

What becomes a legend most?

The Wayne Guitars Rock Legend offers hand-crafted excellence and some serious, stinging tones

Review by G-Man
Immedia Wire Service

The name Wayne Charvel will always have a place in the history of guitar building. As the first to paint wild colors and graphics on his guitar bodies (this was in the 1950s), and the first to equip his strat-style axes with humbuckers (around 1962), he changed the look and the sound of the industry, and greatly influenced the direction of most of the NF/NG (not Fender/not Gibson) companies. Come to think of it, he changed Fender and Gibson, too.

Heading his own organization, he built the Charvel line of guitars. A few of his company's designs got pretty far OUT THERE, while others remained more in the "super strat" mode. He built an enviable reputation for quality and tone. When an offer came to sell out to the Jackson company, he took it -- and watched from the sidelines as the Jackson-Charvel

company slowly beat his good name into the dust by constantly cutting quality year after year to the point where everyone except the most blatant noise-monger bands know to avoid anything with the Jackson-Charvel brand. Yes, custom Jacksons can be fine machines, and a vintage Charvel from the sixties can be a real prize, but picking up a current production line Jackson in a music store is most often a disappointment.

Prevented from using his last name on headstocks of guitars he creates, he has made some custom axes under the WRC label. (We have a WRC Neptune in the Immedia studio, an abalone-covered super strat that is as darkly rich sounding as it is visually bright).

But now, Charvel has decided to re-launch a semi-custom line of top quality guitars. Instead of his famous last name, he's using his other moniker. Thus we have Wayne Guitars, and the small but fiercely dedicated company is building axes with all the distinction and craftsmanship of his sixties-era Charvels.

The Rock Legend.

The first model sent to us was a Rock Legend, and it is a delight. In particular, the neck is as smooth and easy to play as anything on the market today. With high but comfortable frets, there is a true "vintage" feel to this neck despite the use of 22 instead of the classic 21 frets. They are immaculately dressed and are a delight when bending notes. Appointments are superb, from the excellent Gotoh tuners to the strap buttons (another Wayne Charvel creation, by the way).

Wayne Guitars is one of the first guitar manufacturers to use the new Eddie Van Halen D-tuna, a device invented by the axe icon to instantly

drop the low E string to D without un-clamping the strings. If you enjoy standard tuning, this is no big deal, but some people are thrilled with this device. Like it or ignore it, you're certain to fall in love with the sound as well as the feel of this guitar. The pickups are in a single/single/hum configuration, with a five-way switch to access them. Although there is no tone control (you always get it "all the way up, dude"), there are amazing differences between the five positions -- more so than on many guitars we've played. The graphics are eye-catching, the Floyd Rose trem is smooth as silk, and the Seymour Duncan pickups are excellent, but it's the superb neck that keeps bringing you back to this guitar.

Makes amps come alive.

We tested the Wayne Rock Legend plugged straight into several amps as well as playing through the marvelous Hughes & Kettner Tube Rotosphere, Tubeman and Tube Factor pedals that arrived at about the same time. Amps selected ranged from Marshall to Fender to Crate to Pignose, and even included the world's smallest amp, the cigarette pack-size Smokey. The Rock Legend seemed right at home with all of them, although the tonal variety was the widest with the new

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Crate DX-212 (with its digital modeling of many classic amp voicings). With the Tube Rotosphere in particular, the guitar was a shimmering tone monster of a machine.

The bottom line is: for modern efficiency and classic looks, this is a winner. And if every Wayne creation has a neck as magnificent as this, they will be in constant demand from this point on.

WAYNE ROCK LEGEND SPECIFICATIONS:

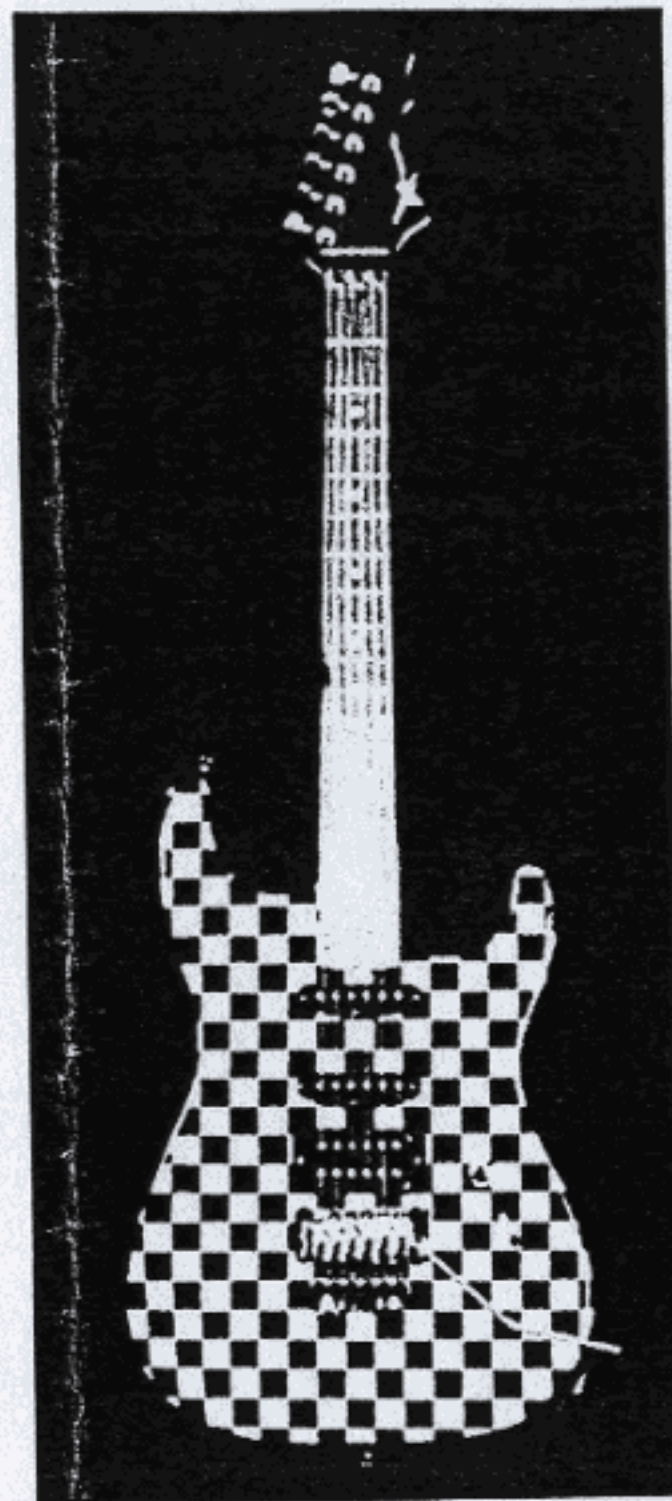
Body: "S"-style; premium grade alder wood.

Bridge: Floyd Rose trem in chrome; or non-trem brass bridge made to early '70s specs.

Bridge effect: D-tuna offered on Floyd Rose trem.

Neck: AAA birdseye maple.

Frets: 22 jumbo.



Fingerboard: Ebony, rosewood or maple.

Tuners: Gotoh.

Knobs: Dome in chrome or brass.

Nut Width: 1 3/4".

Controls: Volume; 5-way switch.

Strap buttons: Original strap buttons designed in the early 1970's by Wayne Charvel.

Hardware: Chrome or Brass/Gold.

Pickups: S/S/H, Seymour Duncan (with Jeff Beck bridge pickup).

Colors: Jet Black, Bright Red, Candy Red, Corvette Yellow, Orange, Dark Purple, Metallic Lavender, Lime Green, Hand Rubbed Oil, Rock White, or Cherry Sunburst.

Graphics: Flames, Bulls Eye, Snake Skin, Checker Board, Japanese Flag, Pinstripes, Leopard Skin, or Zebra Skin, Polka Dot. For other custom graphics, call or E-Mail for a quote.

List price: \$2,695 including case.

All guitars hand-made in the U.S.A.

www.wayneguitars.com

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