



# GREAT DANE

IT LOOKS GOOD, IT'S HANDMADE, AND IT PLAYS WELL, HORATIO. **PAUL SALTER** FINDS THAT SOMETHING IS ROCKING IN THE STATE OF DENMARK

**... Guitarists are often guilty of becoming anthropomorphic with our instruments. And before the claims of 'I was only having a scratch', or 'It's just the way my trousers hang' ring out in defence; it means attributing a personality to something non-human, okay?**

It's no wonder though, because in the right hands a guitar can cry, scream and talk a whole range of emotions, so it's only natural we get a bit soppy, instead of just regarding these amalgamations of wood, plastic and metal as merely tools.

Thus the appeal of handmade guitars is assured. And lying somewhere between the instrument that's been carved from the holy tree as a vessel for the spirits of his ancestors by a mystic Shaman after fasting on a mountain-top for three weeks; and the mass-produced cheapie churned out in the factory next to the gas works, there is the Rahbek Standard.

Hand-made in Denmark from carefully selected materials, it's available in this 'Standard' spec, or as a custom order with an amazing range of options.

## BODIES & NECKS

We've all seen variations of this body shape carved from alder countless

times before, but perhaps not as well executed as this one. The famous double cutaway outline seems to have been on a bit of a diet, resting closer to Music Man's bosom than the mighty muscle-filled chest of Fender, and looks and feels quite good on it.

On a strap it hangs nicely, nestling against your body in a natural manner thanks to the generous forearm and ribcage contours. The back edge of the lower horn and the heel have also benefited from some player-friendly shaping with the result that there's little to complain about if you like the odd foray up at the dusty end.

The neck joins the body with the four screws anchored by ferrules rather than a plate, and feels like a firm fit despite the slight gaps around the side edges. We're not talking enough room to slide your pick down the gaps, a piece of paper perhaps, but the Rahbek isn't about machine-shaped components and super-high tolerances anyway – this is all handmade stuff with the emphasis on feel and character rather than out-and-out engineering. Take the neck itself for instance; a wonderfully comfortable, shallow C-shaped piece of satin-finished maple that allows your hand to simply glide across the pau ferro fingerboard and its 22 small frets. It's all very slick with a familiar feel of a

## GBINFO

### RAHBK STANDARD

PRICE:	£1500
BUILT IN:	Denmark
SCALE LENGTH:	648mm (25.5 inches)
NUT WIDTH:	42mm (1.65 inches)
BODY:	Solid alder
NECK:	Maple bolt-on
FINGERBOARD:	Pau ferro, 241mm radius (9.5 inches)
FRETS:	22 small
PICKUPS:	Three Custom Kinman single coil
CONTROLS:	One volume, one tone, five-way selector
BRIDGE:	Schaller 2000 Vibrato
MACHINEHEADS:	Chrome Schaller M6 mini locking
FINISHES:	Vintage White (shown), plus plenty more – see website for details
CASE:	Moulded hard case included
LEFT-HANDERS:	Yes, at no extra cost
CONTACT:	Oxford Guitar Gallery
PHONE:	01865 553777
WEB:	www.rahbekguitars.com

**GBOPINION**

**RAHBK STANDARD**

**GOLD STARS**

- ★ Lovely neck
- ★ Great overall feel and vibe
- ★ Efficient Schaller trem and tuners

**BLACK MARKS**

- Fender and Music Man's existence!

**IDEAL FOR...**

Clean and blues tones with muscle



25.5-inch scale length and a 9.5-inch radius fingerboard, but with that all-important warm and personal vibe.

**HARDWARE & PARTS**

This particular incarnation of the Standard is fitted with a non-locking vibrato. It's a Schaller 2000 variant, and is well-matched to this guitar with its uncomplicated, efficient design. The saddles are small rollers which help to avoid any differences in string tension either side because of friction, and on the whole it works very well.

This sample has been set flush to the body which is great for right-hand damping (ie no upbend the minute your right hand rests on it), and also ensures a positive return to pitch as long as you don't go absolutely nuts. It does mean that you may get an audible clunk as it returns to its resting position if you're heavy handed, so subtlety is key here. There is the option of a floating, double-locking Floyd-Licensed system for those who have trouble showing any kind of restraint of course.

The Schaller vibrato's efficiency is aided by the straight string-pull across the well-cut nut and the excellent Schaller locking tuners that take all the hassle out of the clamping business, as well as being supremely smooth in operation.

This Standard has the Custom Kinman single-coil option where pickups are concerned.

These are mounted on a white/black/white scratchplate (again, there are loads of possible alternatives

**AND THERE'S MORE**

DECISIONS DECISIONS... THERE'S PLENTY HERE

■ It's hard to fault the choice of hardware fitted to the Rahbek Standard, it's all top-notch stuff that looks great and performs brilliantly.

There are plenty of options to choose from if you'd prefer something a little different, however. As well as black and gold varieties of the Schaller bridge and tuners, you can chose from hardware from manufacturers such as Gotoh, Wilkinson, LR Baggs and Grover. Pickups

are available from Kinman (as fitted here) or DiMarzio and Seymour Duncan. And these are just the standard options as listed on the website. You can contact Rahbek direct, or the Oxford Guitar Gallery for more details and prices.

Check out these two lovely variants on the Standard with figured maple tops as an example of higher-spec axes. Fancy tops and finishes are clearly no problem for Rahbek.

■ Standard with an alder body/quilted maple top in trans Darktiger Eye



■ Again an alder/maple top Standard, this time in trans dark blue

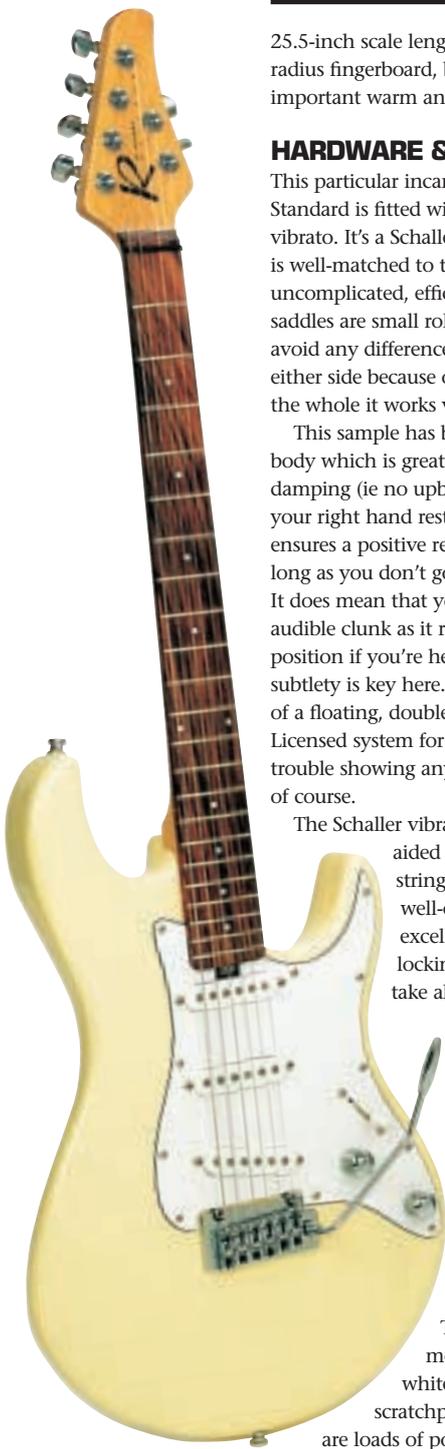
**"THE GUITAR'S BRIDGE PICKUP IS CAPABLE OF A WIDE RANGE OF TONAL COLOUR AND BREADTH"**



■ This Schaller is one of the best two-pivot vibrato designs out there. Nice one

here when you come to place your order) with a master volume and tone, and five-way selector switch configuration. These pickups and all

the wiring has been treated with a graphite-based shielding process that cuts down airborne interference to a noticeable degree.



**... DETAILS**

THE HAND-BUILT STANDARD BOASTS MORE PERSONALITY THAN ITS MASS-PRODUCED RIVALS



■ Keeping things simple, Rahbek has dispensed with the second tone pot common to this style



■ Contoured and sans neckplate, this is a thoughtful update on the bolt-neck design



■ Locking tuners mean minimal slippage and ultra quick string changes



**GBCONCLUSION**

THE BEST DANISH EXPORT SINCE CARLSBERG, LEGO, AND BACON?

■ So if you've got a grand and a half to spend on a double-cutaway guitar with single-coil pickups, why should you consider the Rahbek Standard?

It's the killer question when the USA-built guitars that inspired it can be had for less money.

Well, for a start there's the fact that this great playing and sounding guitar is entirely hand-built; this is actually a tangible quality rather than just a factor of the construction process. There's also a huge range of options that cover just about every aspect of the guitar, including stuff like fingerboard radius, woods and hardware. Even if your particular requirements aren't on the list, the Rahbek team are willing to meet your personal spec if you give them a call.

Above all, however, the Rahbek Standard offers a different slant on the concept together with more individual personality in each guitar than you'd find in a mass-produced instrument. And we could all do with something unique, right? **GB**

**4X2 BENEFITS**

A COMPACT HEADSTOCK DOESN'T JUST LOOK GOOD Y'KNOW

■ There have been plenty of attempts to produce a headstock shape that allows the strings to pass across the nut in a straight line. No angles means less friction and

therefore the strings are less likely to stick and cause tuning problems.

There have been plenty of successful designs, but the most aesthetically pleasing shapes (outside of PRS) in our opinion have been based around the 4 and 2 layout. It's easy to arrange the machineheads to line up with the nut slots like this without the fear of taking someone's eye out with something that's too pointy.

All credit to Ernie Ball Music Man, of course.



**SOUNDS**

There's often an overriding character with a guitar fitted with a set of this type of single-coil pickups, and in this case it's gutsy. There's a good strong upper-mid strength present in all of the pickup selections, especially with the volume and tone controls at a maximum setting. It's perfect for slightly overdriven valve amps where you want your power chords to hammer-out with detail and impact.

While the bridge pickup is pokey and cutting, it doesn't get shrill with sensible

amp settings or tiring on the ears after a while. In fact, it's capable of a wide range of tonal colour and breadth, round edged yet never too tame.

Flicking through the selector switch it's quite impressive how even the volume balance is across the range of tones. The neck pickup does sound bigger in isolation, but as soon as the rest of the band kicks in and those overlapping frequencies come into play, the transition between the pickup tones is surprisingly good. Even the in-between sounds ring out true and clear.

There's a strong element of sixties double-cut tone in there too, but a little silkier and more classy, especially on cleaner sounds where the Standard proves to be the perfect antidote to a humbucker-heavy mix. In fact, 'classy' is the key word all over the Rahbek.

**GBRATINGS**

**RAHBEK STANDARD**

BODY & NECK	4/5
HARDWARE & PARTS	4/5
PLAYABILITY	4/5
SOUNDS	4/5
VALUE FOR MONEY	4/5
<b>GBVERDICT</b>	4/5