



HEAD-STRONG VERBROVIBE

Price: \$2,800
(Verbivibe combo)

Contact:
Headstrong Amplifiers, 333 Donnybrook Drive, Asheville NC 28806; phone (828) 670-1207; headstrongamps.com.

of the output power of the EL34s, which equates to an overall spongier, more midrange-oriented tone. But still, notes pop and highs sing in very Class A style, which equates to great bluesy gain and note separation. Humbuckers, of course, push the tubes to even earlier breakup and the less-compressed sounds that say “not as British” as the EL34s. At full volume, the tone gets a little *too* compressed, so backing down is in order if you’re into low

and high mids, more punch, and great touch response.

The Headstrong Verbivibe is an affordable alternative for anyone lusting after an early-’60s Fender Vibroverb combo (but thinking the coin might be tough to justify) and fully demonstrates why that tone is so sought after. And the Prima 30 is an extremely versatile amp, especially given the inherent responsiveness of its variable-output-tube design.

– **Bob Tekippe**

Axe of Many Colors

The PRS 513

THE LATEST ADDITION TO the model line at PRS Guitars is the discretely-named 513, an axe that carries all the family traits, like a carved figured-maple top, double-cutaway mahogany body, set mahogany neck, 10"-radius fretboard, vibrato, and low-mass locking tuners.

In fact, at first glance the 513 could be mistaken for a Custom 22 or Standard 22, but stands out thanks to its pickups and a 25¹/₄" scale length, more sculpted neck heel, and a neck profile and bird inlays designed specially for it.

The 513 has the typical PRS high-quality feel, with well-conceived contours, control placement, and overall design. Its playability is very good, and it has a comfortable, slightly-thick neck profile that doesn’t feel at all chunky, with a nice low/choke-free action, nicely polished and leveled frets, and excellent access to the upper frets. The guitar weighs in at a comfortable 8.5 pounds and is well-balanced whether strapped on or perched atop a knee.

Not since Leo was at the helm of G&L has a major guitar manufacturer offered a model with a truly new pickup system, but with the 513, PRS does just that; the guitar’s sound is produced via a totally new configuration that uses five specially designed single-coil pickups (four of which are mounted in pairs) with two blade switches, master Volume, and master Tone controls.

The guitar’s five pickups can be used in 13 pickup combinations, and while the layout and function of the two blade switches could scare away the traditionalist, the system is quite straightforward: the five-way switch located just below the Volume control functions as a regular pickup selector (1 – bridge pickup cluster, 2 – bridge/

middle, 3 – middle, 4 – middle/neck and 5 – neck cluster), while the three-way (near the Tone control) allows the player to choose from three pickup voicings (dubbed Heavy Humbucker, Clear Humbucker, and Single-Coil). The Heavy Humbucker setting produces traditional thick-midrange hum/single/hum sounds, while the Clear Humbucker setting gives more articulate, scooped-midrange hum/single/hum sounds, and the Single Coil setting offers classic triple-single-coil sounds.

Through the clean channel of a 12AX7/EL34 1x12" combo, the 513’s Single Coil setting produced a variety of solid traditional single-coil sounds, with nice high-end sparkle, punchy lows, and a fair dose of bell tone. The additional 1¹/₄" of scale length (compared to PRS’ standard 25") adds noticeable twang to the pallet of the 513, and its two “out-of-phase” positions are especially nice, slightly thicker and less “quacky” than a Fender Stratocaster.

The Clear Humbucker setting through the combo’s overdrive channel offered a hum/single/hum pickup configuration where the two humbuckers had a slightly crisper thinner tone than full blown humbuckers. The twangy tone of the single-coil setting is, of course, tempered by the additional coils, which add noise-canceling properties and a slightly thicker sound (except in the middle position), but are still very well-balanced both tone-wise and in terms of volume in all five pickup positions. The Heavy

Humbucker setting performs as the name implies, producing a thick, harmonically rich distortion through the amp’s overdrive channel. The Clear Humbucker setting allows you to play chugging rhythms with a crisp, crunchy overdrive sound, while the Heavy Humbucker sound works well for soloing, giving slightly more gain and

boosted mids that make single notes jump.

The resonance gained with the set neck, combined with high-quality materials, give the 513 marked sonic advantages in terms of clarity, articulation, and note separation. And the 513 is easy to use. We’d pick a nit only with the fact that you cannot use the two outside pickups simultaneously, which would help it achieve sounds more reminiscent of a Fender Telecaster and/or a dual-humbucker setup. In terms of fit and finish, our tester 513 was outstanding, with a gorgeous Dark Cherry Sunburst finish. It suffered no flaws and had no issues.

The PRS 513 is the complete package; it offers a variety of quality, usable tones with a well-conceived and easy-to-use configuration and controls.

– **Phil Feser VG**

PRS GUITARS 513

Price: \$4,200 (base MSRP)
Contact: PRS Guitars, 380 Log Canoe Circle, Stevensville, MD 21666; prsguitars.com.

