



APACHE!

THIS LIMITED-EDITION BURNS CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF THE SHADOWS, BUT IT'S NOT JUST FOR FANS OF HANK, AS **PAUL ALCANTARA** DISCOVERS

Launched back in 1964, the Burns Marvin was designed to meet the needs of Hank Marvin, lead guitarist with British instrumental group the Shadows. Taking Hank's Fender Stratocaster as a point of departure, the new model incorporated various 'improvements' including Burns' new Rez-o-Tube vibrato unit and Rez-o-Matik pickups.

Like an early 1960s Stratocaster, the Burns Marvin had off-set cutaways, a bolt-on neck, rosewood fingerboard and 25.5-inch scale length. The circuitry was virtually identical to that of the Fender, though details such as the three-a-side scroll headstock (a feature suggested by Hank Marvin himself) and three-section split pickguard lent the model a distinct visual identity of its own. Priced at £173 (around £2,450 in today's money) the Marvin was Burns' flagship model. Around 400 original

Marvins were produced and today vintage examples can change hands for up to £7,000.

Since the Burns brand was successfully re-launched in the early 1990s, we have seen the reissue of around five Marvin-style models of varying authenticity, and though the new Apache model deviates from the original in a number of significant details, it is, according to Burns London's head honcho Barry Gibson, "the most accurate to date in terms of sound and feel". Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Shadows' formation, this Apache is limited to a run of just 500 examples, adding extra desirability to an already enticing prospect.

BODY & NECK

First off, let's clear up any confusion regarding the guitar's name. "We first used the Apache name for a custom shop run of 25 Marvin-style guitars that were built back in the late 1990s,"

explains Barry Gibson. "Apache' was the Shads' biggest selling record – it topped the charts for seven weeks in 1960. So what better name for a model that commemorates the band's 50th anniversary?"

The Apache's rather imposing double-cutaway alder body displays the usual comfort contours in the forearm and ribcage areas and, like the original, it's finished in glossy white polyester. Of the 500 guitars that will be built, 50 will feature a fiesta red finish instead. 12 will also be made left-handed, all in white.

Despite the fact that the neck pocket has been redesigned, upper fingerboard access is compromised to a degree by the guitar's relatively bulky heel join. To be fair, the Fender Stratocaster suffers from much the same problem, and fans of vintage Burns guitars would no doubt look askance at any attempt to radically alter the original design.

Constructed from a single

GBINFO



BURNS SHADOWS 50TH ANNIVERSARY APACHE

PRICE: £995

BUILT IN: China (assembled in UK)

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5 inches)

NUT WIDTH: 43mm (1.69 inches)

STRING SPACING AT NUT: 36mm (1.41 inches)

BODY: Alder

NECK: Flame maple, bolt-on

FINGERBOARD: Ebony, 254 to 305 mm compound radius (10 to 12 inches)

FRETS: 21 medium

PICKUPS: 3 x special-issue Rez-o-Matik single-coils

CONTROLS: 1 x volume, 1 x tone, 1 x tone/push-pull neck pickup switch, 5-way selector switch

BRIDGE: Engraved Rez-o-Tube vibrato unit, gold

STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE: 51mm (2 inches)

MACHINEHEADS: Burns custom locking tuners, gold

FINISH: White polyester, fiesta red (50 models only)

WEIGHT: 3.4kg (7.5lbs)

CASE: Burns fitted case included

LEFT-HANDERS: 12 will be built (£1,200)

CONTACT: Burns London

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NOT A CLONE

HOW DOES THIS APACHE DIFFER FROM THE ORIGINAL BURNS MARVIN MODEL?

■ The new Shadows 50th Anniversary Apache is not intended as a 100 percent accurate recreation of a vintage Burns Marvin.

Desirable though the originals are, they suffer from a number of design faults that Burns London has – successfully in our opinion – addressed here.

Firstly, the bodies of the first Marvins were constructed from Honduras mahogany. When this proved too heavy, jelutong or obeche were substituted. Though plentiful at the time, both of these timbers were prone to cracking and as a result Burns has switched to alder – a far more stable timber – for the body of the Apache. The neck pocket has also been redesigned. The original featured an extended ‘lip’ that enclosed the neck on the inside of the treble-side cutaway.



“Almost every vintage Burns that I’ve come across displays stress cracks in this area,” comments Barry Gibson. This lip has been removed so that the neck pocket now approximates that of a Stratocaster. Other upgrades include a maple neck (‘steamed beech’ and later sycamore were used for the originals), an ebony fingerboard with a 10- to 12-inch compound radius (replacing rosewood with a uniform 10-inch radius) and locking tuners. We think Jim Burns would have approved.



■ Each string is anchored in a separate hollow tube beneath the bridge plate

sufficient back angle to ensure good string contact at the nut without the need for string trees – always a plus point on a guitar that is fitted with a vibrato. The use of a zero fret (as on the original Marvin) relegates the nut to the role of a string spacer.

A white pearloid plastic plate at the heel conceals the four cross-head screws that secure the neck to the body, and removing it provides access to the truss rod adjuster. Burns’ patented bi-directional ‘Gear-o Matik’ truss rod allows the neck to be adjusted with the strings tuned to pitch. Having removed the plastic heel-plate, a special tool (supplied with the guitar) can be used to adjust the geared mechanism – clockwise to correct a hump and anti-clockwise to correct a bow.

HARDWARE & PARTS

Like the vibrato unit, which we’ll come to shortly, this small heel plate is engraved with the Apache logo (which was borrowed, Barry Gibson tells us, from the decoration on a World War II Mustang fighter plane), the signatures of Shadows guitarists Hank Marvin and Bruce Welch and the instrument’s serial number. The review model (serial number 000) is in fact a prototype. Production models will be numbered from 001 up to 500.

The ‘Rez-o-Tube’ vibrato unit is functionally identical to that fitted to the

original Marvin. Underneath the bridge plate, each string is anchored in a separate hollow tube (hence the name), and the design is said to enhance tone and sustain. Vibrato tension adjustments can be made using the two bolts that are located at

the end of the plate to tighten or loosen the four springs concealed underneath, while the height and tension of the arm can be set using an Allen key. All hardware is gold-plated, including the protective bars which extend over the vibrato plate.

Designed specifically for the original Marvin, the ‘Rez-o-Matik’ pickups were closely based – at Hank’s request – on the units that Fender fitted to its Stratocaster model. For this new Apache, Burns has boosted the pickups’ output, using a thinner wire for the coils. “We found that this, in combination with the ebony fingerboard, yielded a richer, warmer tone,” says Barry Gibson.

Unlike the Strat, all three pickups are set at an angle, sloping down towards the bridge slightly on the treble side.

Note that the neck pickup is slightly narrower than the bridge and middle units so that its polepieces align correctly with the strings – neat! The electronics comprise a master volume control and two tone controls.

The bridge-pickup tone control, positioned closest to the jack socket, doubles as a push-pull switch that adds the neck pickup to the



■ The electronics comprise master volume and two tone controls

“IT’S DIFFICULT TO FAULT IN ANY DEPARTMENT – LOOKS, TONE, BUILD OR SETUP”

section of handsomely figured Canadian hard rock maple, the neck has a comfortable C-shaped profile that, not surprisingly, reminds us of the necks found on early 1960s Fenders. It’s neatly bound with grey pearloid plastic that extends right around the ebony fingerboard at the body end. Pearl position dots of diminishing size are joined at the 12th fret by a pearl inlay that is engraved with the ‘Apache’ legend.

The Apache’s three-side headstock, with its unusual ‘scroll’ shape, has



DETAILS

AN OUTSTANDING LIMITED-EDITION INSTRUMENT



■ The heel plate features Hank and Bruce's signatures and the guitar's serial number



■ The three-section split pickguard lends the Burns Apache a unique visual identity



■ The 'scroll' headstock is set at an angle to ensure good string contact at the nut



GBOPINION

BURNS SHADOWS 50TH ANNIVERSARY APACHE

GOLD STARS

- ★ A respectfully updated classic
- ★ Fantastic looks and build quality
- ★ Great price for a limited-edition axe

BLACK MARKS

- None

IDEAL FOR...

Shadows fans and indeed anyone looking for a quality alternative to the ubiquitous Strat

whatever combination is determined by the five-way blade switch.

Though the review guitar (being a pre-production prototype) sports a set of Sperzel tuners, the production model will be fitted with gold-plated Burns-branded locking machineheads of a similar design.

SOUNDS

Unplugged, this Apache produces a rich, lively tone with plenty of sustain, while the combination of the zero fret, compound fingerboard radius and excellent setup provides a very enjoyable playing experience.

Plugged in to an amp, the five-way switch yields the usual Strat-type settings – the three pickups individually plus bridge/middle and middle/neck pickup combinations. Using the push-pull tone control to add the neck pickup yields two additional permutations – the neck and bridge pickups together and all three pickups at once. As a result of the middle pickup's reverse polarity, combining it with the neck or bridge pickup cancels hum (this obviously doesn't apply to the neck/bridge pickup combination).

It should come as no surprise that, plugged in, the Apache sounds similar to a Stratocaster. However, the Rez-o-Tube vibrato adds a warmth and richness to the overall tone (particularly apparent when using the bridge pickup) that lends the Apache a distinctive sound all of its own. There's a snap and twang to the tone, but also a rich mid-range that serves both Shadows-esque clean sounds and more raucous rock and blues playing equally well.

All told, this is a great guitar that offers a broad palette of tonal shadings and is capable of much more than the basic Shadows repertoire. It's difficult to fault in any department – looks, tone, build or setup – and feels every inch an up-market instrument.

GBRATINGS

BURNS SHADOWS 50TH ANNIVERSARY APACHE

BODY & NECK	★★★★
HARDWARE & PARTS	★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★
SOUNDS	★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★
GBVERDICT	★★★★

GBCONCLUSION

GET ONE BEFORE THEY'RE GONE

■ Burns London has pulled out all the stops for this limited-edition Apache, with gold hardware, a figured maple neck and a bound ebony fingerboard. Described as an "amalgamation of the best features of the original Marvin models", the guitar updates a classic design with several performance enhancing features.

That Burns has accomplished this without compromising the overall character of the model reflects the company's genuine enthusiasm for its heritage. Offered in a strictly limited edition of 500 (50 of which will be finished in Fiesta Red with a figured maple fingerboard!), complete with a certificate that's hand-signed and numbered by Hank Marvin and Bruce Welch, the Apache nevertheless retails at a very reasonable price. While build quality, sound and playability are comparable to similarly priced US products, we reckon that the Apache offers a lot more guitar for your money. The queue starts here! **GB**