

## new gear

frets, and only the tiniest bit of filler (on a small section of the binding) intruding upon the visual reverie. A look inside reveals a good level of cleanliness, although the guitar's dedication to electronic performance is exposed by the twist-tie wire retainer looped through a hole drilled into one of the scalloped X-braces. One clever touch is the attachment of the magnetic pickup to the underside of the top with industrial hook-and-loop tape; while it might seem unusual, there is probably no lighter-weight mounting option. The Parker comes ready to sling, with strap buttons at both ends of the body.

### YIN AND YANG APPROACH

Played unplugged, the guitar offers up an intimate, compelling sound with bright trebles, a vocal-like midrange with plenty of sustain, and solid—but not overpowering—bass. Contrasting structural elements work well together sonically: Traditional X-bracing gives the P8E a Martin-esque focus, while the more unusual cedar-and-maple combination yields a paradoxical tone that has both a brilliant edge and a healthy amount of

compression and warmth. The result is an even, musical voice that works for almost anything: I enjoyed the great clarity and balance when playing fingerstyle, and when I let jazz guitarist Eugene Jablonski try the guitar, he commented on the crisp response and the fast neck for chord-melody playing. Even an electric lead guitarist who sampled the Parker loved its sustain, the even response up the fretboard, and the full-access cutaway. I took the P8E to a round-robin-style singer-songwriter circle, and here too, the P8E shined, providing solid accompaniment for both heavy strummers and bare-fingered pattern-picking performers.

### PLUGGED-IN POWERHOUSE

The Parker is clearly a guitar designed for live sound, and the P8E delivers on this front. The P8E sports active Fishman electronics consisting of a top-mounted, hum-canceling magnetic (derived from the company's Rare Earth series), an Acoustic Matrix undersaddle element, and side-mounted Blend, Bass, and Treble controls, all of which feature center detents. Output is via either a standard 1/4-inch jack, a balanced XLR jack, or

both. Plugging into an AER Domino via XLR, with all knobs at center for a 50/50 blend of magnetic and undersaddle pickups, I was treated to a warm, throaty, and very strong acoustic sound, with cavernous lows supporting the Parker's clear, string-oriented mids and top end. Though the tone controls offer generous boost and cut, I preferred to simply leave them flat. Plugged straight into a club's Mackie mixer and Mackie SRM450 speaker combination, the resulting tone was similarly bold and pleasing.

### THE WRAP

With a fast-playing, all-access neck, balanced voice, and custom electronics, the Parker P8E will likely be a hit with any player who wants to combine acoustic tone with near-electric playability. Its looks, quality, and versatility make it a natural for folks with an electric background who are crossing over into their first gigging acoustic, and players of all types who are drawn to the instrument's bold stage persona will likely be pleasantly surprised by the P8E's demure, unplugged manner back home on the couch.

AG

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