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March 2015 Vol. 29 No. 05

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9 GEAR REVIEWS!

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GEAR

REVIEW

GAME CHANGER? The Avante Gryphon

People bandy about the term “game changer” so often these days it barely means a thing, but the Avante Gryphon may be just that.

Avante is the import line of Joe Veillette, who has long been crafting fine American guitars. His new Korean-made line presents the package in a range affordable to most players.

In a sense, the Gryphon is a hybrid instrument in that it can be applied in many ways. Certainly, one can use it as a higher-register 12-string; its shorter scale and smaller body create a heavenly “soprano guitar” effect with a shimmering top end and much less bass than a standard 12. On the other hand, being tuned D to D, it’s a potential secret weapon for guitarists looking to add mandolin-like sounds to their repertoire, as it projects in a similar range.

The Gryphon has a solid spruce top, solid mahogany back and sides, and a mahogany neck. The fingerboard and bridge are rosewood, and there are 21 frets (including a zero fret for better intonation). Its scale length is 18.5” and overall length is 32.5” – perfect size for a travel guitar.

In performance, the Gryphon exceeded expectations. Thanks to light tuners, the instrument balanced very well on the lap. The setup was excellent and made the neck (a shallow D profile) easy to play. The Gryphon has a very bright, brash tone – again, much like a mandolin – and should cut through any acoustic mix. Plugging into a P.A. or acoustic amp via the onboard preamp opens up new universes, and for controls there are Volume and Tone thumbwheels just inside the rim of

Price: \$1,495 (street)
Info: www.veilletteguitars.com

the Gryphon’s top soundhole. Add a few sweet effects (reverb, chorus, compression, etc.), and the Gryphon becomes a positively ethereal 12-string. It’s easy to imagine solo

guitarists from the Michael Hedges, Adrian Legg, or Andy McKee schools going wild over its sound and sonic possibilities. Further, world-music players will note that the Gryphon serves as an alternative to traditional folk instruments such as the bouzouki, mandocello, and Cuban tres and cuatro. And for studio recording, you can double a standard acoustic guitar part with the Gryphon and mix it back slightly for a mysterious treble shimmer, much like the classic “Nashville tuning.”

In this day and age when young guitarists are constantly reinventing the instrument, it’s easy to see how the Gryphon might be a tool of sonic evolution. —**Pete Prown VG**

