





Words Jonathan Horsley Photography Phil Barker

# GRETSCH G5220 ELECTROMATIC JET BT G5260 ELECTROMATIC JET BARITONE

The venerable Gretsch single-cut gets updated for the modern era as two classy Jets are served up two different ways

**T**oday we are going to take a look at two variations on an iconic single-cut electric guitar. No, not *that* one – the Gretsch Jet, a model that has been in production in one way or another since 1953 with the arrival of the Duo Jet. The Jet has put some miles under its belt over the years, finding its way into the possession of an array of players, including George Harrison, Matt Bellamy, Chris Cornell and many more, and like an old-fashioned blues standard that's been passed down generations there are all kinds of variations on the theme. You'll find them with hard-tails or Bigsby vibratos, with pickups ranging from the DynaSonic snap and definition of the G6128T-GH George Harrison Signature Duo Jet to the PAF-power of a Broad'Tron humbucker.

The G5220 and baritone G5260 from Gretsch's mid-priced Electromatic range are Chinese made but conform to the classic Jet recipe, with chambered mahogany bodies as standard. They both look like they pre-date decimalisation but are new for 2022, and arrive with a host of updates bestowed upon all new Electromatics. They look the part, with bound headstocks and bodies, vintage-style purfling, Big Block pearloid inlays, sealed tuners and a number of finish options.

While they are clearly siblings, sharing the neat V-Stoptail hardware, not to mention the very welcoming Thin U neck profiles and Indian laurel fingerboards found across the series, they are both very different guitars. The G5260 has a bolt-on build, a longer 29.75" baritone scale to accommodate the lower tuning, and has mini-humbuckers, whereas the G5220 houses a pair of Broad'Tron humbuckers, with its newly upgraded body sporting a maple top.

All the classic guitar brands have their purists, yet none are as devout as the Gretsch super-fan. These electrics have a retro appeal, sure, but are not necessarily for those whose idea of Gretsch doesn't extend beyond twang, chime and the radio hits of the 1950s. Sure, you'll get a taste of that here but the G5220 and baritone G5260 grant today's player plenty of license to give 'That great Gretsch sound' a new cadence.





## GRETSCH G5220 ELECTROMATIC JET BT £529

### Prepare for takeoff

**T**he G5220 is a typical Electromatic, which means a champagne instrument at craft beer prices. Of course, Gretsch's superlative entry-level Streamliner series is even easier on the wallet, but it's hard to compete with this on value. The Bristol Fog finish has a smoky vibe that is immaculately finished with the binding and purfling, and complemented by the chrome hardware and Gretsch-branded arrow control knobs.

If your first move on any new electric guitar is to play hit an open A chord as hard as you can, you'll be well rewarded with a sound that suggests that, just maybe, this is going to be a classic Gretsch experience after all, and by classic we mean a sound inextricably linked to the heritage of the brand. The Broad'Tron pickups are hum-cancelling, with an output similar to, say, a Gibson PAF, and they balance this power with definition.

Gretsch calls it "full-spectrum fidelity" and we'd endorse that description. There's a forensic note definition that brings chords to life. Should your amp be on the threshold of overdrive when hitting the aforementioned A chord, the recorded works of Malcolm Young will spring to mind.

What this Jet reminds us is that heritage brands can be fun, fun, fun. The compact scale – particularly after playing the baritone – makes it a willing accomplice for all kinds of rock 'n' roll adventures. High-gain stuff is rough and unruly and exhilarating, while the Jet excels at power-pop mid-70s sounds, sprinkling magic dust on big chords. There is a resonant snap and bounce that does just enough to assuage the rock 'n' roll set. Through the right amp, a tube combo with spring reverb to taste, it'll scratch that itch for *American Graffiti* tones. It's not an all-rounder but what is? Besides, it is pretty close.







## GRETSCH G5260 ELECTROMATIC JET BARITONE

£609

The low-end is nigh

**T**hat historic context makes even more sense when you start playing the G5260. There is something pleasingly rubbery about that the tubby sound of that low B string. With a little slapback echo and spring reverb, and picking near the bridge, you can coax a twang out of it that does the name on the headstock proud.

The G5260 looks stretched out, its top flat where the G5220's is noticeably arched, and for a moment you might ask yourself if you need arms like Mr Tickle to cover the fingerboard. Perhaps the biggest trick the G5260 pulls is in shrinking once you start playing it, that it feels manageable.

In a sense, this G5260 splits the difference between the 60s vibe and the baritone's latter-day uses. The proprietary mini-humbuckers are not going to arm-wrestle an EMG into submission but they have a growl that

invites incaution with the fuzz pedal. Always a good option. Played clean, it goes from being Morricone-adjacent on the bridge pickup to piano-esque and detailed at the neck. Baritone guitars might be most widely recognised as a specialist instrument but this challenges that.

Who is this for? How long have you got. You can play all kinds of styles on this. Modern metal and shred is a stretch; everything else is fair game. Woolly mammoth, fuzzed-out Melvins tones, grunge, punk, all translate well. Jazz chords are given a sonorous authority when performed on a baritone. Okay, blues sounds kinda weird but assimilated into the vocabulary of rock 'n' roll and big riffing classic rock the baritone makes sense. There is just enough power and oomph – not to mention clarity – to make it work. And like its standard-scale sibling, the G5260 is nicely put together, a guitar whose price tag might require a double take.





# FINAL VERDICT

The question is: do you want your Jet at cruising altitude or turned down low?

In a sense, there is no like-for-like comparison to be made. The baritone, extended down a lower 4th to B (or A if you're feeling brave), is a floor-shaker that muscles in on the bass player's territory, while the G5220 is a contemporary update to septuagenarian platform, accessible, classy, a jack of most trades. And yet they both demonstrate how classic design can be augmented over time, and

how Gretsch's brand identity translates to different platforms. Though the output jacks on both our instruments were a little loose, the quality of the fit and finish is otherwise tip-top, with tuning stable throughout, and factory setups that present both as addictively playable guitars. Even the baritone, with its tow-rope sixth string, is player-friendly. We often talk about Gretsch being typecast but this takes us through the

looking glass with a guitar that challenges our assumptions of what a baritone is for. The G5220's versatility makes it a compelling option in a market comprising some superb mid-priced electrics from the likes of Epiphone and Fender's Player Plus series. Broad'Trons make for a more hench Gretsch sound but it is not overpowering. If anything, with these dynamic humbuckers, the Jet is more practical than ever.

## GRETSCH G5220 ELECTROMATIC

£529



### AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** Chambered mahogany with maple top  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**SCALE:** 24.6"  
**FINGERBOARD:** Indian laurel with Big Block pearloid inlay

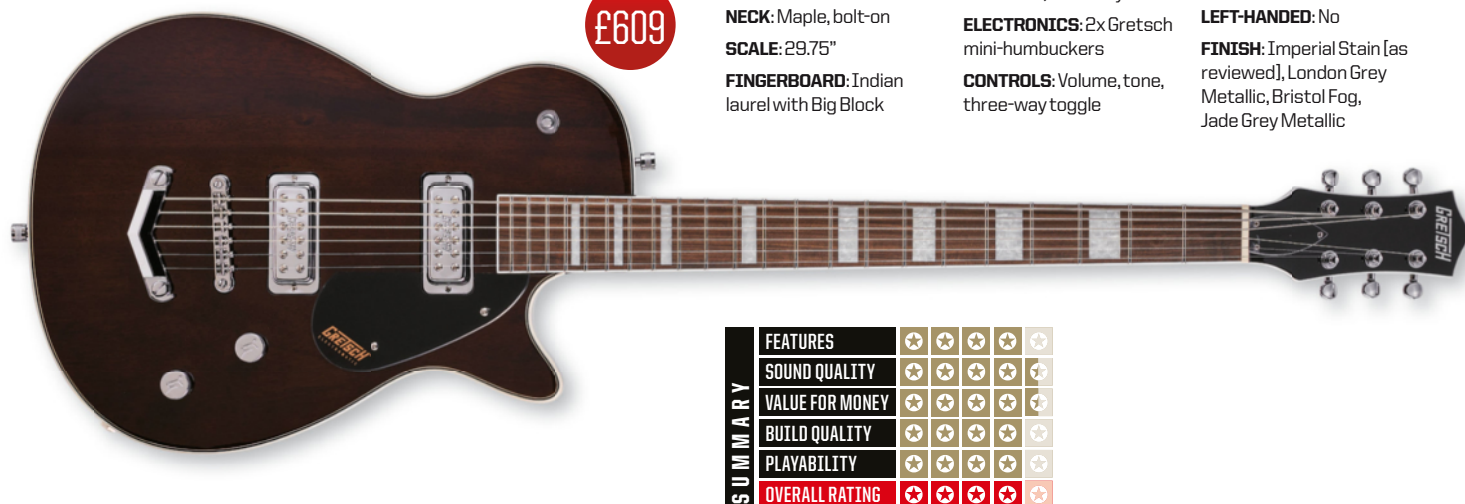
**FRETS:** 22, medium jumbo  
**ELECTRONICS:** 2x Gretsch Broad'Tron humbucking pickups  
**CONTROLS:** Master volume with treble bleed, 2x individual pickup volume, tone, three-way toggle

**HARDWARE:** Sealed tuners, V-Stoptail, chrome  
**LEFT-HANDED:** Yes  
**FINISH:** Bristol Fog [as reviewed], Midnight Sapphire, Black, Firestick Red, Dark Cherry Metallic, Jade Grey Metallic

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

## GRETSCH G5260 ELECTROMATIC

£609



### AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** Chambered mahogany  
**NECK:** Maple, bolt-on  
**SCALE:** 29.75"  
**FINGERBOARD:** Indian laurel with Big Block pearloid inlay

**FRETS:** 22, medium jumbo  
**ELECTRONICS:** 2x Gretsch mini-humbuckers  
**CONTROLS:** Volume, tone, three-way toggle

**HARDWARE:** Sealed tuners, V-Stoptail, chrome  
**LEFT-HANDED:** No  
**FINISH:** Imperial Stain [as reviewed], London Grey Metallic, Bristol Fog, Jade Grey Metallic

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★