

FIRST PLAY



GODIN RADIATOR £829

WHAT IS IT? Affordable Canadian-made chambered-body, set-neck electric released 20 years after the original Godin Radiator

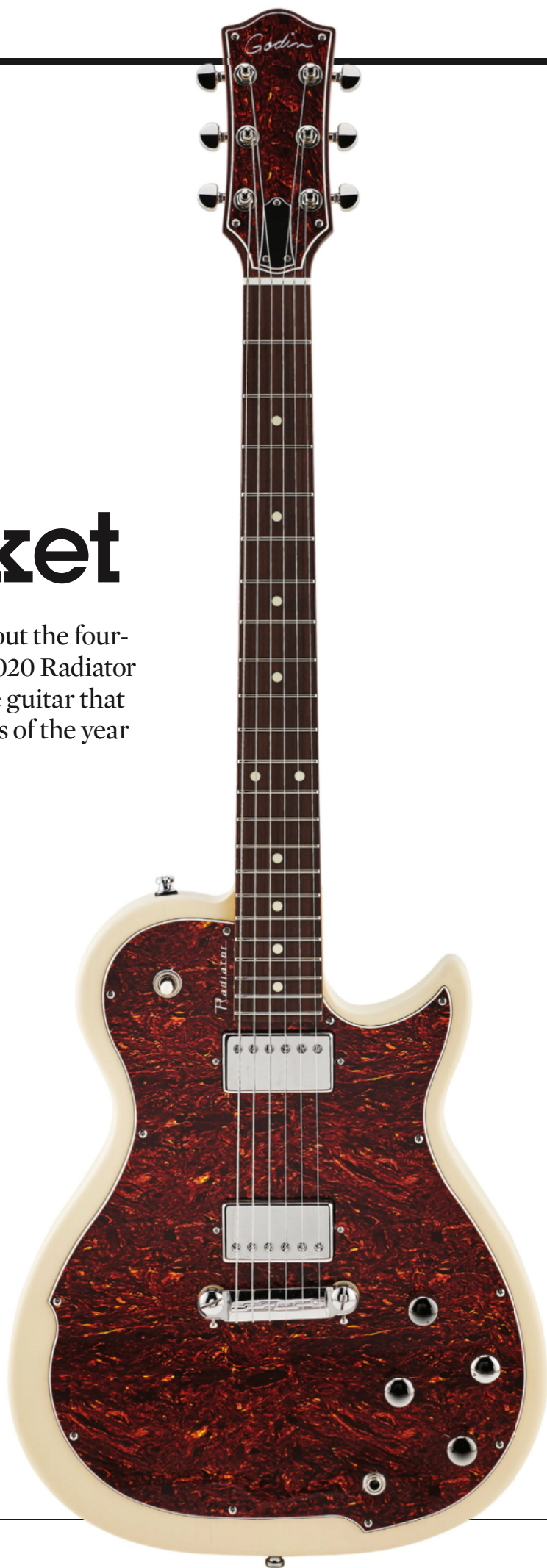
Hot Ticket

Fancy some boutique style without the four-figure price tag? Well, Godin's 2020 Radiator is exactly that: a Canadian-made guitar that might well be one of the bargains of the year

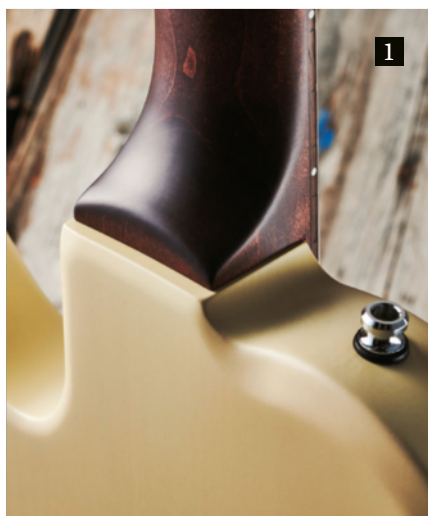
Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Olly Curtis

Godin's original Radiator launched back in 1999 as a very retro-styled entry-level model – the antithesis of the more complex dual- and three-voice (including synth access) electrics that the Canadian company was becoming known for. It used the elongated single-cut SD shape, pretty similar to today's LGXT, with a bolt-on 24-fret maple neck, while the fairly heavily chambered body was covered with pearloid, including a full-face scratchplate, creating that retro vibe and probably inspired by certain Magnatone electrics from the 50s. Along with a string-through bridge with six L-shaped saddles, it featured a pair of retro-y Rickenbacker-style single coils with dual volumes and a master tone all mounted on its plastic front. That original model also came in a range of natty colours, too.

Today's version certainly has some of that DNA, although the body shape follows the more contemporary single-cut outline used on Godin's Summit Classic SG. The colours are also more muted like our matt Trans Cream with its tortie face; the Matte Black version comes with a black fascia, while Bourbon Burst features a whiter pearloid







1. The set-neck here is brown-stained silver leaf maple with a nicely crafted heel. The original Radiator was a bolt-on

2. We get a volume and tone for each pickup with these classy knurled knobs, all mounted on the full-face scratchplate

3. Adding a little budget Gibson-like style, the wrapover bridge has overall intonation adjustment with raised preset saddle ridges for each string

4. These proprietary and retro-looking Godin High Ratio tuners use a 18:1 ratio on the bass side and 26:1 on the treble

5. The scratchplate material is unusually used as a headstock facing here and matches the colour of the body's fascia

facing. Incidentally, the colour-matched pearloid is also overlaid on the very classic-style and back-angled three-a-side headstock here.

Like the original, the 45mm thick silver leaf maple body is chambered, but here it's more heavily done, though that aspect of the design is not mentioned in any Godin marketing. It means the guitar drops comfortably below the 3.6kg (8lb) mark, but certainly doesn't feel feather-light. In fact, it's got a good business-like and purposeful feel to it, less gimmicky perhaps than that original design.

Now, you could bash it up a bit and load it up with boutique parts, and a design like this could easily set you back £3k. But Godin has long loaded in the quality while keeping costs pared down, thanks to their immense production experience. We've mentioned the matt body finish, which is obviously quicker to apply than a high gloss. The neck appears brown-stained and is a little more silky satin in feel, but we'd guess that's pretty fast to apply, too. There's a little rear edge chamfering on the back, but otherwise we just get an edge radius to the slab body. The heel is left square and Gibson-esque, and the neck appears to be a three-piece construction with its headstock spliced on and a heel stack.

Godin doesn't go deep on pickup specs. These are clearly covered and classic looking with individual volume and tones, a shoulder-placed toggle and output jack below the lowest controls. It means, of course, that all the wiring and pickups can

It's a gutsy-sounding Les Paul Special-style instrument with a great weight and a big sound

be mounted to the face-plate, although with 13 screws to attach it to the guitar (there's a hidden screw under the bridge) you won't want to be removing and replacing it too often. Don't worry, though – we've done it for you (see Under The Hood, opposite).

And while the Summit Classic SG, which we looked at back in issue 440, sported a rather nice Graph Tech ResoMax Sonic 1 one-piece "wraparound" bridge, the wrapover here is more generic in style, a heavier cast bridge with raised ridges to act as intonated 'saddles'. Overall, intonation is via the two protruding steel bolts that connect directly to the steel posts adding to the rather Melody Maker-like vibe.

Feel & Sounds

The craft is excellent, particularly for the price. The neck really does feel like it should be on a much higher priced guitar. It features a Gibson-like scale length and similar 305mm (12-inch) radius and the medium gauge fretwire (approx. 2.36mm wide by 1.2-1.25mm high) is beautifully installed and highly polished. The fingerboard edges are lightly rolled, too, and the Graph Tech Tusq nut is perfectly cut.



UNDER THE HOOD

How the 2020 model measures up to its predecessor

Now, to access the electrics you have to remove the bridge and undo the 13 screws (albeit two fewer than a Fender Tele Deluxe): quite a palaver. Unlike the Summit Classic SG we looked at back in issue 440, which used very modern and small pots, here we have standard-sized 500kohm types with 'Made in Korea Jinsung' stamped on their bases. Again, unlike that Summit, there's no treble bleed and the wiring is modern style using a small ceramic 333 code (.033 microfarads) tone cap on each tone control. The humbuckers are four-conductor types, so if you fancy a bit of modding then that would be easy enough, and the stickers on the brass baseplates identify the pickups as being made by Booheung Precision Machinery Co, Ltd in Korea.

Exactly what's going on under the covers is anyone's guess, and DCRs measured 16.17kohms at the bridge and 9.26k at the neck – both slightly higher than the uncovered Godin Custom Zebra humbuckers of the Summit SG we previously looked at, which certainly reinforced the hot humbucker vibe when we plugged in. This entire full-face scratchplate and its electronics are probably assembled in Korea and shipped to Godin HQ for assembly.



The base of the Radiator's bridge pickup



This is a simple control circuit



With the bridge and scratchplate removed you can see the extensive chambering



In terms of profile it's a pretty regular medium C style: 21.5mm at the 1st fret and 24mm at the 12th, almost Fender-y in lower positions with a little more bulk by the heel. Aside from needing a slight tweak of the truss rod, the setup is low and slinky as supplied with a string height of 1.3mm on the high E and 1.5mm on the bass.

The very retro Godin logo'd tuners are a little special as well, with a very smooth feel and higher-than-usual gear ratios (18:1 on the bass side and 26:1 on the treble), which makes them very fine tuning, especially on the treble side. Once we'd stretched the strings, we barely touched them: this is one very stable guitar.

The bridge, though, is a little rudimentary. Intonation was slightly sharp overall during our test, but that can be easily dialled in with those outer pair of Allen key bolts. If you live in the upper-fret positions, certainly chordally, it simply might not be 'in' enough, but we suspect this guitar has more of a rock 'n' roll aim.

Although we have four controls they're not laid out like our benchmark Gibson's;



Godin's nickel-covered Custom pickups are made in Korea, although their specs aren't publicised. As with the other electronics they also mount to the full-face scratchplate

the outer treble pickup volume and tone are lower than the closer neck pickup pair. It's hard, then, to do the classic move where you can pull up or down both volume or tone controls simultaneously with a swipe of your right hand. It's not a dealbreaker, but it is a slightly different drive and you'll need a cable with a right-angled jack for the face-mounted output socket, of course.

Despite hanging on (or should that be clinging on?) to its retro past, this Radiator is revoiced with much more rock intention. It's kind of like a pawnshop relic from the 50s that Larry DiMarzio modded back in New York city in the early 70s. There's nothing wrong with that, nor the sounds we're hearing with a nicely gained Marshall-y amp voice where the bridge has that sort of overwound grind about it that would grace most classic rock to early metal styles perfectly. The neck is no slouch with a tube-y voice that, in the environment, has just enough clarity for those vocal lead lines. On a cleaner Fender-y channel, it ain't a Tele that's for sure, although the mix does

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add a little more chime and some dirty funk, especially if you knock the neck volume back a little. It's a thicker, tougher sound than you might expect, and you can't help thinking that some coil-splits and/or a simple treble bleed circuit would add some versatility to what is a very good-playing guitar. If the original Radiator was more indie, this one is more alt-rock, armed with some pretty serious clout. Above all, it's the playability that punches way above its weight. Godin really knows how to make a good guitar.

Verdict

A very different guitar to the original Radiator, this 2020 version – full-face scratchplate aside – seems more rock-aimed and much less retro-sounding. Of course, you could easily swap the pickups or even mod what you have here to increase the versatility, and on a quality platform such as this any work would be money well spent. The bridge, while certainly suiting the vibe, is a little rudimentary, but again that's easy to upgrade. That's not to say there's anything really lacking here. It's a gutsy-sounding Les Paul Special-style instrument with a great weight and a big sound. It's crisply made and actually feels more like an old guitar; it plays like butter, too, and comes with a proper gigbag. If we were Godin we'd be shouting about this guitar a lot more. This really is a slice of modded boutique style at a very tempting price. **G**



GODIN RADIATOR 2020

PRICE: £829 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: Canada

TYPE: Single-cutaway, solidbody electric

BODY: Silver leaf maple, chambered

NECK: Silver leaf maple, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")

NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech

Tusq/42.79mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, pearloid

dot inlays, 305mm (12") radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: Wraparound bridge,

'High-Ratio' tuners (18:1 bass side,

26:1 treble) – nickel/chrome-plated

STRING SPACING/BRIDGE: 52mm

ELECTRICS: Nickel-covered Custom

Godin humbuckers (GHB1 bridge &

GHN1 neck), 3-way toggle pickup

selector, individual pickup volume and tone controls

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.5/7.7

OPTIONS: Colour/scratchplate only

RANGE OPTIONS: The similar-style

Summit Classic SG in Matte Green,

with Canadian Laurentian basswood

body, is next up at £935. Godin's

solidbody range starts with the

bolt-on Session HT and Stadium HT,

both at £735

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Trans Cream (as reviewed),

Matte Black, Bourbon Burst

440 Distribution

0113 2589599

www.godinguitars.com



9/10

PROS Simple but classy build; great neck and playability; rock-ready voicing and subtle retro vibe

CONS Might be a little dark sounding for some