

Heritage H-535 Semi-Hollow

A Classic Axe Lives On

When Jim Deurloo, Marv Lamb and JP Moats made the decision to set up shop in the former Gibson Guitar factory in Kalamazoo, Michigan, they made a commitment to uphold the legacy of high standards and hand craftsmanship for which the historic building was known. Releasing its first guitar in 1985, the Heritage Guitar company has gone on to produce a line of instruments that have earned praise among players for their playability and fine attention to detail.

With deep roots in Kalamazoo, several former Gibson employees made the choice to stay behind when production was relocated to Nashville in 1984. With a strong respect for history and tradition, these craftsmen hatched a plan to reopen a small guitar factory in the vacated space. Considering that this was the very same spot where Lloyd Loar designed the L-5 archtop and F-5 mandolin, as well as the birthplace of some of the most iconic guitars in the world, it made sense that Heritage would build on the reputation that Gibson had established early on. Heritage initially released the H-140 solidbody, based on the Les Paul design, and later moved into hollowbody archtops, eventually offering the H-535 semi-hollow, based on the classic Gibson ES-335.

The H-535 is extremely close in design to the original ES-335, with only minor differences in pickups and hardware. Originally introduced in 1958, the 335 received an overwhelming response due its ability to maintain some of the resonance and warmth of an archtop, but with the added capability of being able to play at much higher volume levels. This revolutionary design uses a hybrid approach featuring a thinner body depth with a solid maple block running down the center, surrounded by two hollow wings with f-holes in the top. Sitting firmly between a hollow archtop and a solidbody, it's the perfect guitar for a wide variety of styles.

The Heritage H-535 might look a lot like the Gibson, but on closer inspection, you begin to notice the fine detail and high quality of this guitar, which is much closer to a 1960s 335 than a newly manufactured Gibson. Heritage builds these guitars using some of the very same Gibson machinery that either was left behind or purchased by Heritage after Gibson relocated. The H-535 is available in four finish options, and the one I play-tested was in translucent cherry, recreating the look of classic 335s from the 1950s. The body is made from laminated figured maple that

is sourced mainly from Michigan, and the neck is hand-rolled mahogany. The cream-colored binding helps add an aged look to the guitar, which is finished in nitrocellulose lacquer. This is a classy, well-built instrument.

You always can tell a really good guitar by how well it plays right from the factory, an indicator of the maker's quality control. The H-535 plays wonderfully with a great setup and required no adjusting to dial it in. The dual Seymour Duncan Seth Lover humbucking pickups sound good with plenty of clarity, but with a nice warmth and fullness to them. The guitar has great sustain and seemed to excel when paired with a quality tube amp. The range of tones available on this guitar is very impressive, providing the ability to navigate through nearly any gigging situation.

The semi-hollow design, well known for its versatility, always has been a popular choice for guitarists who require a single axe that can function in a variety of musical situations. At \$2,799 (including a sturdy TKL case), the Heritage H-535 offers quality and playability that hark back to the glory years of American guitar manufacturing.

—Keith Baumann

heritageguitars.com



Fishman Loudbox Mini Charge

Battery Power, Maximum Output

Fishman, known for its acoustic instrument amplification products, has released the next generation in the company's Loudbox series amplifiers. The Loudbox Mini Charge runs on a rechargeable battery and power management circuitry specifically designed to maximize output levels and playing time. With 60 watts of power, dedicated instrument and microphone channels, and Bluetooth 4.0 connectivity for playback of backing tracks or external music sources, the Loudbox Mini Charge covers all the bases for modern utility and portability in a high-quality acoustic instrument amplifier.

Dimensions of the 21.2-pound amp are 12 inches high by 13.7 inches wide by 9.7 inches deep. It's covered with textured tolex, a dark-tan tweed

grille and a brown control panel—a smart aesthetic that pairs well with wood-based acoustic instruments. The amp cabinet has a 10-degree tilt to the base and a comfortable carrying handle.

Two separate channels for instrument and microphone on top of the amp are angled toward the musician for easy visibility and adjustment. The instrument channel has a 1/4-inch input, a phase button to tame situational feedback, and knobs for gain control, low/mid/high EQ and digital reverb and chorus effects. The mic channel with XLR input also has its own gain, low/mid/high EQ and digital reverb effect. Above the master volume are three small lights to indicate battery use, battery life warning and power charging status. The closed back of the amp has the power