

# GuitarPlayer

## MJ Duke Deville Solidbody

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Made in the USA by a small shop using quality components, the Duke Deville hits most of the standard notes for modified T-style guitars with its subtly redrawn body shape, hotrodded neck pickup, and traditional two-knob control plate with 3-way switch. But mounted in the Wilkinson T-style bridge plate is a Seymour Duncan Five-Two Tele pickup that seeks to address the occasional imbalance between wound and plain strings by using alnico V magnets on the *E*, *A*, and *D* polepieces, and alnico II on the *G*, *B*, and *E* poles. In the neck slot, a Duncan Custom Mini Humbucker with a ceramic bar magnet and overwound coils adds girth to this somewhat underpowered Tele position.

Kluson-style Gotoh tuners on MJ's three-per-side headstock and Dunlop Straploks complete the parts package, and it all looks great in a fiesta red finish (one of several vintage-inspired color choices) with a curvy, 3-ply white pickguard.



Digging into the timbers, the Duke Deville features a slab body carved from solid poplar, a wood more often associated with flooring and furniture than guitars. And while the neck is traditional maple, it features “maple cap” construction with a separate fretboard that allows the trussrod to be installed from the top side (i.e. no “skunk stripe” on the back). A splice under the third fret and a volute behind the nut add the strength required for a back-angled headstock, which negates the need for string trees. The neck departs a little further from current trends, however, in a narrow-C profile that measures just .781" deep at the first fret and .843" at the 12th fret. It's a little thin for my taste (and might also be for anyone accustomed to gripping necks with more shoulder in their profiles), but the guitar proved an easy player, and felt superb all up and down the neck after a slight tweak of the trussrod to remove some relief.

The Duke Deville has a balanced acoustic tone and naturally good sustain, and plugged into a Dr. Z Remedy head through a 1x12 cab with a Celestion G12-65 speaker, it delivers bright, snappy tones that are infused with some extra beef from both pickups. On the bridge setting, the Duke Deville will do any of the classic Tele-toned tricks, with more than enough squawk for chicken pickin', while also delivering the requisite grind for Stonesy-sounding rock licks. The neck setting has more snarl and guts, and makes a great voice whether you're doing some rootsy slide work or bluesy lead excursions. Crank the amp toward overdrive, and this tone segues into breakup beautifully, while retaining more clarity than you get from many Tele neck pickups.

Offering versatile performance in a straightforward yet stylish package, the Duke Deville is worth investigating if you are in the market for a guitar that's designed from the ground up to bring some fresh twists to the modified Tele scene.

## **MODEL DUKE DEVILLE SOLID BODY**

**CONTACT** [mjguitars.com](http://mjguitars.com)

**PRICE** \$1,777 street

### **SPECIFICATIONS**

**NUT Width** 1 11/16" wide, micarta

**NECK** Maple, bolt-on, slim-C profile

**FRETBOARD** Maple, 25 1/2" scale

**FRETS** 22 medium-jumbo

**TUNERS** Gotoh Kluson-style tuners

**BODY** Solid poplar

**BRIDGE** Wilkinson T-style with compensated brass saddles

**PICKUPS** Duncan Custom Mini Humbucker (neck), Duncan Five-Two Tele-style (bridge)

**CONTROLS** Volume and Tone, 3-way selector

**FACTORY STRINGS** MJ/Martin, .010-.046

**WEIGHT** 7.8 lbs

**BUILT** USA

**KUDOS** A fun and versatile take on the modded T-style format.

**CONCERNS** Thin neck might not suit all tastes.