

Tom Anderson Guitarworks
Hollow Cobra Review

Guitar The Magazine You Can Play™
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Tom Anderson Hollow Cobra

Charming Snake

By Chris O'Byrne

The last time we checked out an Anderson (Classic model, DEC/02), we gushed about its fine craftsmanship, superb playability, and limitless tonal options; this time won't be much different, as Mr. Anderson has churned out another winner in the Hollow Cobra. As I eased the axe out of its plush, form-fitting case and gave it a once-over, I noticed the inscription on the neck plate: *Made in California 5-27-03*. And after playing a few notes, I realized that this guitar will be best when played every day after this date.

“The Cobra’s neck is the apotheosis of playability.”

SVELTE IN YOUR HANDS

This is the kind of guitar you can unplug, forget to unstrap, then walk around and forget it's still on your shoulder. Besides its featherweight chambered mahogany body, the well-balanced Cobra molds perfectly to *your* body, thanks to its slightly exaggerated contours; Anderson's "Drop Top" technology, which allows them to bend the 3/16" flame-maple top over the tonewood back, makes for an ultra-comfy forearm contour, while the deeply beveled back hugs your side snugly.

With its satin-finished mahogany back and flawless African Rosewood fretboard, the edges of which are evenly rounded, the Cobra's neck is the apotheosis of playability. Chords and lines alike play like Parkay, and the 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ " scale lends a soft, bend-friendly feel while retaining snap and enhancing mid-range punch. The stout '62 Cobra neck provides ample surface area for digging in, and yet doesn't feel bulky. Add to all this the fully dressed, traditionally seated "heavy" stainless steel frets, as well as the impeccable intonation of the Buzz Feiten tuning system, and you're pretty much spoiled rotten.

A COBRA'S COILS

Strumming the Cobra acoustically produced bright, ringing overtones and warm sustain that only hinted at the guitar's electric potential. The single-coil soapbar-style pickups not only look cool against the natural binding but also boast gobs of tone; the P1 in the neck position yielded rich, round tones, while the bridge-position P3 featured a gruff, throaty voice (see lick below). The P3 is slightly boosted, making for a seamless sonic transition when switching pickups. Tone buffs will dig the straightforward controls and smoothly rotating knobs, as well as the volume knob's close proximity to the strings, which facilitates swelling.

HIDDEN TWIN

Our Hollow Cobra's fixed bridge housed the optional Fishman Powerbridge piezo pickup system; operated only by footswitch—our review model came with the Fishman Powerblend pedal—this system can either ply acoustic tones to those of the P1 and P3 or generate solely plugged-in acoustic sounds. Ditch the footswitch, and the only thing that gives away the piezo system is the word "Fishman" on the side of the bridge.

The only thing I'd change is the arctic blue finish, as it clashes with half my wardrobe. Fortunately, since Anderson is basically a custom shop, there are about 100 other finishes available—all applied through an ultra-violet light curing process that lets tone breathe. Of course, with custom shop care comes a custom shop price tag, but if you're looking for a refreshing take on a classic shape, the Hollow Cobra delivers plenty of bite for your buck.

CONTACT Tom Anderson Guitarworks, 805-498-1747, andersonguitars.com



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GEAR BOX **FEATURES** **WOODS** Flame-maple top with mahogany back **FRETBOARD** Rosewood with 22 stainless steel frets, 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ " scale length, 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ " nut width **CONTROLS** Volume, tone, 3-way switch **PICKUPS** Anderson P1 and P3 **TUNERS** Split shaft Gotoh **FINISHES** Arctic Blue and nearly 100 others (see Web site) **PRICE** \$3,310