



GEAR

REVIEW



TURN THE PAGE

The John Page Classic Ashburn

With the creation of John Page Classic Guitars in 2006, the guitar builder, designer, and co-founder of the Fender Custom Shop opened a new chapter in his already illustrious career. After launching a line of custom guitars earlier this year, Page teamed up with HRS Unlimited and a Japanese manufacturer to build a more-cost-friendly “custom production” version of his U.S.-made Ashburn model.

The Ashburn is Page’s version of the classic double-cutaway electric, with plenty of familiar features and a few new ones. The Classic version of the Ashburn has an alder body, a 25.5"-scale maple neck with maple or rosewood fretboard, bass-side fret markers, Gotoh 510 chrome vibrato bridge with bent-steel saddles, and Gotoh staggered-post vintage-style tuners.

While the Ashburn has a standard bolt-on neck, its neck joint is not all that standard. Instead of a neck plate and four wood screws to hold the neck to the body, Page uses four countersunk 1/4" x 20 machine bolts through the body mated to four threaded brass inserts in the neck. This produces a very stable joint that does a superior job of transferring string energy and vibrations between body and neck. With or without the guitar plugged in, you can feel and hear the system’s added vibrations and overtones, especially with the G, B, and high E strings.

The Ashburn’s neck has a comfortable, ever-so-slightly enlarged C profile, a meticulously cut bone nut, 12"-radius fretboard for effortless choke-free bending and low action, and excellent upper-fret access with a contour heel.

Electronics include a trio of Bloodline JP-1 single-coil pickups with hum-canceling in positions two and four, master Volume and Tone controls, a standard five-way blade pickup selector, and a side-mounted 1/4" output jack. The Bloodline pickup set has flat Alnico pole pieces, #42-gauge wire, and a slightly hotter bridge pickup. The Volume control is placed just far enough back and down that it isn’t in the way of

strumming or picking, but still close enough for easy volume swells. It is also very well-tapped, allowing it to “clean up.”

Plugged into the clean channel of a Fender Blues Junior single 12" combo with an Ibanez TS9 Tube Screamer, the Bloodline JP-1 pickups offered a classic scooped late-’50s/early-’60s single-coil tone with snappy highs and punchy low-end, as well as a lot of quack in positions two and four. The bridge pickup was slightly hotter

and tilted the opposite direction from a typical double-cut solid-body. This produces a meatier sound in the bridge position with less of the shrill high-end on the E, B, and G strings. This, coupled with the guitar’s superior neck joint, bone nut, and high-quality bridge, give the bridge position an aggressive, crunchy overdrive tone with natural sustain – no humbucker needed. The neck and middle pickups also play well with overdrive, their scooped midrange giving both a nice, throaty sound with good note separation; they don’t get muddy with the overdrive heavily dialed in.

The John Page Classic Ashburn has comfortable familiar feel and vibe. The minute you pick it up, plug it in, and play it, you know you have a quality instrument in your hands. With an excellent design, tons of classic and new features, great tone, and excellent playability, it’s an instant classic. – **Phil Feser VG**

Price: \$1,499.99 (list);
\$1,379.99 (street)
Info: www.johnpageclassic.com

