



GEAR

Framus

DEVIN TOWNSEND STORMBENDER

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

DESIGNED TO DELIVER sounds that Townsend favors, which basically means ultra-heavy to Telecaster bright, the Stormbender is a beautifully made double-cutaway instrument with a high-gloss black finish that's offset by an eye-shaped section of exposed flamed-maple on the top. The body contours make it very comfortable to hold seated or standing, and the way the neck flows seamlessly into the body makes it super easy to reach the entire span of the ebony fretboard, where the only marker (aside from white side dots) is Townsend's "O" motif inlaid in pearl at the 12th position.

To enhance playability, the Stormbender features a Plek treatment, which is a computer-guided process that scans, levels and dresses the frets to a high level of accuracy. The extra-tall jumbo frets are highly polished and the ends trimmed so perfectly that you can barely feel them. The factory setup yielded low action with minimal fret buzz, and the Graph Tech nut was accurately notched and the corners rounded off. The Stormbender sounds in tune along the neck, and the Evertune bridge is a big factor on this guitar, as it basically self-adjusts to keep the strings solidly in tune. There are a few steps involved in getting an Evertune adjusted, and some of it can seem a little counterintuitive — like

when setting it to allow bends, or, conversely, adjusting it so that the strings simply can't be bent or squeezed out of tune, which can be handy when tracking rhythm parts.

Once you get comfortable with how this clever mechanism operates, it's very easy to be seduced by how well it keeps the strings in tune no matter how hard you play or the temperature or humidity level of the performing environment. I left this gloss-black guitar in the hot sun for more than an hour, and it was still perfectly in tune when I checked on it.

The Stormbender's other innovative feature is its Fishman Fluence pickups, which, coupled with a push-pull function on the tone control, can deliver beefy but well-detailed humbucker sounds or sparkling split-coil-like textures. Played cleanly though a Fender Deluxe Reverb, the Stormbender could sound convincingly like a single-coil guitar, with plenty of bridge-pickup bite, ringing neck tones and a great openness and presence in the dual-pickup

position. These tones also took on a cool grinding shimmer when given distortion via a pedal or the high-gain channels of a Mesa/Boogie Mark Five:25. Push the tone pot into humbucker mode and the sound gets louder and fatter, making it easy to get massive overdriven tones through the Boogie's Mark IV and Extreme modes. The humbucker setting also sounded great for dirty rhythm work or blues and jazz soloing with



SPECIFICATIONS

Devin Townsend Stormbender

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PRICE \$4,769 street, padded case included

NUT WIDTH 1.7" Graph Tech

NECK Maple, set

FRETBOARD Tigerstripe ebony, 24.5" scale, 12" radius

FRETS 22 extra-high jumbo nickel silver (Plek fretwork)

TUNERS Graph Tech Ratio Locking

BODY Mahogany with carved flame-maple top

BRIDGE Evertune

PICKUPS Fishman Fluence Devin Townsend Signature

CONTROLS Volume, tone (with push-pull switch for coil-split voicing), three-way selector

FACTORY STRINGS Cleartone Coated, .010–.046

WEIGHT 9.36 lbs

BUILT Germany

KUDOS Fabulous build. Great playability. Abundant tonal range. Evertune bridge provides rock-solid tuning stability

CONCERNS Wish the pickup selector wasn't a sharp-edged metal type

a less overdriven setting. In any pickup configuration, the tone control's voicing facilitates browner sounds but doesn't make things overly muddy when turned down.

For reasons unknown, the system in this installation uses a nine-volt battery instead of the rechargeable pack that Fishman offers, but at least the flip-open control cover on the back makes it easy to change the battery. The guitar cord plugs into a deep channel in the rear of the mahogany body, which is shaped so that the guitar stays upright when leaning against an amp or a wall.

By any measure, the Devin Townsend Stormbender is a unique and formidable guitar that stands out in the high-end range with its excellent playability, sounds and tuning stability. **B**