

**GBINFO**

**ORGANIC STANDARD**

**PRICE:** £1200

**BUILT IN:** UK

**SCALE LENGTH:** 635mm  
(25 inches)

**NUT WIDTH:** 43mm  
(1.69-inch)

**BODY:** African paduak

**NECK:** African paduak

**FINGERBOARD:** Macassar  
ebony

**FRETS:** 22 medium

**PICKUPS:** Seymour Duncan  
SH2 Jazz humbucker  
(neck), Seymour Duncan  
Bridge SH11 Custom  
Custom (bridge)

**CONTROLS:** Master volume  
with push/pull coil tap for  
neck pickup, master tone  
with push/pull coil tap for  
bridge pickup. 3-way  
selector switch

**BRIDGE:** Schaller Nashville  
tune-o-matic style

**MACHINEHEADS:** Schaller  
M6 mini-chrome

**FINISHES:** Natural

**CASE:** Hard shell case  
included

**LEFT HANDERS:** Yes, no  
additional cost

**CONTACT:** Organic Guitars

**PHONE:** 07985 525321

**WEB:**

[www.organicguitars.co.uk](http://www.organicguitars.co.uk)

# CELL 'ARD

GB GETS AN EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK AT ORGANIC GUITARS, AN EXCITING NEW BRITISH COMPANY THAT'S ALREADY CREATING A BUZZ. **TIM SLATER** PLAYS THE NEW ORGANIC CLASSIC AND STANDARD

**...** **Guitar building is an art that continues to attract people from all walks of life. Most are inevitably guitarists, some are not, yet there is something about this most uncertain of careers that some people find irresistible. We've regularly reviewed and reported on examples of the private luthier's art in GB, and we've always enjoyed seeing how people tackle the challenge of building something forged in the flame of their own imaginations. Admittedly, not everybody gets it completely right and some hand-built guitars don't quite make the grade, but very occasionally somebody comes along who is obviously gifted with above-average talent.**

Organic guitars have already made an impact on the general public thanks to an amazing debut at the 2004 British Music Fair in Birmingham, where the fledgling company sold every guitar on their stand. A flash in the pan? Possibly, but this unprecedented success, without any previous support from magazines, is maintained by a steady flow of orders and indeed the Organic Classic featured in this review was already sold. Its patient owner kindly allowed us to borrow it before taking delivery,

and with due acknowledgement of that favour we take our first detailed look at Organic guitars.

## BODIES & NECKS

To help keep things simple the Organic range is based around three core instruments. The first two as reviewed here are the Standard and Classic, both built using bodies cut from CNC-machined blanks that are then hand finished and assembled in the workshop. The Organic Custom, on the other hand, is entirely hand built from start to finish and has the same basic body shape as the Standard and Classic models, but details such as timber, number of frets and even the scale length can all be individually tailored to customers' spec.

The Organic Standard and Classic are both beautiful-looking guitars with bodies made from a single piece of paduak, an African timber that has an attractive orange hue and a very distinctive grain with open pores that are left unfilled to enhance the guitar's natural appearance. The oil and wax used to finish both guitars feels smooth to the touch; it's very natural in fact, and this creates an overall vibe that feels so, well, organic. Every point where the guitar bodies make contact with your body is smooth and rounded, providing an incredible amount of comfort to the point where you feel reluctant to stop playing and put the guitar down. →

## GBINFO

### ORGANIC CLASSIC

PRICE:	£1600
BUILT IN:	UK
SCALE LENGTH:	635mm (25 inches)
NUT WIDTH:	43mm (1.69-inch)
BODY:	African paduak & 5A quilted or optional flamed maple top
NECK:	African paduak
FINGERBOARD:	Macassar ebony
FRETS:	22 medium
PICKUPS:	Seymour Duncan SH2 Jazz humbucker (neck), Seymour Duncan Bridge SH4 JB Jeff Beck (Bridge)
CONTROLS:	Master volume with push/pull coil tap for neck pickup, master tone with push/pull coil tap for bridge pickup. 3-way selector switch. Macassar ebony volume & control knobs +£20 extra
BRIDGE:	Schaller Nashville tune-o-matic style (Black customer option, +£30 extra including machineheads)
MACHINEHEADS:	Schaller M6 mini-chrome (Macassar ebony buttons +£30)
FINISHES:	Vintage honey, black cherry, antique tobacco, deep violet, Natural, Tru-Oil on top, Danish Oil on back and neck
CASE:	Hard Case included
LEFT HANDERS:	Yes, no additional cost
CONTACT:	Organic Guitars
PHONE:	07985 525321
WEB:	www.organicguitars.co.uk

## LEFTIES

NO PROBLEM, MATE

■ Southpaw axe-slingers no longer need to chew their knuckles in frustration at not being able to find or afford a decent left-handed guitar.

When forced to pay premium prices for what are often very average Far Eastern guitars and with USA left-handers usually as rare and affordable as solid gold hen's teeth, then one of these relatively affordable and high-spec custom-made jobbies might be just the ticket.

Please note, this is a flipped picture, not a pukka LH model – it at least gives you the idea!



A traditional ribcage contour is enhanced with an unusual scoop on the guitar's belly, leaving a shallow concave profile that recalls that of Warwick basses. This resemblance isn't entirely coincidental, however; Organic boss Duncan Wales is a bass-player and his admitted fondness for Warwick's designs is evident in the shape of his six-strings' distinctive downward-pointing lower horn.

The Classic's un-bound quilted maple top looks fabulous against the paduak body, and the clean, seamless contrast between the two timbers looks more like a timeless piece of furniture than a guitar. If the natural wood look isn't for you, then you might want to check out an Organic Classic with a maple top finished in translucent colours; we've seen a few and quite simply, they are stunning.

Both guitars have glued-in necks made from a single piece of paduak and the neck joint

itself is an interesting example of how Duncan applies his engineering

background to try and improve upon what is otherwise still a traditional way of fitting a neck to a guitar's body. Virtually every conventional glued guitar neck-joint features the facing edges square-on to each other, but Duncan has opted for a diagonal angle that joins the neck and body at the 18th fret on the bass-side and the 20th fret on the treble side. When asked why, Duncan draws a diagram on his workbench to help explain the simple physics behind this design.

"The diagonal neck joint is longer and has a larger surface area than a standard neck joint, so there is more room on both two pieces of wood to allow more glue for a stronger neck joint; it's as simple as that."

The seamless join also has an ultra-slim neck heel that resembles a through-neck design until a closer look reveals a small stump protruding from the body where it joins the main

neck shaft. There are a few more designer touches too, including a very neat magnetic truss-rod cover (no more fiddling about with a screwdriver) and all of the hardware including the machineheads, bridge and controls fits into recessed pockets.

The Standard and Classic both have Macassar ebony fingerboards that look and feel more like high-quality rosewood than the tightly grained jet-black ebony more usually encountered on many high-end electric guitars, and the low-profile medium Dunlop frets are expertly fitted and dressed. The fret ends were a little prominent but this is a result of some slight (and perfectly normal) shrinkage around the edges of the fretboard caused by the relatively fresh wood settling into its new role as a guitar neck instead of a tree.

New guitars usually require a second setup once they have begun to settle and both guitars featured in this review were returned to Organic for a final setup and check by Duncan, before heading off to begin a new life with their new owners.

## HARDWARE &amp; PARTS

You can order your own Organic guitar with pretty much whatever type of hardware you desire, but the decision to use high-quality and ever-dependable Schaller hardware and Seymour Duncan pickups as a basis for the range is a sensible one. The Standard has chrome-plated Schaller M6 tuners and a Schaller Nashville fixed bridge, with the Classic

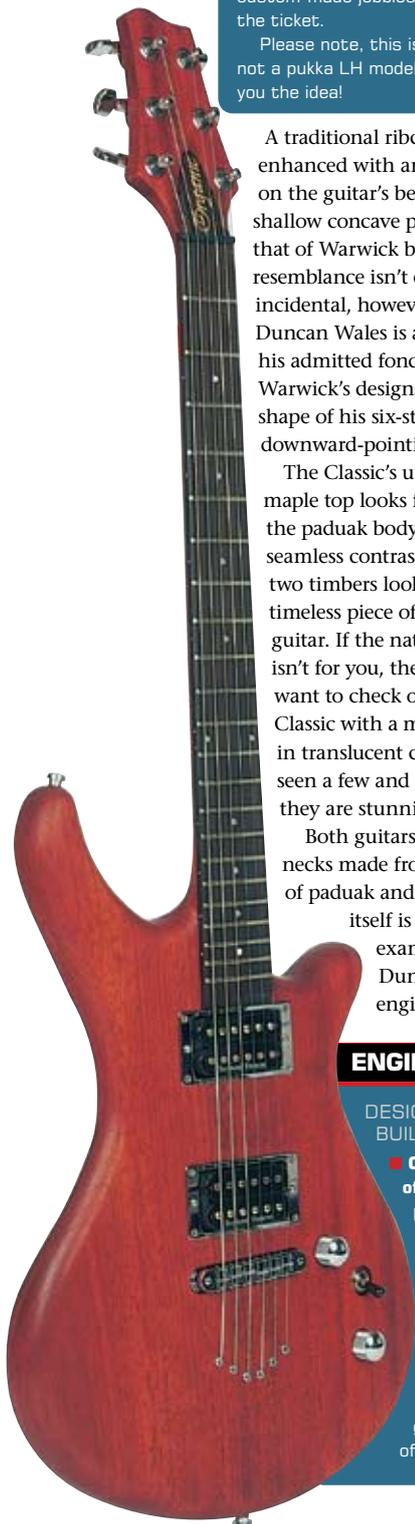
"THE CLASSIC'S UN-BOUND QUILTED MAPLE TOP LOOKS FABULOUS HERE AGAINST THE PADUAK BODY"

## ENGINEERING PERFECTION

DESIGNED BY COMPUTER,  
BUILT BY A MASTER

■ Organic guitars are designed using state-of-the-art 3D CAD computer technology programmed by Duncan Wales.

A graduate of the well-regarded Totnes School of Guitar making, Duncan is also a design engineer by profession who combines his technical abilities with his guitar-building skills to realise his ideas. The sophisticated CAD technology that Duncan uses might seem like an unusual or even gimmicky way to design a new guitar, but when you're able to use this kind of technology properly, then why not?



**GBOPINION**

**ORGANIC STANDARD**

**GOLD STARS**

- ★ Superb sounds
- ★ Competitive price
- ★ One-on-one service

**BLACK MARKS**

● Setup on our review model needed correcting due to relative newness of the timber but this was a minor point, and easily corrected at the Organic workshop

**IDEAL FOR...**

A player who wants usable and typical humbucker tones allied to genuinely good coil-tapped sounds that, for once, really contribute to the guitar's all-round tonal range and versatility



sharing a similar line-up, the difference being that the Classic also has ebony tuner buttons to complement the Macassar ebony control knobs. These items were specially requested by the customer along with the black hardware which is another cool-looking alternative to the chrome bridge and machineheads that are otherwise standard specification on all Organic guitars.

Both guitars use slightly different, but tried and tested combinations of Seymour Duncan pickups: the Standard features Duncan Wales' personal choice of pickups which is an SH2 Jazz model humbucker in the neck position alongside a Custom

Classic bridge humbucker. The Classic is equipped with Seymour Duncan's personal favourite choice of pickups, a Jazz neck humbucker residing snugly beside the infamous SH4 JB humbucker at the bridge.

Push/pull coil pots on the master volume and tone controls coil-tap the bridge and neck humbuckers, respectively for brighter single-coil-type tones, with pickup selection taken care of by a conventional three-way selector switch. This package really impresses on two major counts: its simplicity and flexibility. Both create a powerful impression that you are sitting on a potential gold mine of potentially killer tones and neither guitar disappoints when it comes to the crunch.

**SOUNDS**

You can always tell a good electric guitar by a couple of different factors, not the least of which is the quality of the acoustic tone. The natural wood body, virtually free as it is from layer-upon-layer of suffocating lacquer, vibrates like a goodie bag at an Ann Summers party, and both guitars have a genuinely powerful and rich acoustic voice that resonates with a very impressive amount of sustain.



■ The African paduak bodies show off a very distinctive grain with attractive open pores

**"BOTH HAVE A POWERFUL AND RICH ACOUSTIC VOICE THAT RESONATES WITH IMPRESSIVE SUSTAIN"**

Plugged into an old Fender Pro Reverb amp with a Keeley modified TS 808 Tube Screamer overdrive pedal to help goose-up the front end, the Standard has a bold authoritative voice with a sweet-sounding edge. The



■ Both guitars are made from a single piece of paduak, giving an organic vibe

Organic Standard's bridge pickup sounds more finely drawn than a typical Gibson Les Paul, while lacking none of the typical humbucker's dark raunchy flavour. The neck pickup is a real winner; clean tones sound absolutely stunning with masses of detail and an impressive woody-sounding warmth that really shines through when the tone control is backed off to slightly soften the attack. The coil-tapped tones tend to vary but for our money we love the tapped neck Jazz humbucker tone that chirps merrily like a steroid-enhanced Strat; closely followed by both pickups on together with the neck humbucker only tapped. This is a nice breezy tone that cuts through a fraction better than the full-blooded 'buckers without sounding too thin or nasally.

The Organic Classic shares a similar sonic profile to its sister, with the Jeff Beck humbucker's slightly hotter output and pronounced midrange grunt making the most notable difference. Personally speaking, I've had mixed results from the JB humbucker over the years, finding

**DETAILS**

PUT SIMPLY:  
STUNNING.  
A BRIGHT FUTURE  
SURELY BECKONS  
FOR ORGANIC



■ It's magnetic. How cool is that?



■ Schaller Nashville tune-o-matic-style bridge



■ Ebony tuner buttons feel, yep, organic



■ You may order your own Organic guitar with your preferred choice of hardware

**GBOPINION**

**ORGANIC CLASSIC**

**GOLD STARS**

- ★ Cool good looks
- ★ Excellent and genuinely great tones
- ★ Lefties no extra charge

**BLACK MARKS**

- Feisty Jeff Beck humbucker maybe a bit fruity for classic rock players, but Organic will fit whatever pickups you want

**IDEAL FOR...**

Serious players who enjoy owning something different and a bit exclusive compared with an off-the-peg guitar

it perfect when nothing less than in-ner-face molten steel will suffice, but this pickup is a bit of a handful on general purpose melodic rock or function-type gigs. The Classic still manages to cut it insofar as versatility goes and the coil-tap thankfully helps to control some of the JB's somewhat

less compromising characteristics, not forgetting that the mellower Jazz neck pickup is there to help rescue you if things get a bit out of control.

Tonally speaking both guitars cover a lot of ground, with the Standard just edging the Classic on the grounds that it is marginally less aggressive-sounding and probably more suited to a more all-round player than the Classic model, which arguably feels more focused towards a full-on hard rock player.

**GBCONCLUSION**

■ Both guitars are built to an extremely high standard and we are genuinely and deeply impressed. There is something very engaging about these Organic guitars that makes it very difficult to put them down once you start playing; despite the fact that the Standard particularly was ready for a second fettling in the workshop to ready it for the heat of battle.

These are both great guitars that offer a wealth of usable and top-quality tones within a package that is simple, neatly engineered and yet still original and dripping with the exclusivity and kudos that only a custom-built guitar can provide. The UK has been waiting a long time for an exciting new builder with the potential to offer a credible alternative to the major brands, and although Organic guitars' resources are currently limited to low-volume production, who knows what the future might bring for this very talented newcomer. **GB**

**GBRATINGS**

**ORGANIC STANDARD**

BODY & NECK	★★★★☆
HARDWARE & PARTS	★★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★☆
SOUND	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
<b>GBVERDICT</b>	★★★★☆

**GBRATINGS**

**ORGANIC CLASSIC**

BODY & NECK	★★★★★
HARDWARE & PARTS	★★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★★
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VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
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