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## Guitar Player Magazine Reviews The Epiphone Dot Studio

Be sure and check out the June 2005 issue of [Guitar Player Magazine](#)! Michael Molenda reviews the [Epiphone Dot Studio](#) on page 163. Here's a sneak peek at the review.



### EPIPHONE DOT STUDIO

Tested By Michael Molenda

*What it's coming to is this: These days, you have to evaluate cheap guitars as rigorously as you'd review a \$1,500 model, because budget guitars are getting so good that there's no excuse for crap pickups, shoddy construction, flaky intonation, or bad sound. And let me add that it's positively creepy how little you have to pay for a solid, gig-worthy instrument in 2005.*

*The Epiphone Dot Studio, for example, carries a somewhat rational list price of \$499, but, depending on the finish selected, this baby streets for anywhere between \$199 and \$249. That's like Jerry-Lewis-as-the-Nutty-Professor crazy. And this is no budget box best relegated to spare-guitar status, either. The Dot Studio doesn't look, play, feel or sound anything like a low-cost alternative, and its value-for-money ratio---along with that of finely honed budget models from other manufacturers---should have high end instruments watching their backsides. After all, if you can grab a damn fine guitar for little more than two hundred big ones, those expensive babies had better be absolutely fabulous and completely glitch free.*



*The Dot Studio is made in Epiphone's own plant in Qingdao, China, and it epitomizes the company's facility for taking the DNA of its parent corporation's Gibson designs and updating those classics with some youthful and sexy mojo. Compared to its ancestor on the Gibson ES-335 family tree, for instance, the Dot Studio is like a work of minimalist pop art---no pick-guard, no pickup covers, and you only get Volume and Tone controls. Even the dot fret-board markers---which gave the original model its nickname---have been eradicated. In addition,*

*the Dot's black hardware and cheerful palette of available colors such as lemon, tomato, ice blue, arctic white, and dolphin gray ensure that it's viewed as a new-school classic. (Old-school colors include worn cherry, worn brown, and worn vintage sunburst.)*

## **HOT BOD**

*The Dot Studio's construction quality doesn't betray its price point. All hardware is solid (excepting a wonky Tone knob that was attached to its control stem at a bit of an angle), the polished jumbo frets are free of file marks or sharp edges, and the guitars sophisticated, mirror-like black finish is nearly flawless. Only two miniscule specks of missing paint on the bottom edge of the top f-hole prevent the job from being perfect. It also bothered my sense of aesthetics that an Epiphone sticker is clearly visible inside the top f-hole, as it messed with the guitar's clean lines.*

## **THE FEEL**

*This guitar is a joy to play. It melts nicely into your body, the thick yet sleek neck invites both comfy chording and swift-fingered mayhem, and the spartan controls react almost telepathically to a player's every whim. My only complaint is that the strings buzzed whenever I fingered a note or chord between the 1st and 5th frets. This was likely a factory setup issue---something several online peer reviews have also complained about---and a few tweaks to raise the action terminated all buzzes.*

## **THE SOUND**

*Acoustically, the Dot Studio exhibits a lively zing and beautiful sustain. The tone is light on high-end, but the gronky-in-a-nice-way mids really project, and the bass content is fat enough to produce a relatively balanced tonal spectrum from the lows to the high-midrange frequencies. Amplified clean sounds are chunky and tight with a definite midrange emphasis, and overdriven amp tones are extremely aggressive with ballsy lows and mids that snap and snarl and jump right out of the speaker cone. While I would prefer more airiness on the clean sounds, the lack of open highs is a benefit when playing distorted, as the Dot never threatens to slice your head off with searing treble. There's also an interesting, almost out-of-phase sound that occurs when you switch to the bridge pickup and back down the tone knob a bit (which delivers most of its range between 0 and 5). Even lacking controls for each pickup, I had no problem discovering a variety of sounds, as the Dot Studio is very responsive to picking dynamics and control tweaks. It doesn't get smoky enough for traditional jazz---even with the Tone knob rolled completely down---but its forceful, articulate, and robust voice kicks ass for rock, modern jazz, prog, pop and punk.*

*Overall, the Dot Studio is a delightfully pugnacious little guitar that also happens*

*to be a tremendous bargain. But if you won't sleep tonight without knowing how it compares to its ancestor, here's the skinny: When measured against a '70's ES-335, the Dot Studio sounded a little thinner and less airy. The legend definitely gives up more highs, produces more lows, and delivers slightly more complex and open mids. (Of course, a pickup replacement could solve some of the Dot Studio's tonal lapses.) Happy? Now go spend that extra \$1,500 to \$3,700 for an authentic 335. I'm gonna be just fine with my totally happening \$200 wonder box!*



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