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G&L Korina Collection ASAT Classic Bluesboy, Deluxe II, and Junior II

TESTED BY JAMES NASH

KORINA HAS A BIT OF A MYTHICAL status in the guitar world: Gibson's Ted McCarty selected the mahogany-like wood for the ill-fated 1958 run of his then shockingly futuristic Explorer and Flying V, and few production guitars have featured korina ever since. But unlike those rare '50s Gibsons, and contrary to legend, Korina is neither endangered nor impossibly expensive, and this tonewood (technically African white limba) contributes a classic yet unique vibe to a new family of American-made ASATs from G&L.

Leo Fender designed the original G&L ASAT to be a refinement of his Telecaster, but this limited edition Korina Collection boldly mixes in features more typically associated

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with Gibson, from the body wood to a Tune-o-matic and stop-tail to dual humbuckers and P-90 pickups.

The ASAT Classic Bluesboy, Deluxe II, and Junior II, all begin with a recipe of classic Tele snap and bite, then blend in varying degrees of Gibson-inspired fat midrange and thick lows. These are uniformly well-built and easy-playing instruments, thanks in part to precision CNC routing and immaculate fretwork courtesy of PLEK technology. And because the Korina Collection ASATs share tight tolerances and identical body and neck specs, we also found them an excellent platform for highlighting the subtle tonal distinctions between similar pickups, and even the sonic contributions of bridge hardware and wood grain.

ASAT Classic Bluesboy

Sporting a 1950s-style boxed-steel bridge and iconic “blackguard,” the ASAT Classic Bluesboy is the most traditional model in the Korina Collection. A 3-position “top hat” pickup selector and chrome flat-top Volume and Tone knobs round out its vintage appearance. But from there, the Bluesboy turns its back on the vintage Tele homestead and heads for the highway, with features like a flat-ish, 12" radius pau ferro 'board, medium-jumbo frets, and a Duncan Seth Lover neck humbucker. And then there's the main attraction: the beautifully finished honey-golden korina body, which looks much like mahogany, but is noticeably lighter.

The ASAT Classic Bluesboy has a somewhat chunky medium-depth vintage C neck (props to G&L for publishing precise measurements online). While I tend to prefer slimmer profiles, I found the combination of vintage neck depth with more modern radius and frets to be immensely playable, and the factory PLEK setup was stellar: low action, very slight neck relief, and no buzzing on big bends. The six individually adjustable brass saddles are a cool touch, giving a cosmetic nod to an early Tele bridge, but with more accurate intonation and better tuning stability with rounded grooves to hold the strings in place.

Both the neck and body feature a gloss polyurethane

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KORINA COLLECTION ASAT CLASSIC BLUESBOY

PRICE	\$2,200 retail/\$1,699 street
NUT Width	1 5/8" bone
SCALE	25 1/2"
NECK	Quartersawn maple, G&L Classic "C" (.830" thick at 1st fret, .960" at 12th)
FRETBOARD	Pau ferro, 12" radius
FRETS	22 medium jumbo
TUNERS	12:1 ratio, G&L sealed
BODY	Two-piece korina
BRIDGE	Boxed steel plate with individual brass saddles
PICKUPS	Seymour Duncan Seth Lover (SH-55) neck humbucker, G&L MFD bridge single-coil
CONTROLS	Single Volume and Tone, 3-way pickup selector
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXL110, .010-.046
WEIGHT	8.3 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Enormous tonal range, from bright and twangy to warm and fat.
CONCERNS	Neck and bridge tones may feel disconnected to some players.

KORINA COLLECTION ASAT DELUXE II

PRICE	\$2,200 retail/\$1,699 street
NUT Width	1 5/8", bone
SCALE	25 1/2"
NECK	Quartersawn maple, G&L Classic "C" (.830" thick at 1st fret, .960" at 12th)
FRETBOARD	Pau ferro, 12" radius
FRETS	22 medium jumbo
TUNERS	12:1 ratio, G&L sealed
BODY	Two-piece korina
BRIDGE	TonePros T3BT Tune-o-matic bridge and T1Z stopbar tailpiece
PICKUPS	Seymour Duncan humbuckers: '59 (SH-1) neck and JB (TB-4) bridge
CONTROLS	Single Volume and Tone with push/pull coil tap, three-way pickup selector
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXL110, .010-.046
WEIGHT	8.1 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Classic humbucker tones with unique attitude.
CONCERNS	None.

KORINA COLLECTION ASAT JUNIOR II

PRICE	\$2,200 retail/\$1,699 street
NUT Width	1 5/8", bone
SCALE	25 1/2"
NECK	Quartersawn maple, G&L Classic "C" (.830" thick at 1st fret, .960" at 12th)
FRETBOARD	Pau ferro, 12" radius
FRETS	22 medium jumbo
TUNERS	12:1 ratio, G&L sealed
BODY	Two-piece korina
BRIDGE	TonePros T3BT Tune-o-matic bridge and T1Z stopbar tailpiece
PICKUPS	2 G&L P-90 type
CONTROLS	Single Volume and Tone, 3-way pickup selector
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXL110, .010-.046
WEIGHT	7.7 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Giant single-coil vibe that's boneheadedly easy to plug and play.
CONCERNS	None.

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ASAT Classic Bluesboy



ASAT Deluxe II



ASAT Junior II

finish of medium thickness. I might have preferred a thinner finish with visible wood texture, but the Bluesboy doesn't feel at all overfinished when played. It has excellent acoustic resonance and sustain, with a lively snap even on the lowest notes.

I tested the ASAT Classic Bluesboy—as

well as the other G&L Korina models—through an Ampeg GVT15, a Dr. Z Maz Jr., and a Suhr Badger 30, and found tones reminiscent of a vintage Tele, but with significantly bigger midrange and rounder highs. The bridge single-coil delivers killer twang and bite, with added korina-fueled

fullness. Imagine a classic ash Tele bridge with a bit of Les Paul blended in . . . yum!

Switching to the neck humbucker almost feels like changing guitars. Gone is the stringy twang, replaced with dark, buttery thickness, spongy lows, and a slightly muted upper midrange, with a dash of P.A.F.-era

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sparkle on top. Combining the two pickups generates a huge and versatile sound with clear highs and big, slightly wooly lows, great for anything from Stones rhythms to chicken-pickin' to songwriter strumming.

This bridge single-coil/neck humbucker configuration isn't for everyone, as switching between the pickups can be jarring at times. But if you're looking for big, Tele-inspired tone with enormous range, the G&L Korina Classic Bluesboy delivers.

ASAT Deluxe II

The ASAT Deluxe II starts with identical specs as the Classic Bluesboy, but swaps out the Tele-style single-coil and plate bridge for a humbucker and a TonePros Tune-o-matic. Those might seem like minor changes, but I found the tonal effect of the bridge and stoptail was dramatic, giving this ASAT a unique sound and feel even before plugging it in. Compared to the Classic Bluesboy, the acoustic tone of the Deluxe II was louder and

punchier, with a fuller midrange. And the string tension felt immediately different, propelling notes forward with a solid "thunk." That's not to say the Deluxe's bridge is necessarily better—some might miss the more scooped midrange and delicate airy twang of the classic Tele-style plate bridge. But if you've always wished for more oomph from a bolt-on neck guitar, without giving up the stringy quality of the 25½" scale, you should check out this ASAT.

The neck pickup is a Duncan '59, which brings more snarl and tighter lows than the similar Seth Lover 'bucker in the Bluesboy. But make no mistake: the Deluxe II is predominantly vintage-flavored, delivering a softer, clearer, and more open neck tone than the comparably crisp, midrange-heavy Dragon II-equipped PRS Custom I referenced. The Deluxe II's Duncan JB bridge pickup further pumps up the volume and growl, but I found it a particularly good match for the milder neck tone—I enjoyed flicking between

all three pickup settings without ever feeling the need to tweak an amp or step on a pedal. And a push/pull tone pot taps the coils of both pickups, yielding single-coil flavors that are somewhat blander than, say, the bridge pickup of the Classic Bluesboy, but still entirely useable.

The Deluxe II—like all the Korina Collection ASATs—features a quartersawn hard-rock maple neck. But as an aside, I had the opportunity to compare a prototype Deluxe II with a flatsawn neck, which I found a hair more compressed and sparkling, the quartersawing contributing punch and slightly more stability during pedal-steel-type bends. I'd be happy with either, and it's a testament to G&L's consistency that this difference was audible at all.

I'll nitpick to mention I didn't like the sharp nut securing the pickup selector, which sometimes bit my hand in the heat of battle, but that did little to dampen my enthusiasm for the vintage-vibed, yet still rather unique and forward-looking Korina Deluxe II.

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ASAT Junior II

Rounding out the Korina Collection is the ASAT Junior II, which is reminiscent of a Les Paul Special, with its dual soapbar pickups and flat-top styling. Ignoring the pickups, the ASAT Junior II shares identical specs with the dual humbucker Deluxe II, and once again, I was struck by G&L's build consistency: when played acoustically, these two test guitars sounded almost indistinguishable.

But it's all about the plugged-in tone, and here the Junior II is decidedly single-coil, as it features a pair of P-90-style G&L MDF soapbar pickups, with a slightly underwound neck and a slightly overwound bridge. The result is an enormous tone brimming with sparkle and clarity, but with big-time fatness and lower midrange push, and outstanding balance from neck to bridge. What's not to like?

Well, these are still single-coils, so the price for getting single-coil personality with



humbucker-like girth is giving up the hum-free operation of the 'buckers. Then again, when killer tone is happening, it's easy to ignore a little noise, and such was the case with our Junior II, which could sound raw and toothy and full and smooth, often all at the same time—and generally with no need to fine tune any of the test amps' tone controls.

The Junior II's no-brainer tone was especially evident when I tried it through a new Ampeg GVT15, which employs a non-traditional Baxandall tone stack. That amp had proven a bit tricky to dial in with several other guitars, but when I connected the Junior II . . . bam! There was the sustaining, warm-but-biting lead sound I had been chasing, but this time with no tweaking required.

With its P-90 style pickups, maple neck, and korina body, the ASAT Junior II combines some of the best qualities of classic humbucker and single-coil guitars. This is an instrument I'd feel confident bringing to just about any gig or session, knowing I could dial up a solid and vibey tone through any amplifier for just about any style of music. Versatility and mojo are often at odds, but the ASAT Junior II cracks open big cans of both, and for that reason, I give it the nod over the other solid contenders in the Korina Collection, all of which are interesting, classic-toned G&L guitars well worth trying. 🎸