






## Dingwall Custom I Electric Guitar Review

---



-  Dingwall Custom I - Bridge Pickup, Clean by [premierguitar](#) 199 plays 0.17
-  Dingwall Custom I - Bridge Pickup, Distortion by [premierguitar](#) 179 plays 0.27
-  Dingwall Custom I - Neck Pickup, Clean by [premierguitar](#) 179 plays 0.13
-  Dingwall Custom I - Neck Pickup, Distortion by [premierguitar](#) 161 plays 0.27
-  Dingwall Custom I - Both pickups, clean by [premierguitar](#) 171 plays 0.11

Though overrun with traditionalists, the world of guitar building is as subject to the trends as anything else. And lately, it's been more common to see Telecaster influenced body styles fitted with Gretsch Filtertron type pickups. Chalk it up to lust for the Fender Custom shop's La Cabronita or the boutique builders that have caught on to the sonic potential of this pairing, but this design has been cropping up all over in recent days. In many ways, it's an obvious match—two iconic country music guitars—Telecaster and Gretsch—crossbred into a monster of twang. Dingwall Guitars' take on this mongrel caught the eye of *Premier Guitar* at the Montreal Guitar show. And the time spent with the guitar since has been a pleasure.

### Making a Case

Dingwall has been a force in the bass world for years, with artists like Leland Sklar, Dale Peters (The James Gang), and Prescott Niles (The Knack) singing the praises of their fan-fretted four, five and six string instruments.

The company obviously knows how to build a great six string too. The Dingwall Custom was impressive long before I ever strummed a chord. The guitar came in a flight-ready HSC case, with a handle on one side and wheels on the other. It normally ships with a deluxe gig bag and the flight case is an extra \$250 street, but seems well worth it if you travel. Should you opt for the case, you will be glad you have the wheels, as this case puts the heavy in heavy-duty. The guitar itself is surprisingly light, considering that it's equipped with a Bigsby. Though the surprise dissipated when I

discovered that the swamp ash body is chambered.

The polyester Vintage White finish and matching headstock is offset beautifully by a pale Cheetah-patterned pickguard. The narrow headstock, which is more Paul Reed Smith than Fender still provides a straight string-pull over the nut—like any good Tele-style guitar should—which helped keep the inherently less-than-stable Bigsby in tune.

A three-piece maple neck is capped by a maple board with striking, contrasting inlays that are made from the same material as the pickguard (though these will set you back an additional \$315 over the standard pearloid dots). The neck and fingerboard are finished in satin polyurethane that facilitated smooth sliding and bends. The neck is also set as solid as a rock, thanks to the luthier's choice to use four large bolts to secure the neck to the body, rather than wood screws and a backplate.

This Dingwall Custom came with a Neutrik locking input jack, a pricey extra that, to me, seems better on paper than in live performance. True, it will keep your jack from pulling out of the guitar if you accidentally step on it, or your lead singer gets caught in your cord during his or her gyrations. But that also increases the likelihood you'll yank your cord out of the amp or bring your stack tumbling to the floor. I prefer the embarrassment of temporarily losing signal. If you agree, it's likely Dingwall can install a normal jack.

---

**The crispness of the pickups helped maintain the Dingwall's presence through the morass of pedals and cables. But it also helped the guitar a cut through a crowded band mix of a second guitar, bass, vocals, and drums.**

---

Having drooled over this guitar since *PG*'s Montreal coverage I couldn't wait to plug it into the three amps I set aside for the task—a Fender Blues Junior, an Orange Tiny Terror, and a Hughes & Kettner Tubemeister.

The guitar came set up with very playable if high-ish action. Opting to risk reducing the beautiful ringing quality of the guitar, I easily lowered the action with the two screws on the Graphtech Tune-O-Matic-style bridge. Thanks in part to the large, well-finished 6105 frets I was able to get the action substantially much lower without experiencing any string buzz or fretting out. I didn't notice much loss of ring or sustain either—strong evidence that this well-built instrument derives much of its resonant qualities from the whole.

### **TV Time**

Dingwall uses a duo of TV Jones Classic Filter-Tron-style pickups. The bridge pickup gives you twang for days, but with an entirely different character than a Tele pickup. There's more upper high-end and lower lows and you get both extremes without any ugly edge or muddy bottom. It gave me plenty of mid-range oomph to induce break up in Tiny Terror and the lead channel of the Tubemeister—and all with an almost total absence of hum. The neck pickup is mellow enough for jazz but, when pushed with hard picking, had more than sufficient bite for blues. I was impressed yet again when I rolled off the guitar volume and didn't hear any high-end loss. The tone remained remarkably consistent down to the quietest ranges, which was almost certainly helped by the high-quality volume pot.

At a rehearsal I was able to crank up the Dingwall through my full pedalboard. The crispness of the pickups helped maintain the Dingwall's presence through the morass of pedals and cables. But it also

helped the guitar a cut through a crowded band mix of a second guitar, bass, vocals, and drums. It's worth noting too that the Dingwall really gets along with stompboxes, and it drove my Paul Trombetta Feederbone fuzz to fat tone heaven, and matched up equally well with both channels of my Jetter Jetdrive.

After a short break-in period, the Bigsby stayed in pretty good tune through both gentle rocking and Neil Young-style soloing. After the five-hour rehearsal, my shoulder was thankful for the light weight and my bandmates were effusive about the guitar's great looks.

### **The Verdict**

With a narrow three-on-a-side headstock, pointy cutaway, and unusual inlays the Dingwall has its own well-balanced look that tastefully references an American classic. It also lives in a familiar-but-different sonic territory that reflects the guitar's looks and plays beautifully. The fusion of Fender and Gretsch may be a trend on the rise, but the Dingwall Custom I makes it plain why the marriage works.

#### **Buy if...**

you want a twang machine that can rock as well.

#### **Skip if...**

if you need to dive bomb, or are short on the green stuff.

#### **Rating...**



Street \$3711 (as tested) - **Dingwall Guitars** - [dingwallguitars.com](http://dingwallguitars.com)