

Natural Progression

ORGANIC RETURNS WITH A SPECIALLY-BUILT CLASSIC MODEL TO RAISE **ROB SANDALL'S** EYEBROWS AND MAKE ONE PRIZE WINNER VERY HAPPY INDEED

GBINFO



ORGANIC CLASSIC LGS2006
 PRICE: £2000
 BUILT IN: UK
 SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25 inches)
 NUT WIDTH: 43mm (1.69 inches)
 STRING SPACING AT NUT: 36mm (1.41 inches)
 BODY: African paduak, flame maple top
 NECK: African paduak
 FINGERBOARD: Macassar ebony
 RADIUS: 406mm (16 inches)
 FRETS: 22 Dunlop medium frets
 PICKUPS: 2 x Organic BKP humbuckers
 CONTROLS: 1 x volume, 1 x tone with push-pull coil tap, 3-way selector
 BRIDGE: Gold-plated Schaller tune-o-matic-style
 STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE: 52mm (2 inches)
 MACHINEREADS: Gold-plated Schaller locking tuners
 WEIGHT: 3.4kg (7.5 lbs)
 CASE: Moulded hard case included
 FINISHES: Custom ordered - see website
 LEFT HANDERS: Yes
 CONTACT: Organic Guitars
 PHONE: 01354 652231
 WEB: www.organicguitars.co.uk

... This review has a little history to it; we've spent the last three issues following this guitar's design, construction and finishing. We've seen Peterborough-based luthier Duncan Wales turn blocks of unassuming wood into the beauty you can see here, which was offered up as a must-have prize at this year's London Guitar Show 2006.

We first covered the Classic and Standard models back in issue 45, both of which were given glowing appraisals, and although this particular guitar may be of a one-off number, it's representative of the higher-priced work of which Organic Guitars is capable. Due to our incredible generosity, we also decided that, as we're giving this beauty away, we'd better check it over for the winner, just in case.

BODY & NECK

Off the bat, it's clear that the body shape is influenced in no small part by the much-loved Warwick Bass school of design. Duncan, in fact, freely admits being one of the much-lovers, and although the deliberate lack of edges anywhere on the body or headstock and distinctive, elongated treble horn pay a little homage, it's by no means a clumsy rip off. Besides, in comparison with every Jones and his Doberman building Fender and Gibson shapes, it's a refreshing change

to see a builder referencing something else. The curves of this guitar really make it; holding it in your hands is an experience smoother than a marble statue of Sean Connery in his heyday. It really does feel 'organic' - it's almost ironic that a luthier so keen to make use of CAD and CNC technology (see boxout on page 12) can produce such a shockingly natural-feeling guitar.

Whether or not you've even heard of paduak, it's doubtful that you've seen it on many guitars. Xylophone builders treasure the striking wood (pun thoroughly intended), its natural resonance making it a first choice for keys. Indeed, Organic goes as far as tapping each intended piece with a hammer, to ensure that the whole guitar will have "a woody, natural tone, with plenty of sustain." It's not overly heavy either, and balances perfectly when played standing up.

Off the tree as it were, it's close to a bright orange in colour, but those suddenly put in mind of David Dickinson-coloured classical guitars needn't worry. Gradually, the wood naturally matures to a deep reddy brown - it's already become noticeably darker since we saw it last.

Speaking of which, the maple cap is nothing short of stunning, the tobacco-stained, tiger-stripe effect giving this guitar a sleek and classy look. The whole body has been oiled rather than gloss-finished, and is all the better for it - you can feel the



KNUCKLEBUCKER GLORY

MILLS A BOONE

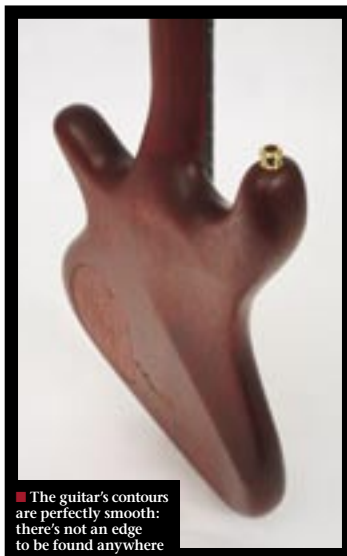
■ **Tim Mills of Bare Knuckle Pickups wound the Organic BKP to particularly specific requirements. Here's what the fuss is all about.**

"Guitar tone is 70 per cent the player, 10 per cent woods and construction, 10 per cent amp and speaker and 10 per cent pickups," says Tim. "But I still stand by the fact that pickups dictate the tone.

"We went with my favourite Alnico IV magnet, which has a vintage output, although we went with a more hot vintage vibe. They produce an organic tone, which seemed apt. It has



a bite to it with a healthy amount of power, more than from a stock PAF-style unit. Imagine vintage tone, but with more power and girth – I tried to keep a balance to allow the pickups and guitar to interact with the overall tone."



■ The guitar's contours are perfectly smooth: there's not an edge to be found anywhere



■ The strings travel through golden ferrules onto a tune-o-matic-style bridge

wood underneath your hands, and the lack of paint shows off the seamless joint of maple top and paduak body. In that respect, it's a quality assurance, too: you can see every grain and knot in the wood, and there's a distinct sense that Organic has nothing to hide in terms of construction.

Continuing the theme of resonance and sustain, the set neck is paduak too, topped with a Macassar ebony fingerboard. It's a comfortable, rounded C-shape, that some may find a little too compact, but certainly the oil finish and perfectly smooth medium frets feel great under your fingers. The neck joint has been built with as little glue involved as possible – indeed, the joint itself is firm enough to securely hold the neck without any, even when tuned to pitch (!) – which makes for maximum sustain. The frets are mirror polished, that's to say levelled, then finished with progressively more fine sandpaper, then polished out with a series of progressively softer compounds. It's laborious but oh-so worth it – bends almost run away from you.

The 'stock is finished identically to the body, Organic going so far as to bookmatch the maple face plate, and even the truss rod cover is subject to a little creative flair.

Rather than the usual screws, it's held on by magnets, meaning quick and easy adjustments without carrying your toolkit around – a nice touch.

HARDWARE & PARTS

It's all very well crafting a custom body and neck for acoustic bliss, but if the hardware doesn't cut

the mustard then it doesn't matter jot. Fortunately, the LGS2006 isn't let down, the selection of gold hardware looking positively resplendent against the tobacco finish.

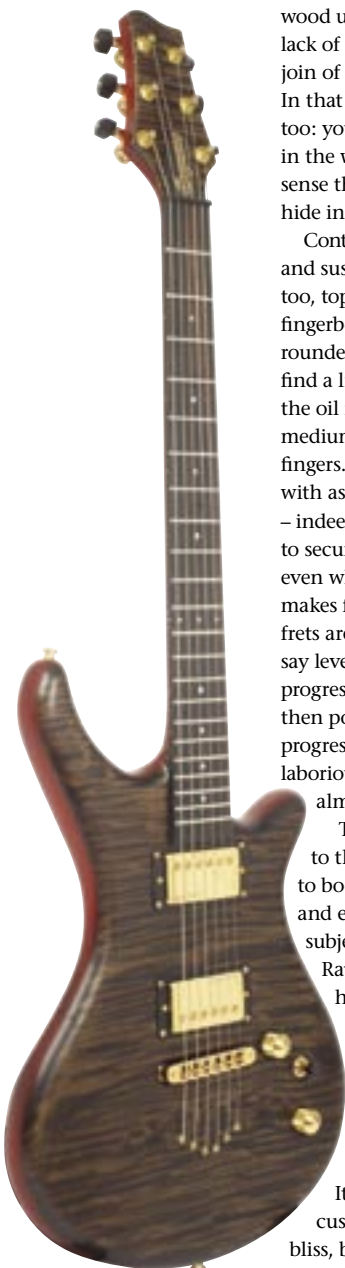
The Organic BKP pickups are custom wound by fast-rising UK brand Bare Knuckle Pickups (see boxout above), and are controlled by the standard fare master volume, master tone and three-way toggle controls. There's a push-pull on the tone pot, enabling a coil-split function for both pickups, but more on that later. The strings are anchored through the body with golden ferrules, onto a Schaller tune-o-matic-style bridge, while the same brand's locking tuners reside at the headstock. Being a hardtail, keeping things in tune shouldn't be

too tricky, but all the same, it's reassuring to have high-quality hardware to back it up.

Eventually, the back plate will be replaced with a brass cover, engraved with the London Guitar Show 2006 logos and the lucky winner's name. Duncan even does that himself, but to be honest, the wooden temporary plate is almost too nice to do away with, keeping everything tidily tucked away with a touch of class. The winner has both.

SOUNDS

Strummed acoustically, it's apparent quite how much resonance the body and neck of the LGS2006 possess; you can feel the vibrations along the neck for a considerable time after a strum,



COOL AND DIGITAL

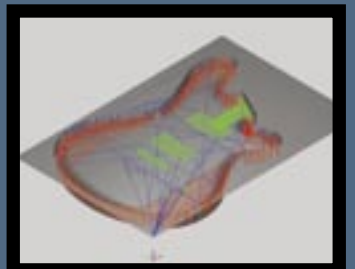
GUITAR DESIGN FOR 2006

■ **Designing a guitar – it's all about pencil, paper and a steady hand, right?**

Well, to a large number of luthiers that's certainly one way of looking at it.

Duncan, however, isn't going to waste his pencil collection, and instead makes cunning use of CAD – computer aided design – software to map out the model in its entirety. Once all the data has been set on his PC, Duncan can add textures to see what his creation will look like in advance, calculate where the greatest load, or pressure, will be across the neck, and make sure all the measurements are correct before he even looks at a piece of wood.

Once he's satisfied, these measurements are sent to the CNC machine, which will cut the block to Duncan's requirements. It's a world away from primitive drawings, and an assurance that every guitar out of the Organic workshop has the same high-quality build.



DETAILS

ORGANIC GUITARS OFFERS UP A NATURAL, SUPERBLY BUILT PIECE



■ The magnetic truss rod cover is a nifty bonus to proceedings



■ There's a choice between standard strap buttons or Schaller straplocks



■ The backplate will eventually be replaced with a brass equivalent



GBOPINION

ORGANIC CLASSIC LGS2006

GOLD STARS

- ★ Oil finish looks great
- ★ Coil-tap a bonus
- ★ Unrivalled sustain
- ★ Lovely build quality

BLACK MARKS

- Extra care required with oil finish

IDEAL FOR...

Those players looking for woody looks and tones in a custom axe



■ The guitar's body shape means that the whole thing looks decidedly sleek

and the tone in general clearly benefits from Duncan's decision to forego the use of sound-stifling gloss lacquer. We can only use the 'Organic' analogy so many times, but there's a natural, woody vibe to proceedings, which bodes well for the plugged-in tone.

Indeed, putting this guitar through a Vox AC30 brings interesting results. Played clean, the neck pickup delivers a sing-song warmth, that does a great job of picking up the guitar's acoustic nuances – there's a sweet detail to the lows and mids, especially with the volume rolled off. Coil-tapped, this translates into a more-flighty tone, cutting through that little bit better than the humbucker wash, and perfect for jazzy interludes. The bridge pickup is a stronger, more insistent sound, although the tone loses a little

complexity when compared with the neck. It will handle rock and blues application extremely well, with a forthright rawk that will appeal to players who find the mid-light tones of standard Strats and Teles just a little too polite. There's a real bark to the tone, that remains articulate under the heavy gain of a more rock-oriented amp, which will be good news for progressive and modern jazz tones. The coil-tapped interpretation of the tone is a good foil for the throaty roar, adding a clearer definition to the mids and high-end.

There's a lot of scope here for just about any genre, assuming it's the humbucker tone that you're after, and the coil tap is a much-appreciated bonus for refining your sounds as you see fit.

GBCONCLUSION

NATURAL GUITAR TONES AND TOP-NOTCH CONSTRUCTION

■ Even at high prices, there can be a tendency in the custom-guitar world to almost try too hard, in a construction sense. Garish hardware, thicker-than-thick lacquer and gaudy finishes can often over-compensate for a relatively unknown name on the headstock.

It's lovely, then, to see a guitar built in celebration of everything that makes them good. Carefully chosen woods tonally unaffected by lacquer, top-notch hardware that's both practical and great looking, and tones that do justice to the construction values and essence of the axe. Of course, not everything on offer here will be to everyone's taste, but that's the beauty of the custom-built guitar. The Organic Classic LGS2006 is an indication of just how well Duncan Wales can build guitars – beautiful.

Don't miss next month's issue, when the lucky winner will be revealed. GB

GBRATINGS

ORGANIC CLASSIC LGS2006

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