



Asher Guitars Resosonic Rambler

TESTED BY MATT BLACKETT

IF YOU'VE CHECKED OUT THE PLAYING of Jackson Browne or Ben Harper, you've heard instruments built by Bill Asher. Asher has been a SoCal fixture for a long, long time and in addition to Harper and Browne, he counts Marc Ford, Redd Volkaert, and a host of other great players as clients. When we visited Asher Guitars at the last NAMM Show, we couldn't help but fall in love with the Resosonic Rambler that you see here.

It's easy to understand why. This is one of the most eye-catching designs of all time. Let's start with the obvious: You get a hand-cut 1958 Nash Rambler hub cap that covers the spun aluminum 9.5" Beard resonator cone. I could basically end this review right here and this instrument would still rule. You also get a sumptuous red finish with super-cool pin striping (done free-hand by artist Jack "Pacman" McCann) on the sexy body. The elegant headstock shape and Lollar Gold Foil pickup round out the cosmetics.

The Ramblers showed up with a medium-high action making it possible to both fret chords and play slide. It came tuned to Dobro-style high-G, but you can tune it any way you want. I grabbed a slide and plugged the Asher into a Kendrick 2210 and started playing my brand of gutsy—if slightly out-of-tune—bottleneck licks. I was instantly knocked out by the deep, rich tones that the Rambler is capable of. The Okume body and neck wood, coupled with the Lollar pickup, produces amazing detail. It can be sweet and

pretty or swampy and nasty, but it never loses its articulate voice. And, despite the fact that all you get is a neck-position pickup, there's plenty of treble on hand and I never missed having a bridge or middle pickup. It also sounds righteous acoustically before you ever plug it in.

The Volume control on the Rambler is beautifully voiced, with usable sounds throughout its range. That made the instrument all the more flexible, because I could easily dial in a distorted tone on the amp and get anything from clean to dirty with volume adjustments. The Tone control is another thing entirely. Underneath the knob (which looks just like the knobs on my old Fender Champ) there lurks a ToneStyler circuit, which gives you ten different roll-off points to fine-tune your tone. This makes it a breeze to compensate for a bright amp, turn a punchy rhythm tone into a warm and wooly lead tone, or create a subtly different sound for an overdub. A very cool bonus.

Asher takes pains to intonate the maple and ebony saddle, which is really important for keeping the fretted notes sweetly in tune. Not every maker does this, and it makes a big difference. And although this is a roundneck instrument—not a squareneck—and is designed to be played like a guitar, I had a blast playing it lap-style (with a Dunlop Ben Harper signature bar, no less) and butchering licks from my Rob Ickes lesson.

The Resosonic Rambler is an incredibly inspiring instrument to play. My slide chops are not great but this guitar makes me want to practice and get better. Bill Asher is a master craftsman who makes incredibly hip works of art. If you get a chance to try a Rambler, do so and you'll see. **B**

MODEL

RESOSONIC RAMBLER

CONTACT asherguitars.com
PRICE \$2,985 retail

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1 11/16"
NECK	Quartersawn Okume
FRETBOARD	Indian rosewood 25 1/2" scale
FRETS	22 Dunlop 6155
TUNERS	Hipshot 18-1 ratio
BODY	Slab cut Okume
BRIDGE	Biscuit
PICKUPS	One Lollar Gold Foil
CONTROLS	Volume, ToneStyler tone circuit
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario, .011-.049
WEIGHT	5.75 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Beautiful design. Great range of tones. Super inspiring.
CONCERNS	None.