

builder's art. Nothing fancy, just a solidly built amplifier with tone for days. Quest forth...to

## ToneQuest Swope Guitars



We are pleased to present reviews of the three Swope models currently in production. All of these guitars are extremely

well made and toneful instruments. Swope understands what a custom guitar should be, and he has the chops as a builder to back it up. If you would like to venture beyond the typical Fender/Gibson formula and play a guitar that is excellent in terms of tone and design, Swope does a fine job of meeting those criteria. Enjoy ...

We posed some important question about Swope guitars: What is a knock-around finish?

A Knock-Around is essentially a slight relic. The lacquer on the body is checked. There may be a few bumps or bruises here or there. The solid colors have a white undercoat which shows nicely when dinged. The bodies are glossy and the plastics are clean. While the headstock has a deep gloss the back of the neck is a thinner, satin finish. There is no lacquer



above the fret tangs of the rosewood fingerboard. The edges of the fingerboard are blended nicely into the sides.

Benefits for the player:

- The finish treatment takes the fear factor out of playing the guitar. The customer will continue to add to the story with his own player wear through the years. I have only started the ball rolling.
- The neck treatment provides a broken in feeling for the player's hands while the glossy headstock retains the depth and shine that so many vintage guitars still possess.

Benefits for the dealer:

- The Knock-Around is a guitar that can be handled, photographed, played and sold without having to worry about the perceived "imperfections" that certain customers tend to

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*find in the most pristine of guitars. The slight relic treatment means that any dent, scratch or check is simply part of the story. These guitars are not meant to be "garage queens." They are meant to be played.*



• The treatment of the neck, with regard to the lack of lacquer above the tang, is especially helpful if there is a change in temperature or humidity. The issue with sharp fret ends or "fret-sprout" is all too common. With the knock-around, all that is required is to kiss the tangs with a mill smooth or diamond file. The lacquer has been removed already. Simply re-oil the fingerboard and all is lovely.

**Please clarify which models we have in addition to the Geronimo.**

The slab body guitar is the MG (Steve Cropper reference due to the obvious Tele inspiration). The one with all the comfy contours is the GTO



**There is a smaller knob in-between the volume and tone on the Geronimo. What is the purpose of this?**

This is the "funk-bump." It's a high pass filter so it pinches the lower frequencies. It's subtle, and I debated its merit. But all my test-pilot guys really dug it. It is only functional in the #3 position (both pickups on). It could easily be wired in to all pickup options if someone preferred but I wanted to keep it simple. Turn the knob clockwise to engage the funk bump. Clean, it has a bit of a cocked wah effect, mostly on the lower strings. Dirty up your amp and play any Zeppelin riff. It's got a cool rip to it.

**Can you clarify the pickups used in each guitar and features - Alnico, resistance, etc?**

The Geronimo pickups have a lot going on under the hood and I have to be a little mysterious about those. Basically

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each of the coils has a slightly different recipe. Be it magnet, turns, geometry, wire ... The way the switch works is:

- 1- bridge pickup
- 2- one coil from bridge and one coil from neck in series
- 3- both pickups on (funk bump optional in this position only)
- 4- same coils as #2 but in parallel
- 5- neck pickup



Neck humbucker is 7.2K and Bridge is 7.8K DC resistance. Since each coil's recipe is different, #2 is essentially a unique 3rd humbucker option.



The GTO pickups are Alnico V rod magnets, 42 AWG, Formvar. Calibrated for neck and bridge position. Neck is 8.3K and bridge is 8.9K. The bridge pickup is reverse wind/reverse polarity so the middle position on the 3 way is hum-cancelling. Pull up on the tone knob and you bypass the switch and put the two pickups into series, acting as a hum-bucker.

The MG pickups are the same materials and the switching is the same, though the geometry of the coil is different. Neck is 7.5K and bridge is 9.5K.

Please describe the wood type used for each guitar.

The Geronimo and GTO are both alder. The MG is ash. All Swope guitars are made from 2 piece center seam, clear finish quality blanks, (no paint grade wood, even though many



of my finishes are solid colors). Light weight wood is selected with the goal of the finished guitar being between 7 and 7.5 lbs. All this in an effort to build the most consistent sounding instrument I can. Necks are flat or rift-sawn maple with quarter-sawn rosewood fingerboards.

### Additional features of each guitar.

Finishes are a very pure nitro-cellulose lacquer that will check all on its own. I just get the ball rolling with the knock-around finish treatment. The backs of the necks are a very thin satin finish but headstocks are deep gloss. Gears are staggered but I still use a string tree for the high E and B strings. You can sometimes hear a ghost of "ping" sound without a string tree. I find even with staggered gears the open strings ring better with the tree. All guitars have the truss rod adjustment at the heel but with an easy access spoke

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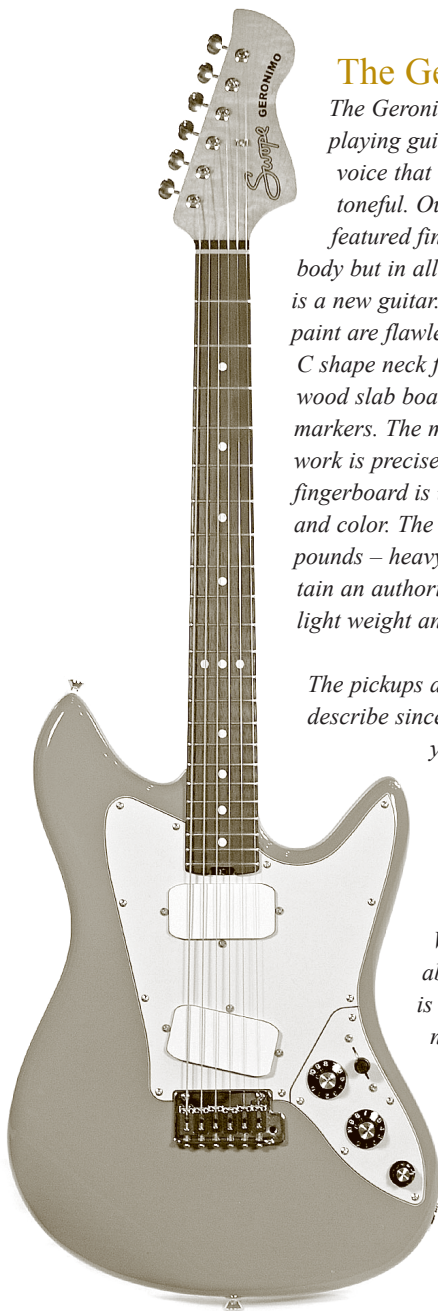
wheel. All models are available with a vibrato or hardtail bridge.

### The Geronimo

*The Geronimo is a great playing guitar with a unique voice that is both clear and toneful. Our review guitar featured fine checking on the body but in all other respects it is a new guitar. Workmanship and paint are flawless. The moderate C shape neck features a rosewood slab board and large fret markers. The medium jumbo fret work is precise, and the rosewood fingerboard is uniform in grain and color. The guitar weighs 7.9 pounds – heavy enough to maintain an authoritative voice yet light weight and responsive.*

*The pickups are difficult to describe since it isn't likely that you have heard anything quite like them, but fortunately Swope has loaded sound clips on his web site. What we can say about the Geronimo is that it is a very nimble guitar sonically, not easily described as possessing a typical single coil or humbucking voice. The Geronimo is a chameleon capable of many sounds. It*

*is also simply a joy to play with an extraordinary feel and a responsiveness to touch. This guitar feels remarkably consistent along the entire length of the neck and it works so well as an instrument. Excellent on all counts. Sonically this guitar can cover a lot of ground and will please both Fender and Gibson players. Mark Johnson spent some time with this guitar and really liked the tones he was able to produce.*



### The MG

*Mildly suggestive of a Telecaster with its ash body and see-thru blonde finish, the MG is in fact a very unique guitar design that won't be mistaken for anything but a Swope. The*



*high quality, tightly grained ash body and see-thru blonde finish may make a familiar statement, but this is where any resemblance to the Telecaster ends. The neck on the MG is tight grained maple with a thick slab of rosewood beneath the perfectly dressed medium jumbo frets. The large fret position markers are identical to those found on the Geronimo, but the Swope pickups are quite different, with a bigger tone. Pull the tone knob up for Series humbucking mode for both pickups and a fine tone indeed. These are excellent sounding pickups in all positions, deep and robust. Mark liked them a*



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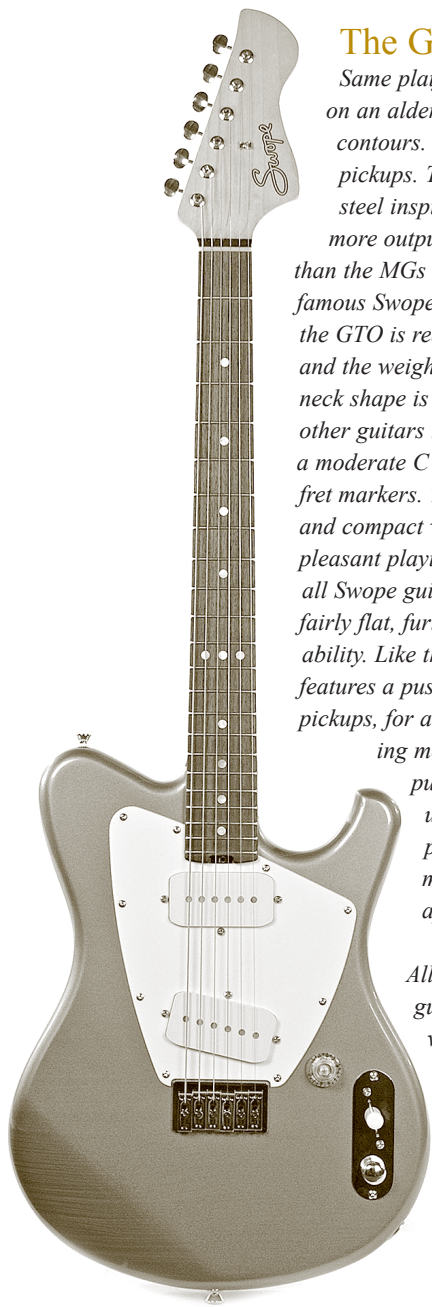


lot, too. The string-through design of the MG creates a vivid tone that is very full, rich and versatile. We really like this guitar and recommend it highly.

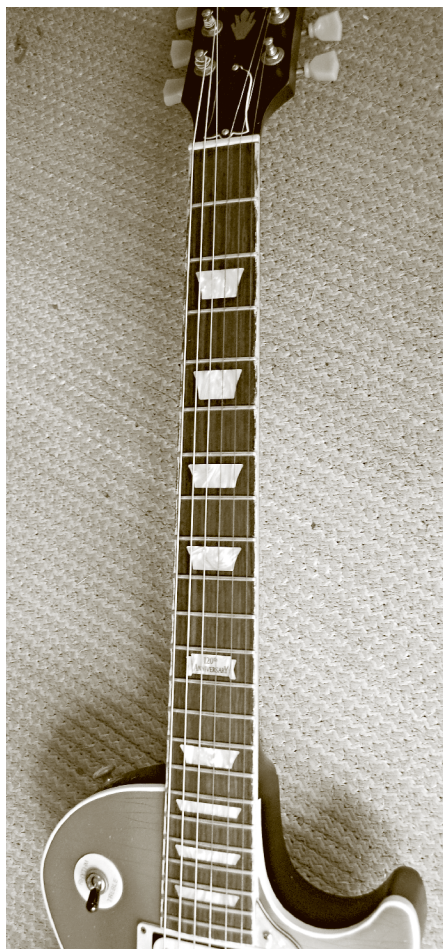
### The GTO

Same platform as the MG but on an alder body with comfy contours. Features Swope's GTO pickups. These pickups are lap steel inspired and have a bit more output and fuller mid-range than the MGs but still retain that famous Swope clarity. The body of the GTO is realistically checked and the weight is 7.25 pounds. The neck shape is consistent with the other guitars reviewed here, with a moderate C shape and oversized fret markers. The body style is small and compact which makes for a very pleasant playing experience. Like all Swope guitars the fingerboard is fairly flat, further enhancing playability. Like the MG, the tone knob features a push/pull function on the pickups, for a full series humbucking mode with the knob pulled up and a very useful tone. The GTO possesses a very animated tone, lively and appealing.

All three of the Swope guitars are very toneful with a personality all their own. The outstanding nature of the fret work makes all three guitars exceptional players, each with its own unique tone. Swope has gotten off to a great start with these three unique and great sounding guitars. **TO**



a USA Les Paul painted with nitro gold paint and aged perfectly. Imagine USA Zebra PAF pickups, a '50s rounded neck, maple cap over mahogany, aged Kluson tuners, 500K Gibson pots and a MOP pickguard. Weight is 8.6 pounds.



This has got to be one of the most attractive deals on eBay, and at \$1050 it's a steal. At 8.6 pounds it is the perfect weight, and the aged and checked nitro gold top is just too cool. The back of the body is aged and painted black and the neck shows wear to bare wood on the back. The neck shape is just perfect, and the feel of the neck is outstanding.

## Relic'd Les Paul

When we saw this guitar on Ebay we had to have it. Imagine

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