

Thursday, May 19, 2005

### Masterbilt EF-500M Wins Better Guitar Great Gear Award



Be sure and check out [BetterGuitar.com](http://BetterGuitar.com) for a review of the Epiphone [Masterbilt EF-500M](#). Mark Starlin performed the review and awarded the EF-500M the Better Guitar Great Gear Award! Here's a sneak peek:

#### ***Epiphone Masterbilt EF-500M***

*Review by Mark Starlin*

*The 1930's were a very difficult time for America. The Great Depression robbed many people of their jobs, homes, and hope. The rise of dictatorships in Europe and Asia led to worldwide war by the end of the decade. Yet Americans persevered and eventually prevailed.*

*.....As in most troubled times, music played an important role in comforting and helping heal the heart of a generation. Guitars became increasingly popular during this decade, and Epiphone and Gibson became fierce rivals, constantly trying to one-up each other in an effort to win over the guitar buying public.*



## **A Tradition Returns**

*Inspired by this golden age of guitar building, Epiphone has reintroduced the Masterbilt line of acoustic guitars. With design elements drawn right out of the 1930's, including an "offset" headstock shape with historic Epiphone script logo and "stickpin" inlay, the Masterbilt's looks invoke the feeling of being from a different era.*



## **Features**

*The EF-500M features all solid wood construction with Mahogany back and sides and a Sitka Spruce top. A Rosewood version is also available. The guitar features a tapered dovetail neck joint, hand-scalloped bracing, and full-body abalone binding. A thin headstock with open-gear Grover tuners helps continue the "vintage" vibe of the guitar. A very deluxe, embroidered hard-sided gig bag with built-in hygrometer (an instrument used to measure humidity) is included to round out the package.*

*.....The EF Masterbilt models are fingerstyle guitars and feature a slightly wider neck than typical Dreadnaught models. The neck also has more of a "V" shape than traditional guitars, which becomes more pronounced as you move up the neck.*

## **Construction**

*Unlike many current guitar builders, Epiphone no longer subcontracts their import guitar models out to other Asian companies. In October 2002, Gibson/Epiphone opened their own factory in China dedicated solely to making Epiphone guitars. This gives them complete control over manufacturing, materials, and quality. The payoff is evident the minute you open the gig bag and see the instrument. The construction of the review guitar was flawless, inside and out. The Mother Of Pearl diamond neck inlays fit tight and there were no rough fret edges to be found. I looked hard, but couldn't find anything to complain about.*



## **Setup/Playability**

*The action was a hair higher than I prefer, but certainly playable. A small truss rod adjustment would take care of it. There were no string buzzes or other annoyances. The guitar is comfortable to hold and fun to play. The only concern some player may have is the "V" shaped neck, which gets a little thick as you move up the fretboard. Those with small hands will want to try this out for comfort.*

### **Tone**

*The use of Mahogany for the back and sides, gives the EF-500M a warm tone with pronounced midrange and high end. Those looking for more bass will want to check out the Rosewood EF-500R. The use of solid woods and a light satin finish, make this a very resonant guitar. The guitar feels "alive" when played, and picking staccato notes reveals plenty of overtones as the body resonates the other strings.*

*.....When fingerpicking softly with my fingers the tone of the high strings was a bit subdued, but playing a little harder brought out the sparkle. Don't be afraid to dig in, you'll find a richer tone when you do. I should mention that this guitar also sounds great when strummed with a pick. Flatpicked arpeggios chime nicely too. And being a solid wood guitar, the tone should just get better with age.*

### **Ideal Users**

*The wide neck makes this guitar ideal for fingerstyle players. Although any guitarist with large fingers may enjoy the extra room, as it sounds great with a pick also.*

### **Final Thoughts**

*While the Epiphone line has long been considered "made to be played", the Masterbilt EF-500M takes bang-for-the-buck to new heights. With its flawless construction, good looks, and great tone, it is obvious Epiphone is focusing their attention on both value and quality. When you consider that you can get a great sounding and playing, solid wood guitar with a very nice case for \$600, perhaps this century is the golden age of guitar building.*

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