

Epiphone®

review



Wednesday, February 13, 2002

Zephyr Regent

Budget archtops used to be something of a joke—all gaudy cosmetics and no tone—but now, Asian-made models from DeArmond, Yamaha, and others prove you can now find classy, good sounding and good playing archtops for under a grand. In this arena, Epiphone's Korean-made Zephyr Regent is a standout, delivering sharp looks, quality workmanship, and serious tone. Based on the primal, one-pickup incarnation of the 175, the Zephyr Regent's main departures from early-'50's designs are its humbucker pickup and Tune-o-matic bridge. With only single volume and tone controls and a full-depth body that erupts into feedback the instant you crank the gain, the Zephyr Regent is not a versatile guitar, but players in search of classic jazz tones at a bargain price will find a lot to like here.

The Zephyr Regent's detailing is impressive. The finish and binding are immaculate, the vintage styled heel and cutaway are quite chunky, and the comfy frets are low enough for fast maneuvers, but substantial enough to get "under" the notes and add precise vibrato.

Sonically, the Zephyr Regent doesn't attain the complexity and depth of a fine handmade archtop, but its tones are very pleasing. The acoustic response is punchy and focused, and the guitar sounds terrific recorded with only a microphone (as Joe Pass sometimes tracked his ES-175). Despite its Tune-o-matic hardware, the Zephyr Regent delivers the distinctive plonk of a wooden-bridge model. Amplified tones preserve the 175 spirit with a lovely mix of full-bodied warmth and pointy attack—there's ample bite for aggressive single-note soloing and enough definition for thick chord melody work. Despite the single pickup, you can get a gratifying array of timbres simply by varying your picking location.

The remarkably expressive Zephyr Regent looks and sounds more expensive than it is, and it can definitely swing a serious jazz gig. It's a superb choice for players wanting to venture into vintage jazz realms without hemorrhaging \$4000 or more for a hand made archtop.

--Joe Gore
Guitar Player Magazine

July 2000

