

ACOUSTIC GUITAR

6

SONGS TO PLAY

FOO FIGHTERS

"What If I Do?"

LOVIN' SPOONFUL

"Daydream"

RALPH TOWNER

"Always By Your Side"

"Atholl Highlander's Jig"

"Broke and Hungry"

"Theo Brown"

Win a **MARTIN JOHN MAYER GUITAR!** p. 51

DAVE GROHL

THE POWER OF PLAYING ACOUSTIC

RALPH TOWNER

How to Compose with Improv

NEW "OLD" FLATTOPS

How Modern Makers Recreate Vintage Gems

LESSONS

Two-Handed Tapping
Transposing Made Easy
Build Extended Chord Voicings

Fingernails 101

GEAR REVIEWS

LARRIVÉE
Fingerstyle Beauty

LUNA
Affordable Flattop

LA PATRIE
Hybrid Nylon-String



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GUITAR MAKER

DIRECTORY p. 99

Luna Henna Paradise S Flattop

A cleanly built, eye-catching guitar with flexible electronics and body dimensions specifically designed for women and smaller players.

by Andrew DuBrock



Luna Guitars opened shop in 2005 with a mission: providing playable, well-proportioned guitars for women. But their broad array of acoustic and electric guitars have since found favor with male and female players from across the stylistic spectrum. Their latest model, the Henna Paradise S, features a solid spruce top with a spectacular laser-etched henna design (a cedar-topped Henna Paradise C is also available, for the same price), onboard electronics, narrow string spacing, and an easy-to-grab neck that's well proportioned for petite hands.

CLEAN CONSTRUCTION, ORNATE AESTHETICS

Many guitars with list prices of less than \$1,000 offer affordability at the cost of neat, precise construction, but the Paradise is clean as a whistle: I couldn't see any glue marks inside the guitar; the bracing and kerfing joints are airtight; the frets are filed evenly; the binding, back, and sides fit together seamlessly; and there are no visible blemishes. What really grabs your gaze, though, are the Paradise's beautiful lunar-phase fretboard inlays, crescent-moon headstock logo, and the unique henna figures (inspired by medieval Spanish art) that grace the Paradise's top, back, and headstock veneer. This guitar projects an alluring, mysterious visual vibe that few others can match.

BRIGHT TONES, COMPACT DESIGN

Smaller-bodied guitars generally work well for fingerstyle playing, and this guitar is no exception. Grabbing chords was a little tough for my large

hands, but a friend with smaller hands found that the fingerboard and neck fit "perfectly." I had no trouble coaxing pleasant trebles and robust midrange from the Paradise, whether I was navigating up at the tenth fret with jazz-chord voicings or playing first-position chords. However, I noticed that the guitar definitely focuses on mids—giving it a somewhat boxy, nasal quality—and has a softer low end than bigger-bodied guitars. Leaning harder into arpeggios and single-note fingerstyle runs, the Paradise yielded greater volume, again showing its fingerstyle practicality.

Grabbing a pick, I launched into single-note runs at the fifth fret, and the Paradise responded with rounder, more open tone than it did from fingers. Strumming lightly and picking out chord runs down near the nut yielded fine results, but when I really dug in with the pick, the tone became rather brash.

VERSATILE CONNECTIONS

The Paradise is built to be played onstage. Two outputs—a quarter-inch and a balanced XLR jack—yield lots

At a Glance

Luna Henna Paradise S

HIGHLIGHTS	Easy to play for smaller hands. Clean craftsmanship and fine detailing.
THE SPECS	Solid spruce top. Quilted-maple-laminate back and sides. Rosewood fretboard. Mahogany neck. Brushed-nickel die-cast tuners with ivoroid buttons. X-bracing pattern. Piezo undersaddle pickup. Prener-LC four-band preamp with built-in tuner. Quarter-inch and XLR outputs. Polyester matte finish. 25½-inch scale. 1⅞-inch nut. Two-inch spacing at bridge. Designed in the USA and UK. Made in China.
WATCH FOR	Midrange-heavy tones. Harsh response under aggressive attack.
THIS IS COOL	An XLR balanced output allows more options for plugging in.
BEST FOR	Diminutive or small-handed players who want an eye-catching guitar that's hard-wired for gigging.
PRICE	\$837.50 list/\$539 street.
MAKER	Luna Guitars: (813) 600-3920; www.lunaguitars.com .

of plug-in flexibility for open mics and other gigs. If you want power, try the XLR output. Through a Fishman Loudbox 100, I found the gain much greater and tone slightly brighter with the XLR than through the quarter-inch jack. The Prener-LC preamp's side-mounted control panel boasts an accurate, easy-to-use tuner with a large LCD display, colored LED guides, and two buttons—one for turning the tuner on (it conveniently defaults to chromatic mode), and one (labeled Note) that lets you manually select the exact pitch you wish to tune to. A four-band EQ (with bass, mid, treble, and presence sliders), a volume knob, and a low-battery LED round out the panel.

The EQ controls indicate a range of +12 dB—a nice range of tweakability. I found that boosting the bass and treble a few decibels while rolling off the mids alleviated some of the boxy qualities,

The Paradise S projects an alluring, mysterious visual vibe that few guitars can match.

getting me closer to the full bass and bright trebles I prefer. Through an AER Alpha combo amp—which admittedly sounds quite bright—I brought the presence control all the way down to -12 dB to avoid string noise, but through an Ultrasound AG-50DS2 I found the presence control added some nice detail when I boosted it a bit.

THE WRAP

As one might expect of a smaller-bodied ax, the Luna Henna Paradise S has a focused voice with lots of trebles and mids that work well for fingerstyle playing and light or moderate strumming, though some players may be disappointed by its somewhat simple sounds and timid acoustic response. However, it deserves kudos for versatile electronics and especially for its balanced XLR output, which you rarely see in this price range. Factor in dimensions that are excellent for players with diminutive frames and smaller hands, as well as attractive, one-of-a-kind cosmetics, and you've got a flashy, specialized ax. **AG**