

Asher Marc Ford Signature

A star guitar from California that melds classic Strat and LP Special influences. chris vinnicombe finds out if you can have your cake and eat it...

sher Guitars & Lap Steels is a family business based in the Venice Beach area of sunny Los Angeles, California, and is headed up by master luthier, Bill Asher. With decades of experience building and maintaining instruments for the likes of Jackson Browne, Ben Harper and plenty more besides, Asher was the man that former Black Crowe, solo artist and mighty fine guitarist Marc Ford turned to a few years ago when he was looking for a custom instrument that combined the tone and vibe of his Les Paul Special with the ergonomics of his go-to Stratocaster.

The resulting mash up of Strat and TV Special influences - now available here in the UK thanks to Coda Music is a hugely pleasing one, and the choice of amp-style aluminium skirt knobs and ^{aged} nickel pickup covers alongside a three-ply parchment scratchplate looks coolly retro without straying into overkitsch territory.

The satin-finished, subtly-flamed rock maple neck has a gorgeous deep D profile that borders on a V with its appealing lack of shoulder. The fingerboard edges are broken for comfort and its rich red flashes add a touch of exotica. The 12-inch 'board radius and Dunlop 6155 fretwire make for a creamy and expressive playing experience all the way up the neck, while the lightweight West African okoume body is a snug fit, too, thanks to the presence of Strat-style forearm and ribcage contours.

Locking Hipshot tuners and an easy-access truss-rod adjustment wheel are reminders that this instrument

almost acoustic-like texture through to raucous, biting rock.

It's in overdrive land that the ToneStyler switch really comes in handy with an array of vocal-sounding treble roll-offs that can be used to help lead tones find space in a dense mix, or thicken up those naturally bright and percussive Arcane P-90s as and when necessary.

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has been developed for the road. The Callaham vintage Strat-style vibrato is among the very best of its type and provides a smooth ride, although it does take a while for our review sample's tuning to settle down.

In Use

Plugging the Asher into a Celestion Blue-equipped 1959 5E3 amplifier, there's an enormous amount of fun to be had by simply manipulating the guitar's volume control. Tones range from pretty, dynamic clean sounds and harmonically rich jangle with an

As you might very well expect, this guitar won't take you all the way into springy Strat or snarling LP Special territory. However, it has bold shades of both among a range of high-dollar tones that excel for rootsy rock 'n' roll playing and sound like absolute dynamite in combination with an old tweed amp. @

Guitar VERDICT

- + Top drawer appointments throughout
- + Versatile range of high-quality tones
- + Light weight and great balance
- Post-Brexit pound crash makes the price even more premium

A nicely refined, vintage-influenced electric with the tonal diversity to cover a varied set

9/10

KEY FEATURES

Asher Marc Ford Signature

- PRICE £3,999 (inc hard case)
- **DESCRIPTION** Double-cutaway solidbody electric. Made in USA
- BUILD One-piece contoured okoume body, quartersawn rock maple neck with ebony headstock fascia and 12" radius pau ferro fingerboard with 22 Dunlop 6155 frets and bone nut
- · HARDWARE Hipshot locking chrome tuners, Callaham vintage-style vibrato bridge
- ELECTRICS 2x Arcane Sweet 90 P-90 pickups, three-way blade pickup selector switch, master volume, tone, 11-position ToneStyler switch (offers 11 EQ curves from true-bypass to 0.022µF)
- SCALE LENGTH 25.5"/648mm NECK WIDTH 43.2mm at nut,
- 51.7mm at 12th fret NECK DEPTH 23.6mm at 1st fret, 25.0mm at 12th fret
- · STRING SPACING 33.6mm at nut, 52.3mm at bridge
- WEIGHT 7.3lb/3.3kg
- FINISH TV Yellow nitrocellulose (as reviewed), Cherry Red, Tobacco Burs
- CONTACT Coda Music www.coda-music.com

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Dennis Fano's Novo Serus J (£2,999) combines a pair of excellent Amalfitano P-90s with a Sumptiously playable neck and the ever-smooth Mastery Vibrato. The Music Man Valentine (£2,449) is another fine player with a gorgeous neck and versatile electronics. For more of a Set-neck LP Special vibe, check out the **Echopark Downtowner Deluxe TV Yellow** (£4,499)

