

panel layout. The modified line array speaker design at the heart of the systems uses four 4-inch speakers and a 1-inch tweeter placed in a vertical pattern. The line array concept holds many advantages over the larger speaker boxes commonly used in P.A. systems. Line arrays produce an even, consistent sound with a wide dispersion, which means the SA330x sounds clear and natural throughout the space. The main advantage is that the P.A. sounds the same to the performer on stage as it does to the audience in the room, allowing it to function as its own monitor. The line array is also resistant to feedback, so the SA330x can be positioned behind the performers on stage. According to Gary Lenaire, director of new product marketing and sales at Fishman, "The concept behind SA was to create a portable stage PA and monitor that produces the same audio quality as a professional studio monitor."

Under the hood, there are some improvements as well. The basic unit is 4 pounds lighter due to using extruded aluminum instead of plywood. Also, advances in Class D power supplies have made the new systems more reliable overall. The SA Performance Audio Systems come with the basic unit containing the P.A. column and speaker stand for mounting. The four-channel SA Expand and the 8-inch SA Sub can be purchased separately, providing a scalable solution.

The systems are unbelievably easy to transport, and they set up in minutes. The full three-piece system sounded absolutely wonderful at all the gigs I used it on. The SA330x's two-input front panel provides a well-thought-out set of controls with a great anti-feedback notch filter and four reverb options. The back panel offers plenty of connection options for DI output, monitors, aux in and the connection for the SA Sub. I particularly like the adjustable tweeter control for fine-tuning the high frequency response. The SA Expand (which connects to the unit with a single Cat 5 cable that also handles power) adds four additional inputs and can be conveniently mounted directly onto the speaker pole. The SA Sub also connects easily, adding quite a bit of low end. Fishman offers the option of mounting the SA330x onto the sub via an optional pole that fits right into it.

Fishman has taken a great product and made it even better. With added power and expandability, this is a very solid solution for those who need a reliable and convenient P.A. for small to medium-sized venues. The base unit, which includes the P.A. column, stand and padded carrying case, is available at an MSRP of \$1,549.99, with the SA Expand listing at \$237.99 and the SA Sub at \$849.99.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: fishman.com



Eastman Custom Edition Guitars

Boutique Instruments Built To Order

Eastman launched its guitar division in 2004 with a mission to produce quality, handcrafted instruments at affordable prices. Building on a strong background in violin making, the company has significantly raised the bar for Asian-manufactured guitars.

Now, Eastman has unveiled its Custom Edition line, offering premium-level instruments that are custom-built to a customer's individual specifications.

The process begins with bodies and necks that are hand-carved in Eastman's Beijing plant and shipped to the United States in unfinished condition. The remaining work is done in Eastman's new custom workshop in Pomona, California, by master luthier and guitar designer Otto D'Ambrosio, a contractor with Eastman for many years who was brought onboard full-time to spearhead the new division.

This hybrid approach takes full advantage of Eastman's skill and efficiency in manufacturing overseas while retaining the ability to offer a true custom-made guitar. D'Ambrosio describes it as "bringing the boutique vision to a production instrument."

Each Custom Edition guitar begins life with a body and neck based on one of Eastman's standard models. Once the raw necks and bodies (made of carefully selected premium-quality woods) arrive in California, D'Ambrosio and his team put about 40 to 50 hours of work into each instrument.

Customers have the ability to customize numerous aspects of their build, including color, finish, inlay, tuners, pickguard design, pickup selection and configuration, and even fret wire preference. You can even have the neck profile custom-carved and request specific neck-set angles.

The guitar we received was based on Eastman's AR805CE model, which is a 16-inch-wide Venetian cutaway archtop with a 3¼-inch body depth. The subtle beauty of this guitar and the attention to detail immediately struck me. The custom design elements lend to the guitar's unique personality and definitely separate it from a regular production model.

Hitting a few chords, I was blown away by the acoustic volume and resonance of this instrument, particularly considering how low the action was. This guitar was absolutely perfect and played like a dream. Plugged in, it once again delivered with a single Lollar neck-mounted pickup. This particular instrument retails for about \$4,500, but prices of Custom Edition guitars will vary with each individual order.

With the Custom Edition line, Eastman has entered the high-end guitar market, offering the custom guitar experience to a wide range of players.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: eastmanguitars.com/custom-edition

