



Bare Knuckle Pickups **REBEL YELL**

Hand wound in the UK

BY BRETT PETRUSEK



Hand-Wound Pride

By now most of us are hip to this progressive little pickup company from the UK. Tim Mills, the owner of Bare Knuckle Pickups, prides himself on a simple concept: Wind the pickups by hand, and offer the highest-quality materials available. It's a concept that works, the proof of which is in the pickups. Bare Knuckle units are definitely designed to ensure that the player knows his or her hard-earned cash has been well spent. The signature-model Steve Stevens "Rebel Yell" humbuckers are positively bursting at the bobbins with tone and response. They're the culmination of many months' research, along with pride possessed by this small but formidable and thoroughly innovative company.

The Process

According to Mills, the Rebel Yell set was designed using Steve Stevens' previous Billy Idol tour as the testing environment, and five of Steve's Les Pauls as the vehicles for the design. It should also be noted that Steve spent many hours in the studio testing the pickups. A series of several prototypes then yielded the Rebel Yell, and the wait was worth it.

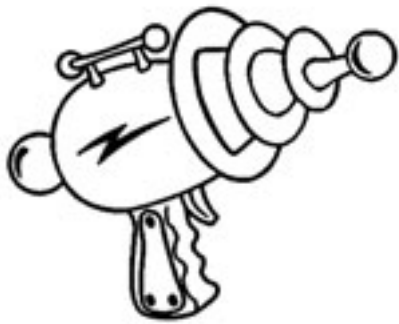
Presentation

The Rebel Yell set, like all Bare Knuckle offerings, comes complete with wiring diagrams, a fresh set of strings, a Bare Knuckles pick and a swanky BKP sticker to boot. This is another testament to the pride and care that Tim Mills has for his work. My set arrived with a purple-and-black zebra finish (after all, Stevens likes purple) that looks classy but is decidedly over-the-top. Of course, the pick-



ups are available in all the standard formats—with covers or exposed coils—but the signature etched “ray gun” covers are simply stunning... or shall I say...just plain cool as it gets!

Sonic Evaluation



For my test I wanted to stay true to form with the designers and review the Rebel Yell with a guitar similar to the models used in the design process. I chose a 2005 Les Paul Limited, which is basically a USA standard with an ebony fretboard. I fired up a Budda Superdrive 80 as the amplifier of choice. I ran the Rebel at a rehearsal to slam out a real-deal test. Needless to say, that test yielded more than pleasing results.

Over the period of time in which I have become familiar with a handful of Bare Knuckle models, I've noticed some inherent similarities. The Mule and Nailbomb models, for example, seem to have a “soul,” with sensitivity, liveliness and great natural overtones. This organic nature is largely due to the fact that they're scatter-wound by hand. The Rebel Yell is no exception. It's wound with 43-gauge plain enamel wire and are loaded with an Alnico V magnet. DC resistance is 14.5 in the bridge

pickup. The most immediate quality was the pronounced midrange punch on single notes. This works nicely to balance and enhance the timbre of the Les Paul itself. The rhythm tones are aggressive, but even with all that firepower the response is smooth and the tone is very open. The big win is how well they clean up when you roll down the volume and tone pots (meaning absolute bliss for the purist).

A Pickup That Covers It All

The Mule is based on the original Gibson PAF, and the Nailbomb resides on the aggressive high-output side with organic harmonic qualities. The Rebel Yell, however, gives you the best of both worlds. This pickup set is a tone connoisseur's dream, since it so easily covers a variety of styles and sounds. Make no mistake, though: It definitely isn't middle-of-the-road, and don't even think about calling it generic. No doubt this level of versatility was the goal, and it was certainly achieved. So, congratulations are in order. Bare Knuckle Pickups has produced yet another sonic masterpiece! For

sure, the Steve Stevens Rebel Yell set gets a Golden M. ■



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