

VINTAGE



Thomas Blug Signature Series V6

Words: Joey Setano

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Thomas Blug
Signature Series V6

SRP £399.00

All prices incl VAT

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WHAT IS IT?

An artificially aged Solid bodied electric six string electric guitar that is microscopically modelled on a much-loved golden oldie.

WHY SHOULD I WANT ONE?

As an excellent substitute to Thomas Blug's '61, the Vintage V6 has the right vibe, looks, sound and playability, and is a fab alternative to higher priced vintage styled guitars, including Fender's Road Worn series.

For more information on Thomas Blug: www.thomasblug.de

JHS' incredible Vintage Icon series unveils its first official Signature series instrument, inspired by the favourite guitar of German session guitarist Thomas Blug...

German born Thomas Blug is one of Europe's most respected guitarists with many awards under his belt, including Germany's Best Pop and Rock Guitarist, and in 2004, the Stratocaster's 50th birthday year he was voted 'StratKing of Europe.' Blug (pronounced Blerg) is very much a one-man one-guitar type of player and his constant companion is a genuinely 'road worn' '61 Fender Stratocaster that Thomas subtly modified to his personal specifications.

The old Strat is so closely identified with Thomas that one couldn't really imagine him playing anything else but one enterprising company has persuaded Thomas to help them develop a brand new signature model that faithfully reproduces the

exact look, feel and unique custom electronics of the German virtuoso's old faithful, virtually down to the last detail. A guitarist of Thomas Blug's calibre would have little trouble commissioning an expensive custom shop signature guitar but his incredible new Vintage V6 Signature Series has a street price that just skims deftly below the £400 quid threshold! This guitar's affordability is obviously one of its main strengths but its development is also fascinating story. Thomas teamed up with British guitar guru Trevor Wilkinson, mapping out every ding and dent on the old Strat's battered Olympic white body and the result is certainly one of the most stunning looking and intriguing signature guitars that we've ever seen.

Hardware

Whilst this Korean-made guitar is designed to replicate Blug's original, the only obvious visual difference is the Vintage headstock which, when all is said and done, echo's the essential vibe of the original without treading on anyone's toes. Vintage have carefully given the headstock plenty of authentic-looking dings and the vintage style Wilkinson Deluxe EZ-Lok tuners have been artificially aged to remain true to the vintage vibe whilst offering modern tuning stability and performance. The single string tree helps the top E and B strings to maintain an even pressure across the Wilkaloid low-friction nut to help side-step any potential tuning problems during heavy use of the vibrato arm

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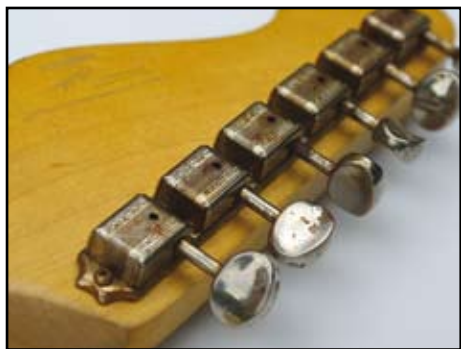
and even straight from the box the guitar feels extremely stable.

In keeping with aged-tradition, all of the metal hardware has received an authentic tarnished and corroded effect, including the tuners, vibrato plate, push-in vibrato arm, vintage style bridge saddles, jack socket, neck plate and strap buttons, as though

an extremely neat set of 21 well honed frets, offers one of the best replicated vintage necks we've played in an age. The tighter vintage style fingerboard radius suits the natural curve of the player's left hand and feels spot-on for chord work and lead playing, as specified by Thomas himself.



The Bukka switch kicks in a hum-cancelling dummy coil



Rust lust: Aged EZ-Lok tuners keep it real



The 7.25-inch fingerboard radius maintains the vintage feel

this guitar has captured a lifetime's worth of the sweat and toil of a hard-pushed, working guitar.

Like the headstock, the shallow C profile neck conveys a convincing feel, not only due to the vintage style 7.25 inch radius specified by Thomas Blug (the standard V6 model has a flatter 10 inch radius) but also due to the back of the neck, whose worn finish painstakingly recreates the aging process bought on by gigging night after night in smoked filled clubs. It looks and feels awesome – like a favourite pair of jeans or trainers that have been worn on a daily basis -and the dark rosewood fingerboard tenders a gorgeous worn-in sheen. This factor, along with

user-friendly weight is slightly undermined by basswood's softness compared to other timbers; it dents easily, but hang on. Aren't we talking about a guitar that is deliberately geared-up to look like it has been dragged through a hedge backwards? In that event the odd extra ding or two from the corner of an amp as you reach for a mid-gig beer hopefully won't result in a nervous breakdown.

Wired for sounds

As a fanatical tone connoisseur, Thomas is also a past master at coaxing a multitude of sounds from his guitar by simply varying the volume control, as he explains,

Scar wars

The Blug Signature's basswood body is cosmetically very striking, finished in a very fetching shade of distressed vintage white with accurately traced out battle scars that look uncannily close to Blug's original. Of course, no amount of artificial aging would be worth a light if the rest of the guitar didn't match and the battered finish is complimented by yellowed control knobs, pickup covers, vibrato arm tip and selector switch tip. The aged eleven screw three-ply scratch plate's vintage appearance isn't just skin-deep either, employing authentic '60's style aluminium shielding beneath the battered surface.

Basswood is a good choice of tone wood for a rock n' roll guitar: it has a pleasing resonance that isn't a million miles away from mahogany, including plenty of fat punchy mids and is tonally well balanced. Its

"I just feel it's so important to get as many different tones from the guitar, this breeds emotion within my playing and writing, and creates different melodic moods on stage. For me, the guitar sound has a lot to do with voice, the whole dynamic range, from a whisper to a dirty mean scream. A lot of guitar players think the best sound their instrument can produce is at maximum volume. Think in terms of driving your car flat out, there's no room left for any acceleration. If your guitar is on ten, the only versatility you have is how hard to attack the strings.

Over the years I've developed this soft and heavy energy technique by lowering the guitar volume and, with a combination of the pick and soft finger approach on the strings, I can express the whole dynamic range of the guitar, augmented with various overdrive pedals set to different levels of gain.

This has been possible thanks to some very special custom wiring, which I'm pleased to say we have included within the Vintage V6."

The Blug Signature V6's custom wiring includes a condenser in the volume control circuit which doesn't bleed off any high-end when the volume pot is backed-off, allowing for a cleaner, brighter signal on the lower settings and a beefier growl when the volume is cranked up full. The bridge single coil pickup is linked to a dummy coil beneath the scratch plate that is activated by a push-push pot on the lower tone control. Christened the 'Bukka' switch by Thomas blug, the dummy coil allows the player to switch between traditional single coil sounds or the noise cancelling mode with the Bukka switch engaged, as he describes, "A Strat's natural glassy output can often be critical to certain classic designed high-gain valve amps, the Bukka switch, with its push-push action, operates a dummy coil which reduces unwanted noise and the high frequencies by the right amount, this offers soaring lead lines and beefy chords when played at high gain amp settings."

To complete the picture, the V6 Signature also includes a reverse wound, reverse polarity middle position pickup that automatically bypasses the dummy coil in position two and four on the five-way pickup selector switch, preserving the classic in-between 'cluck'.

Tone to the bone

We played Blug's signature model through a wide selection of tube and solid state guitar amplification and each pickup maintained its characteristic tone, even when

saturated with high gain overdrive

The treble condenser linked to the volume control proves invaluable for clean-up duties, maintaining a sweet-sounding treble when the volume is backed-off with enough headroom for a dramatic solo lift when wound back to the stopper. The Blug Bukka switch is subtle enough not to change any of the classic single coil tone but it certainly is very effective for kerbing the highs at high-gain settings when they might otherwise get a little crashy, but if that's your preference, you have the choice not to use the switch if you want to preserve the true integrity of the single coil character.

All the classic sounds you'd expect are ready to be coaxed from the Thomas Blug Vintage Signature Series V6. Combined with high gain it virtually plays itself and when pushed hard with minimal overdrive and a hint of compression harmonics are rich and to the fore, with a belting snap and twang, no doubt added by the snug fitting bolt-on neck which is a sure fire contribution to the unmistakable voice.

Conclusions

Pre worn guitars are a controversial subject with players. Some think the price asked for a beat up guitar is crazy whilst others love the idea they can buy a 'been-round-the-block' guitar that looks and sounds like it has been played for decades. If you come down firmly in favour of the whole 'relic' concept then the Thomas Blug Signature V6 is very timely. Price wise, it undercuts Fender's Mexican Road Worn series of pre-aged guitars by a significant margin, plus you benefit from the hands-on attention and knowledge of two experts: a world renowned guitarist and a guitar tech with forty years experience. All of this in a superbly produced package for less than £400? It's a no-brainer if you ask me! **PM**



Spot the difference: Thoms Blug, his '61 Strat and his V6 Signature