

FIRST PLAY



DANELECTRO '66T
£1,049

WHAT IS IT? Dano's Mosrite tribute with added Wilkinson vibrato



DANELECTRO '59XT
£649

WHAT IS IT? A monumentally pimped version of Jimmy Page's iconic budget guitar

Blood Brothers

The retro specialists hit Jimmy Page's and Johnny Ramone's favoured squeezes with a double whammy of old-school cool and modern performance

Words Ed Mitchell **Photography** Olly Curtis

Back in October 2017 we ran a review of the original Danelectro '66. A hardtail reboot of the cult mid-60s Mosrite Combo model, the semi-hollow '66 was a radical move from a brand that is best known for picking clean the bones of its own back catalogue. Aside from the lipstick-tube bridge pickup, aluminium top nut, not to mention the logo on the headstock, the '66 is not your classic Dano. It is, however, very bloody good, so word of a new variant was met with enthusiasm 'round these parts.

At first glance, the new '66T has the cool Johnny Ramone vibe of its predecessor, albeit with a Wilkinson vibrato chiselled into its top. Like the '66, this new model features a semi-hollow alder body with plenty of eye-candy including a f-hole, cream binding and some beautiful German carving around the edges. The bolt-on maple neck carries a







1. As the beautifully bound f-hole suggests, the '66T is semi-solid. Like the '59XT, this guitar features a Wilkinson vibrato with ultra-stable tuning

2. While we like the retro Mosrite-style knobs, they make it hard to activate the coil split. You'll need a decent size nail for the job



355mm (14in) radius rosewood fingerboard, 22 medium frets and vintage Kluson-style tuners. The '66T also comes with its older brother's pickups and wiring loom. You get a lipstick-tubed humbucker in the bridge position and a fat-looking Mosrite single coil at the neck. While both pups are wired through a master volume, master tone and a three-way pickup toggle switch, the bridge 'bucker can also be split via a pull/push switch on the aforementioned tone pot.

Okay, the apple didn't fall that far from the family tree when the '66T was in development, but there are a couple of important changes that you might not pick up on right away. Take a closer look and you'll see that the '66T doesn't possess its predecessor's zero fret or the classic Dano aluminium top nut. Both of these tweaks, the slippery graphite nut in particular, are an obvious attempt to reduce string drag and allow the Wilkinson vibrato to return to pitch.

But the '66 isn't the only Dano to get a new sibling in 2018. The brand's most iconic guitar, the DC59, is now available with pretty much identical specs to the '66T.





3. Both guitars apply an iconic smear of Dano lipstick to your signal chain via a splittable double-tube bridge 'bucker...

You'll know the DC59 best as the doppelganger of the Badass-bridged 'Coke-bottle headstock' guitar brandished by Jimmy Page with Led Zeppelin. Our new '59XT model casts the same shadow as Jimmy's guitar, but here you get the same Wilkinson whammy, slippery nut and electronics featured on the '66T.

The '59XT is obviously way more 'Dano' than the '66T. In its standard DC59 form, it's a perfect little guitar. Back in the 50s, Dano founder Nathan Daniel turned cheap materials into tonal gold when he jammed pickup gubbins into lipstick tubes and fashioned bodies out of the kind of stuff people were using to remodel kitchens. Chaps such as Jimmy Page, proto-punk Link Wray, Eric Clapton and even Jimi

The '59XT has the DNA of those original 50s guitars, yet it carries more weight than we'd expect



4. While the '59XT comes with 21 medium frets, the '66T goes one better. Both models share a slim C profile neck and flat 355mm (14") fingerboards

Hendrix availed themselves of Mr Daniels' wares and an affordable icon was born. The '59XT has the DNA of those original 50s guitars, yet it does carry more weight than we expect from a double-cut Dano. On the scales, it's closer to the heft of an alder-body Telecaster. We gather the extra poundage is the result of substantial centre-block that offers the support required by the Wilkinson WVS50 IIK vibrato.

Sounds & Feel

The '59XT shares the same slim C neck profile with the '66T. Although it has one less fret to play with, the '59XT makes up the numbers with an extra half inch in its scale length. It's worth noting Dano cuts its guitars with a 355mm (14in) fingerboard radius. That puts these things in superstrat territory with a profile that's a lot flatter than a Strat or Les Paul. The upside is you benefit from a super-low action. Both these guitars have the kind of string height only a particularly flexible aphid could limbo under, yet there's no choking or buzzing to put you off. The downside to the flatter radius is that it's harder to dig in when



5. The wide double cutaway design permits very good upper-fret access

6. The angled P-90 style pickup in the 59XT's neck position adds sonic clout and versatility to the guitar's tonal equation

7. Dano has spec'd these new models with graphite top nuts and vintage style nickel tuners. The '59XT has the classic 'Coke bottle' headstock



you're noodling above the twelfth fret. That might steer all you blues heads away from these guitars, but the tone on offer will reward your perseverance.

Tonally, a Dano sits somewhere between a Telecaster and a Rickenbacker 330. Any way you slice that, you get bags of sparkle and presence that responds beautifully to compression and light overdrive, particularly on the coil-split setting. As we discovered on the old '66, the knobs are fiddly, so engaging the coil split on both new Danos takes the edge of a pick or a fingernail. It's worth the effort. You get a great Tele-like twang with the bonus of the springy vibrato.

Running the 'bucker on full power allows both guitars to find a classic rock or even metal voice. Add in the warmth that the neck P-90 brings in and you've got a fantastic tonal palette to work with.

Verdict

When we put the hardtail '66 through its paces it behaved itself impeccably, at least until it received a clip 'round the earhole when we spotted the price tag. A year on,





8

The versatility, build quality and tonal charms of the '66 make it worth the money

we've made our peace with the RRP's. Face it, you're going to get a deal on a '66T anyway and, besides, the versatility, build quality and tonal charms of this guitar make it worth the money. We'd still have liked a case though.

Of the two guitars, we actually prefer the more affordable '59XT. There's something about the looks of a double-cut electric guitar that makes you want to hang it low and beat the hell out of the strings. The '59XT has that appeal, yet it's packing enough equipment to cover any musical genre you're into this week.

If you still regard Dano guitars as retro, one-trick ponies, the '59XT and '66T's double whammy of rock-star good looks and modern performance will set you straight once and for all. **G**

8. While it's not quite as obvious as the '66T's carcass, the '59XT is also semi-solid with a centre-block to provide support for the pickups and bridge



DANELECTRO '66T

PRICE: £1,049

ORIGIN: Korea

TYPE: Reverse double-cutaway, semi-hollow electric

BODY: Alder with centre-block

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 622mm (24.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Graphite/42mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 355mm (14") radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: Wilkinson WVS50 IIK vibrato and vintage style tuners – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm (2.04")

ELECTRICS: 1 x Lipstick humbucker (bridge), 1 x P90-style single coil (neck), master volume and master tone with pull/push coil split and three-way pickup selector toggle switch

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.4/7.6

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: '66 hardtail in four colours (£999); '66BT Baritone in three colours (£1,099); '64 solid body with licensed Bigsby True Vibrato in four colours (£1,099)

LEFT HANDERS: No

FINISHES: 3 Tone Sunburst (as reviewed), Trans Blue, Trans Orange

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8/10

PROS You can't deny it's a looker but the '66T also has a great build quality, supreme playability and a surprisingly versatile tonal range

CONS Not a big fan of the fiddly control knobs and the lack of a case or gigbag



DANELECTRO '59XT

PRICE: £649

ORIGIN: Korea

TYPE: Twin-cutaway, semi-hollow electric guitar

BODY: Composite top and back with plywood centre-block

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

NUT/WIDTH: Graphite/42mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 355mm (14") radius

FRETS: 21, medium

HARDWARE: Nickel Wilkinson WVS50 IIK vibrato and vintage style tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm (2.04")

ELECTRICS: 1 x Lipstick humbucker (bridge), 1 x P90-style single coil (neck), master volume and master tone with push/pull coil split and three-way pickup selector toggle switch

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.2/7.2

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The hardtail '59X comes in four colours at £579

LEFT HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Gloss Black (as reviewed), Burgundy, Silver

8/10

PROS A superb Frankenstein job on an iconic guitar, the '59XT is a tonal Swiss Army knife with the added bonus of a great-quality whammy bar

CONS We do miss some of the classic Dano touches but the fiddly knobs are the only real bugbear