

“Swiss Army” Axe

The PRS David Grissom Trem

DAVID GRISSOM IS AT OR near the top of any list of significant Texas guitarists, having toured or recorded with artists ranging from Ringo Starr to the Dixie Chicks and Buddy Guy. He has also penned songs for Trisha Yearwood, John Mayall, and his own band, Storyville.

Paul Reed Smith Guitars has an impressive roster of artist endorsers, but when they set out to make a guitar that would bear Grissom's name, it was a unique situation; where most “graduated” to a PRS after playing other brands, Grissom has used one of Paul Smith's axes throughout his professional career.

Introduced at last summer's NAMM show, the PRS David Grissom Trem (DGT) is unique in the company's line. Essentially a McCarty Trem, it includes tweaks to the pickups and wiring, a smaller neck, bigger frets, and typical high-quality PRS fit and finish.

The body is mahogany with a carved, figured, or painted maple top, while the neck is the usual 25" almost-Fender scale with 22 jumbo frets on a rosewood fingerboard. Green abalone inlays are available, shaped as moons or birds. At one end of the strings is the standard PRS tremolo, at the other, locking tuners with a 14:1 gear ratio. The knobs are two controls for volume and one for tone. The Tone knob is push/pull for coil-tapping.

Most notable among the differences is the neck. Instead of the flat/wide neck for which PRS guitars are generally known, this one feels great to the typical Tele and Strat freak. The DGT ships with an .011-.049 string set with a plain G.

To test its “all-American” sounds, we ran the DGT through a Victoria 5112 combo with a 12" Jensen speaker and single 6V6 power tube. The neck pickup sounded round without being muddy or producing excessive lower-midrange and bass. The Victoria has only one knob (Volume/on-off), leaving the tone of the guitar unadulterated. As you dial up the amp's Volume knob, notes remain

distinct as distortion swells. Pulling the coil tap moves the tone toward a Stratocaster middle pickup. A certain roundness of the humbucker remains, creating one of those hybrid sounds that was in many ways superior to the two tones being combined. Individual notes within chords remain distinct, even with the volume knob almost dimed.

The bridge pickup has a nice snarl in full humbucking mode, though it never gathers full humbucker gain, instead creating a cleaner, more note-distinct sound than a “standard” humbucker. When the Volume knob on the Victoria hit 8, the bridge pickup started to really sing. The pickup is free of that nasal-quality midrange tone that can affect (some say compliment) a bridge humbucker. With the guitar's Volume rolled off and the coil tap engaged, the bridge pickup offers up a very appealing jangle with lower-mid fullness.

With the three-way pickup selector switch in the middle position, the DGT's sound fills a room even at very low volume while covering the entire tonal range and then some. Pulling the coil tap lightens the tone slightly, and when the coil tap is pulled with both pickups on, a small amount of hum enters the picture.

Playing the DGT through a Reeves Custom 6 combo (1x15" with Bass, Middle and Treble controls) left very little to enhance, disguise, or delete. While the Victoria provides American flavor, the Reeves, with its single EL84 power tube, covers the British tonal spectrum.

The DGT's neck pickup was extremely warm through the Reeves, but

maintained note definition. Even when pushed, the pickup refused to mud out. Pulling the coil tap scooped the mids very nicely with only a minor drop in volume.

Compared to most humbuckers through a “British” amp, the bridge pickup on the DGT is the bright side of humbuckers, tonally speaking. Pushed, it warms up very well and gives a great lead tone. With the coil tap pulled, it sounds like a really good Telecaster bridge pickup, though not as robust as the best Teles. Overall, it provides a very useful tone.

With the three-way in the middle, the DGT can cover jazz with ease. And when the coil tap is pulled, one of the best sounds shimmers from the guitar. The coil tap lightens the midrange, reduces low-end response, and gives an almost acoustic tone.

The DGT's hardware is superlative. The vibrato is incredibly stable and has a Jeff Beck-approved range, moved both up and down. The locking tuners work well (even if they don't have to do much!). Once in place, even with a floating vibrato, string tension is remarkably constant. The brass barrels on the tuners, along with the nickel (instead of chrome) pickup covers give the guitar an “aged” vibe. — **Bob Dragich VG**

PRS GUITARS DGT

Price: \$3,277 (street), \$4,610 retail with 10-top and bird inlays, \$3,600 with standard top and moon inlays.

Contact: Paul Reed Smith Guitars, 380 Log Canoe Circle, Stevensville, MD 21666; phone (410) 643-9970; prsguitars.com.

