

Godin

in the press

Godin Icon Series



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by Steve Henderson



As Featured
in the
April 2011
issue of
Guitarist Australia
Magazine



GODIN ICON SERIES \$2,395
ELECTRICS



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTHONY ADAMSON



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Established in 1972, Godin Guitars has grown into a group of brands covering everything from entry-level instruments to superb professional models, with features that serve the traditional player and innovator alike. From humble beginnings building acoustics and parts for other companies in La Patrie, Quebec, Robert Godin now oversees a diverse catalogue of instruments under seven brand names that have attracted the attention of some of the world's most significant players. Acoustics, acoustic/electrics, electrics of every style, hybrid and synth-ready instruments... without too much fanfare, Godin has become a major player in the industry and continues to create instruments that serve the creative musician.

Godin's synth-access and hybrid designs are market

leaders and recent solid electrics, such as the Freeway series, have shown what they can really do with a traditional design. So when Patrick Godin showed up with a prototype of this new Icon thingy, we had to have a look. After that, we were busting to see the whole range.

Godin's Icon is a set neck solid-body with a familiar vibe, but making a direct comparison is a little too obvious and somewhat redundant, since Godin have incorporated some pretty cool ideas. It's light but feels really solid; the arched (sort of) topped mahogany

body is chambered, which creates both a more resonant guitar and a lighter lug. The mahogany neck is a super comfy '60's-style, with a 16" radius ebony fingerboard that boasts perfectly chamfered fret ends. The electronics are simpler but actually offer a greater variety of tones.

Each of the Icon models differ only in the pickup

configuration: tapped humbuckers, P-90s and P-Rails respectively. And, of course, there's Godin's proprietary High Definition Revoicer – an innovative idea that brings hi-fidelity quality to the humble electric guitar and effectively doubles the pickup choices. Sort of wide-screen HD for the ears!

Type 2

At a glance, the Type 2 Classic has a definite Les Paul vibe. The shape of the body and headstock are reminiscent of the "Big G", and the hardware, the scale length and the two chrome humbuckers certainly add to the impression. But when strummed unplugged the Icon has a loud acoustic quality.

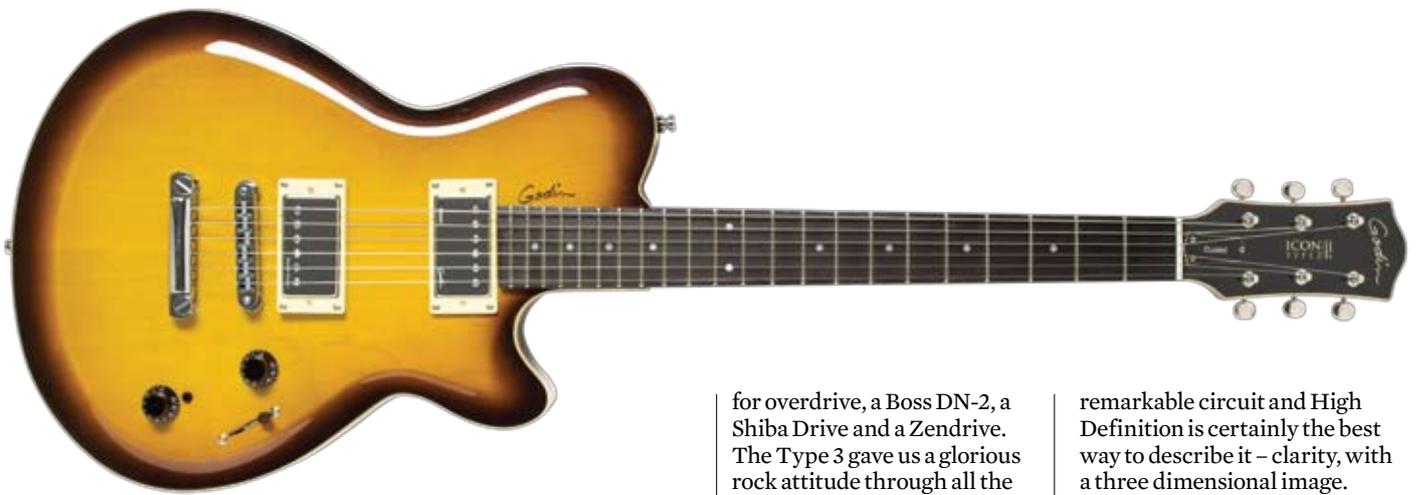
The tones are accessed via a



The Godin headstock: reminiscent of the "Big G"?

Test Gear

Mesa TA-15, Mesa/Boogie Mk IV, tweed Fender Bassman, VHT Classic 18, Blackstar HT Club 40; Boss DS-1 and DN-2, MI Audio Crunch Box, Suhr Riot and Shiba Drive, Hermida Audio Zendrive.



5-way, offering classic dual-humbucker tones plus a couple of split-coil options: (1) neck humbucker, (2) outside coil of neck pickup, (3) both humbuckers, (4) outside coil of bridge pickup and (5) bridge humbucker. Actually, the single coils sound great – they have much more substance than we were expecting and, with the humbuckers, provide that extra variety. The Godin GHN1 pickup in the neck has plenty of body and warmth in humbucker mode and a thick, rich tone as a solo voice. The Seymour Duncan '59 is a tried-and-true choice that rocks when you want it to, and it's classic sound mates brilliantly with the resonance created by the chambered body. The tonal contrast between the two pickups is really workable – not just a dark version and a bright version of the same basic sound.

Even without the HDR engaged, the Classic is lively and toneful. Through any amp we used, clean or driven, and with any of the pedals, the Classic performed better than expected, delivering fat, rich flavours with loads of sustain. The gloss finish produces a slinky feel that's a pleasure to play. There's no drag at all, even as the neck warms up, and the cutaway is sufficiently deep to allow full access to the whole fretboard.

Now, push the little black HDR button, and the "supercharger" kicks in, providing tones that are nothing short of inspiring. The clean tones are broader – kind

of expanded at each end – and the drive tones are richer and tighter. The single coils have an extra snap to their delivery and the treble and upper-mids have an obvious presence. There's more output now so the amp clips a little earlier, but it's also more dynamic...more controllable from the volume pot. If you're after Les Paul tones with a little something extra, the Classic will give it to you and then some.

Type 3

The Type 3 is such a cool guitar. If you've played a good Junior, you'll know what I'm talking about because, when it's all said and done, a P90 may just be THE definitive rock 'n roll tone. And this Icon has three of them!

A P90 is basically a broad single coil – the wider magnetic field covers more of each string and the resultant tone is something like an organically fatter Strat...sort of. The point is, you put three of them into a guitar, wired as normal to a 5-way, and you end up with a rock tone machine that seems immediately familiar but bigger, chunkier, sweeter in the treble, defined in the bass (in every position), but without excessive mids. The output is also a little less than a humbucker, so clean sounds stay clean and drive tones have a lower-gain clarity.

But when you want some grunt, it's right there with a smooth top end and a solid bottom. For stomp box distortion, we used a Boss DS-1, a Crunch Box and a Suhr Riot;

for overdrive, a Boss DN-2, a Shiba Drive and a Zendrive.

The Type 3 gave us a glorious rock attitude through all the devices and amps, driving the gain stages much more transparently than humbuckers. That'd be enough but the Icon gives us even more with the HDR selected – another version of each sound, harmonically richer and measurably bigger that's like having an extra set of pickups.

P90s mean that you have to work a little harder to wring the sound out of the guitar, but this is great because it makes for a more dynamic playing experience. The HDR doesn't change this...rather, it just makes the whole task that much more satisfying. It's a

remarkable circuit and High Definition is certainly the best way to describe it – clarity, with a three dimensional image.

Type 2 Convertible

The Type 2 Convertible has GOT to be the most versatile guitar in the Godin catalogue. Or anybody's catalogue! The Duncan P-Rails are a real triumph in design, and so obvious in hindsight. We first played the Convertible at the Montreal Guitar Show when it was just a prototype. We thought it was wicked cool and, most likely, dressed to perfection for the show. But this normal production instrument is just as smooth to play, just as beautifully presented, and just as cool to listen to.

The tones are rich and varied, the playability is infectious, and the HDR function makes a great guitar greater



The Icon Type 2 offers a variety of tone settings with Godin's proprietary HDR



The 3-way switches between front, middle and back as expected. But each pickup has a mini toggle that selects P90 (up), single coil (down) or humbucker (middle) – making a total of 15 sounds! And folks, that’s 15 good sounds. Engage the HDR and that’s another 15 sounds – bigger, broader and even more dynamic. Having said that, for the first hour we played this guitar we intentionally didn’t touch the HDR and found the experience completely satisfying. The guitar plays really well right out of the box (bag!) and we could use all of these sounds without feeling like any are a compromise (which is usually the case with odd pickup configurations).

The single coils sound a little darker than Fenders – that’s the mahogany doing its thing. They have more of a rounded top end and a sweet midrange, and combine nicely for that “missing” Strat sound: the softer quack of the outside coils. The P90s, on the other hand, have that familiar rock tone that’s thick-but-not-too-thick and bright-but-not-too-bright.

They drive the amp into a low gain honk that’s delightfully chewy. The humbucking sounds are thick and dark, and a bit louder than the other positions. They have plenty of muscle to push the amp channel to a rich overdrive.

Best of all, combining the two pickups through their various modes yields some new and fascinating combinations – a bridge single coil with a neck P90...a neck humbucker with a bridge single coil...etc. The sounds are first rate but the HDR takes them all to another level, adding sparkle and richness across the entire frequency range.

Conclusion

The finish on all three guitars is impeccable, the binding (body and headstock) has a classy subtlety, and the hardware is top notch (the machines heads, for example, are smooth as silk). Negatives? Strangely, on every guitar, the nut is about half a millimetre short on each side of the neck, leaving a slight lip on the mahogany. However, the ebony fingerboard is slightly tapered into the nut, as if the

whole thing was intended. You won’t notice it when you play it but still... Another issue is the P-Rails: on each pickup, there’s a “dag” where the bobbin top has been snapped off the mould and then not trimmed back – it’s hardly noticeable but the folks at Duncan are usually better than this... Also, the paint guys at Godin need to learn how to sunburst – check out an old Epiphone, ‘cause they were the best.

Judging by the number of Icons we saw at Godin’s Richmond, Quebec, manufacturing facility, the company is really committed to the range. And why not? They’ve come up with a guitar that is delightfully balanced, standing or seated, and not so heavy that it wears you down. The tones are rich and varied, the playability is completely infectious, and the HDR function makes a great guitar even greater. Actually, the HDR is a bonus (and a REALLY good one) because the tones are the “real deal” without it. The Icons are superb guitars, beautifully crafted and presented, and each Icon delivering a variety of high-class tones with style. Naturally then, the Icon range receives our Guitarist Australia Choice award. 🏆



The Icon Type 3 comes bearing three P90 pick-ups

Godin Icon Series

PRICE: Type 2 Classic \$2395 (sunburst), \$2150 (burgundy) Type 3 \$2395 Type 2 Convertible \$2395

ORIGIN: Canada

TYPE: Electric

BODY: Solid mahogany (chambered), carved mahogany top

NECK: Mahogany, set and glued

SCALE LENGTH: 629mm / 24.75"

TUNERS: Godin, Kluson-style

NUT: Synthetic bone

WIDTH of neck at the nut:

44.3mm/1.74"

WIDTH of neck at the 15th fret:

54.8mm/2.15"

FINGERBOARD: Ebony, 16"/406mm radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: Chrome

BRIDGE/SPACING: Graphtech

ResoMax (tunamatic-style);

51.5mm/2.02"

ELECTRICS – Type 2 Classic:

Seymour Duncan 59, Godin GHN1,

High Definition Revoicer, 5-way,

Volume, Tone

ELECTRICS – Type 3: 2 x Lollar P90,

High Definition Revoicer, 5-way,

Volume, Tone

ELECTRICS – Type 2 Convertible: 2 x

Seymour Duncan P-Rails, High

Definition Revoicer, 3-way, Volume,

Tone, 2 x 3-way mini toggle

FINISH: High gloss

ACCESSORIES: Gig bag included

Dynamic Music

www.dynamicmusic.com.au

02 9939 1299



The Bottom Line

We like: Great tone and playability. Superlative value for money.

We dislike: The nut issue is minor but quite odd.

Guitarist says: Substance AND style – these will make other companies sit up and take note.

Test results

Build quality	★★★★☆
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★