



STERLING BY MUSIC MAN ST. VINCENT GOLDIE

£1,099

A streamlined take on one of the most exciting guitar designs in recent memory

In 2016, Ernie Ball Music Man unveiled a guitar that was unlike anything else on the market – one so radical it's often cited as one of the most exciting guitar innovations of recent memory. That was the St. Vincent signature guitar, masterminded by Annie Clarke [aka St. Vincent herself] and debuting a new body shape. A more affordable version arrived from Sterling by Music Man soon after, but when an updated \$3,000-priced Goldie was released in 2021, guitarists began to dream once again. Enter the equally radical but comfortably more affordable Sterling by Music Man Goldie, which – at least on the surface – carries all the aesthetic flair and tonal appointments of its pricier sibling...

There are some tweaks worth stating for the record. Here, nyatoh has been used for the body rather than okoume, and the premium tremolo of the original has been swapped out for a standard alternative. A roasted maple neck returns, though it's topped with a rosewood, rather than an ebony, fingerboard. So, a fairly sizeable shake-up, but not one that has compromised the instrument's performance. In fact, those comparisons are almost unfair: this is a smashing guitar in its own right.

It's always strange getting to grips with an unfamiliar guitar shape, but the Goldie somehow doesn't feel unfamiliar. It's very narrow, but the contours make it a pleasing playing companion that doesn't feel brittle when balancing

on your knee. Owing to the nyatoh, the Goldie is light and has a nice snappiness. Pair that with an impeccably profiled neck and 12"–radius 'board, and you've got all the ingredients for an exceptional instrument.

It's a fun little thing to noodle with unplugged, but, of course, its potential is capped without an amplifier. Indeed, if the guitar itself feels like lightning in a bottle; that electricity is unleashed when plugged in. Gold foil pickups have been a bit of a 'thing' recently, but these are certainly here on merit. It becomes a different animal with a little fuzz, and anyone familiar with St. Vincent's repertoire – or gold foils in general – will be well prepared for this trio. The cleans are nice, too, and the five-way switch offers an array of chime-y and sludgy sounds, but this guitar really sings with a little overdrive.

As with all three-humbucker guitars, that pesky middle pickup can get in the way of strumming – and here, that 2/4 tuner design might not be for everyone – but that comes with the territory. To summarise: stick the EBMM logo on the headstock and without a close-up inspection we'd probably be fooled. A must-try for fans of guitars that push the boundaries of instrument design.

Matt Owen

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

1 BODY

In a market flooded with Strats and single-cuts, the Goldie continues the rise of St. Vincent's radical design. Its small, but not too small, and inherently comfortable to handle.

2 PICKUPS

Gold foils are a load of fun, so stick 'em in a guitar that's as zany as this and you've got yourself the makings of a seriously powerful and versatile tone machine.

3 FEEL

The spec sheet has been tamed somewhat, but this still feels like playing lightning in a bottle: the neck is a breeze to navigate, and transforms completely when plugged in.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Nyatoh
NECK: Roasted maple
SCALE LENGTH: 25.5"
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, custom St. Vincent inlays
FRETS: 22, narrow
PICKUPS: 3 x Gold Foil mini humbuckers
CONTROLS: 5-way pickup selector, master volume, master tone
HARDWARE: Vintage tremolo, locking tuners
FINISH: Cashmere, Velvetene
CONTACT: Sterling by Music Man, sterlingbymusicman.com

