and old-school wraparound tail-piece. The expertly executed fret job, with its high-polished and perfectly leveled frets, made bending a breeze with no choking out or unwanted buzz. Weighing just shy of nine pounds, the 429 isn't bad for a guitar with a thick solid-mahogany body and maple cap. It balances nicely on a strap and control placement is familiar and comfortable.

Through a low-watt/EL-84-based 2x12" combo and a quality overdrive pedal, the 429 produced a punchy, clear tone with plenty of present (but not overwhelming) midrange – very well-balanced. The passive Tone control is nicely graduated, with a smooth, usable taper that dials in or rolls off high-end snap, adding versatility to what could be a one-trick-pony single-pickup guitar. One benefit with a single pickup is the



Clicking on the overdrive pedal and dialing in some distortion unleashed a classic "crunchy" tone – full and articulated, with plenty of gain and sustain without taxing one's ears with harsh highs. The combination of the 429's nitro finish, the familiar tone characteristics of the maple/mahogany combo and even its Corian pickup ring, all add to remarkable rock-



HOTTIE 429

Price: \$3,499 (direct)

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a substantial (but not chunky) soft-V neck profile, easy playability with familiar 24.625" scale length,

added sustain you get with fewer pickups pulling on the strings. Another is the ability to adjust the pickup closer to the strings, for better output.

solid tone with no squealing or unwanted feedback – just a rich harmonic overdrive with tons of sustain.

Like the muscle cars that inspired the Hottie 429, it sports high-performance and eye-catching good looks with an outstanding build quality and classic old-school tone. – *Phil Feser VG*