

# Godin **in the press**

## A8 Mandolin

**RoadTest**

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by James Linderman

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■ As a full-time guitar player and teacher I find that I can only realistically devote so much time and energy to the mandolin, considering it a wonderful secondary instrument I sometimes play.

This secondary status is slowly and steadily changing however, as I get asked for the mandolin at more and more gigs and also occasionally in the studio now. Apparently my non-traditional approach and limitations on the mandolin are now considered my "style" and I am acquiring a buzz as a non-traditionalist. Who knew?

Actually, what the buzz is really all about is that, in a world dominated by the sound of the guitar, the mandolin brings a fresh new sound to a song that's just outside mainstream and just above mid-range.

It's not much use, however, to feature a fresh instrument into the mix like the mandolin without considering the quality of the instrument being used, and if it's substandard in any way, it will certainly compromise a performance rather than enhance it.

Many mandolins, especially low-end instruments and particularly those not designed to be amplified, somehow manage to be annoyingly tinny sounding and yet also somehow manage to sound muddy too, at the same time.

The other common liabilities to a poorly made mandolin are intonation issues which affect the instrument's ability to sound in-tune in every key, and dead frets which can bring your blistering solo to a tragic halt (solo-us interruptus) and leave your chord without a root (chordal root non gratus).

Considering the length and width of the fingerboard, it's amazing that so much can go wrong in such a small space, but almost every economy line mandolin seems to suffer from an irreparable functional liability.

With a consideration of replacing the mandolin I have now, which is a pretty good, but older, traditional instrument, I was recently encouraged to take the Godin A8 mandolin for a test drive and here's what I found.

The first thing I noticed about the Godin A8 is its very contemporary look.

I first saw the natural satin finish model which looks a great deal like an acoustic guitar natural finish on

an electric guitar body shape. Later, I got a chance to see the other colour it comes in, which is a cognac burst in a high-gloss finish. Both finish options are really attractive in their own right and the first thing I thought of was how cool it would look to match it up with the guitars I use on stage. My only concern would be that the satin finish would not be a great choice if you wanted the mandolin's finish to stand up to a lot of wear and tear. Road warriors would be better off with the gloss finish I would think.

As for the feel of the mandolin, the first thing I noticed was how comfortable and completely balanced the A8 felt compared to more traditional instruments. It feels like it's been designed and crafted specifically for guitar players with the same visual and tactile appeal of some of Godin's other A series models. The neck shape and fingerboard arc in particular are so very guitar-like that the challenge of switching back and forth from guitar to mandolin, song by song, became completely effortless.

The jewel in the crown of the Godin A8 is the electronics. Godin has engineered the A8 to be an ideal instrument for any playing situation where you are plugging in, but want the natural acoustic sound usually enjoyed only when playing the instrument unplugged.

The A8 features a Custom RMC Electronics pickup system with individual saddle-mounted transducers designed specifically for the mandolin. With its "on the body" volume and three tone fader-style controls (volume, treble, mid and bass), the A8 offers a wide spectrum of tone options and with its built in preamp, it shows lots of presence and gain. At any volume you will hear "clear" and "warm" rather than "tinny" and "muddy".

The A8 also sounds very sweet as an acoustic instrument due to its solid Spruce top and a two-chamber body



A8 Mandolin with Cognac finish.

design that features an exclusive combination x and fan bracing system on a Mahogany body. It may however not be a good fit for anyone looking at a more traditional style and sound, especially if you have set aside enough money for a really high-end luthiered instrument.

With strap locks and high-end tuners included, you have a mandolin as comfortable on the front porch as it is at an arena gig and is priced well below its more traditional competition.

The manufacturer's suggested retail price for the A8 is \$989 for the Natural SG and \$1,092 for the Cognac Burst HG. Both instruments come with a gig bag.

For more product information, contact: Godin Guitars, 19420 Clark Graham Ave., Baie D'Urfe, PQ H9X 3R8 (514) 457-7977, FAX (514) 457-5774, info@godinguitars.com, www.godinguitars.com.

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### Manufacturer's Comments

The Godin A8's comfortable feel, ease of playability, high level of craftsmanship and contemporary design are traits found in all of our guitars. It's a common thread that links back to Robert Godin's own search for continued, innovative ways to push the envelope of guitar building and new guitar concepts. Proudly made in Canada, the Go-

din Guitar family now includes six brands, including Godin, Seagull, Simon & Patrick, Norman, Art & Lutherie and LaPatrie. Check out the A8 and other new guitar concepts at [www.godinguitars.com](http://www.godinguitars.com).

Rich Bunze  
Godin Guitars