

5 NEW LESSONS • SNEAK PEEK: MESA/BOOGIE ELECTRA-DYNE

JUNE 2009

PREMIER Guitar®

PG the relentless pursuit of tone

PREMIERGUITAR.COM

Moderne Mythology

Gibson's Most Elusive Guitar

RICK NIELSEN

His Checkered Past

PG ON THE ROAD:

Musikmesse and SXSW

**5 SINGLE-COIL PICKUP
BUILDERS YOU SHOULD MEET**

12 NEW GEAR REVIEWS

*Takamine, Flaxwood, Peekamoose,
Fritz Brothers, Fender, Cornford,
WMD and **MORE***



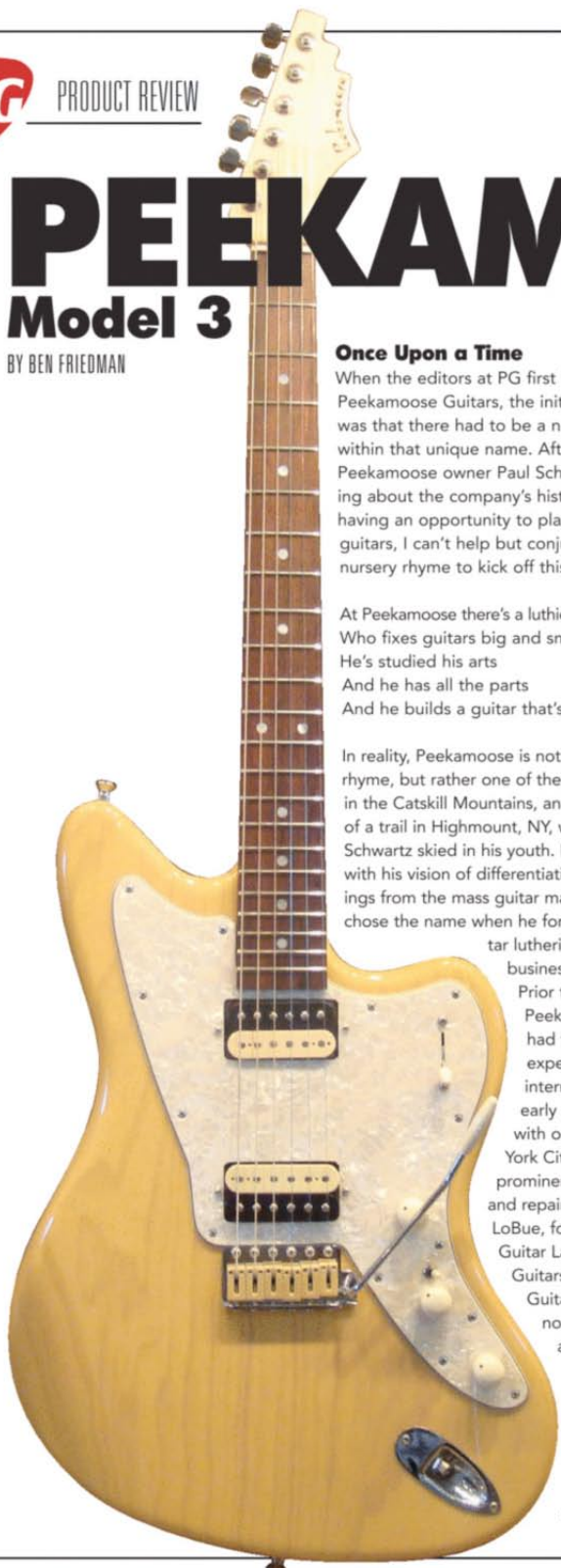
\$4.95 U.S.



PEEKAMOOSE

Model 3

BY BEN FRIEDMAN



Once Upon a Time

When the editors at PG first heard about Peekamoose Guitars, the initial reaction was that there had to be a nursery rhyme within that unique name. After meeting Peekamoose owner Paul Schwartz, learning about the company's history, and having an opportunity to play one of his guitars, I can't help but conjure up that nursery rhyme to kick off this review:

At Peekamoose there's a luthier named Paul
Who fixes guitars big and small
He's studied his arts
And he has all the parts
And he builds a guitar that's a ball

In reality, Peekamoose is not a nursery rhyme, but rather one of the tallest peaks in the Catskill Mountains, and the name of a trail in Highmount, NY, where Paul Schwartz skied in his youth. In keeping with his vision of differentiating his offerings from the mass guitar makers, Paul chose the name when he formed his guitar lutherie and repair business in 1983.

Prior to forming Peekamoose, Paul had the unique experience of an internship in the early seventies with one of New York City's most prominent luthiers and repairmen: Charlie LoBue, founder of Guitar Lab and LoBue Guitars. While at Guitar Lab, Paul not only learned about the fine art of fretwork and guitar design, but he also worked around

other renowned professionals, such as Larry Dimarzio (who wound pickups for LoBue Guitars), Steve Blucher, Sherwood "Woody" Phifer, Ralph Novak and Bob Sindorf. For several years thereafter, Paul was immersed in the 48th Street guitar community, providing repair and warranty support services. These invaluable experiences served as the foundation for the designs he uses in the four models currently available from Peekamoose Guitar's Custom shop, including the Model 3 under review here.

Here, Moosie Moosie

At first glance, it might be easy to mistakenly label the Model 3 as a mere update to the classic Fender Jazzmaster design. Looks can be deceiving, as the only genetic code the Model 3 shares with the Jazzmaster is its body shape and 25.5" scale length. Beyond those two similarities, every other design decision in the Model 3 is derived from Paul's experience in order to create an instrument with a broad sonic palette, a high degree of responsiveness and solid reliability. The Model 3 features a two-piece solid southern ash body (f-hole semi-hollow is also available), finished in an opaque blonde using nitrocellulose lacquer. The body features both a top arm contour and tummy cut. The quartersawn maple neck is also finished with nitrocellulose lacquer and sports the unique Peekamoose headstock. The neck carve, like other features of the guitars, draws from time-proven designs and is best described as a combination of a '50s Strat and a '50s Les Paul. The neck is topped off with an 8"-12" compound-radius fingerboard made of a generous cut of highly-figured, slab-style rosewood. Maple and ebony are also available. The rosewood contrasts nicely with the 22 polished, 18 percent nickel-silver frets (.057" x .100") and mother-of-pearl dot fret markers. The sleeved, single action truss rod is accessed at the headstock.

Playing the Moose

The guitar is voiced with a pair of zebra custom-wound Seymour Duncan humbuckers that use the Seth Lover model (Alnico 2 bar) as a foundation. The goal was to



deliver a broad, even frequency response with balanced harmonics in pickups that are transparent and allow the natural sound of the instrument designs to come through. The degree of thought behind the pickup design is also carried through to the wiring circuit of the Model 3. Using coaxial wire wherever practical, the dual humbuckers are wired to a horizontal 4-position switch along with a Master Volume, 2 push-pull Tone knobs and a phase reverse mini-switch.

The combinations of the 4-way switch are as follows: position 4, both pickups full humbucking, in series; position 3, neck humbucker; position 2, both pickups full humbucking, in parallel; and position 1, bridge humbucker. The phase reverse mini-switch flips the polarity on the bridge pickup and is adjusted so there is no volume loss in position 2, and exaggerated when used in position 4 (think Brian May). The master volume control features a high-pass filter, so you don't get the typical loss of the high-end frequency when reducing the volume. The first Tone control is a standard bass roll-off, and pulling it up puts the neck pickup coils in parallel. The second

tone control is an upper-mids/lower-highs scoop and pulling it up puts the bridge pickup coils in parallel (to make them brighter). The pull-pot switching functions are independent of the tone filtering of the pots they ride above. The layout, design, and quality of components used all appear to translate into a circuit that delivers exceptional bandwidth, articulation and a low signal-to-noise ratio.

The vintage-style, six-screw tremolo bridge features solid Tusq saddles and is set flush to the body. This tremolo stays in tune despite the abuse I put it through, and I suspect the combination of the Tusq saddles and Tusq 1-5/8" nut has a significant role in its performance. The strap

buttons are traditional Dunlop-style straplocks and pair well with the Strat-style recessed jack plate. The neck is firmly attached to the body at the 16th fret with the use of a 4-bolt neck joint with nickel neck plate and stainless steel screws. The locking satin-body/plated-key Sperzel tuners are well seated and feature staggered posts to avoid the need for string trees. The use of Ivoroid control knobs and three-layer white pearloid pickguard and backplate are nice design touches.


The high degree of craftsmanship and intelligent design embodied in the Model 3 translates into an instrument that has exceptional playability and tone. The guitar is lightweight, resonant and every note seems to leap right off of the fretboard. The neck has that classic broken-in feel and the fretwork, which is PLEK'd in-house, is exemplary. The combination of tone woods (ash body and rosewood board), which some say can provide too much sizzle to the frequency response, works well on the Model 3. The broad, yet balanced tonal response of the instrument is apparent from the moment you strum it—whereas the tones of some tried-and-true instruments all

seem to be blended together with a healthy dose of broad harmonics.

Juice that Moose

Plugged in, the Model 3 offers up a sonic palette that is diverse enough to handle just about any style of music. The guitar is designed to cut through the mix in any live situation, and the tone control has such a broad range that Paul suggested that it be kept around seven to leave some additional sweep if needed while playing in a tone-sucking venue. There are too many usable tones to describe all of them, but some highlights for me were: position 4 (neck and bridge pickups in series with no coil-switching engaged), which produced a bodacious Les Paul-like tone; position 3 (neck pickup alone with no switching engaged), which offered up a sweet, clean tone well-suited for jazz; and position 1, in parallel (bridge pickup with the 2nd tone pot pulled up), which kicked up some fat, Tele-esque lead tones. The Duncan pickups are very impressive, consistently delivering bold, balanced and articulate tones in both clean and high-gain applications.

The Final Moose Mojo

The Model 3 clearly stands out as a top-notch player's tool. Its broad frequency response, tremendous playability and meticulous design make it an instrument worthy of serious consideration among guitarists seeking top performance in any situation. 

Buy If...

you're a working musician seeking the ideal players' guitar.

Skip If...

you're looking for an instrument to hit a smaller tonal target.

Rating...

4.5

ON THE Web

Click here to download sound clips of the guitar in action



Peekamoose Guitars
MSRP \$4600 (as tested)
peekamoose.com