

Godin

in the press

LG EMG Black Graphite

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Godin LG EMG

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

AMERICAN PLAYERS ALL TOO OFTEN NEGLECT to look north of the border when seeking a well-made guitar at a reasonable price. Makes like La Patrie, Seagull, Norman, Simon & Patrick, and Godin frequently offer astounding value, and all operate under the umbrella of

Robert Godin's guitar-making empire. Of all these, only Godin currently makes solidbody electrics, and, as it happens, these are assembled in Berlin, New Hampshire, out of components manufactured in La Patrie, Quebec. The company has a propensity for innovation—with MIDI-equipped models for controlling synthesizers, hybrid magnetic/piezo models such as the LGXT, and solidbody acoustics such as the Multiac and A Series—but the LG EMG is one of the more straightforward guitars to wear the Godin name.

Essentially, the LG EMG is a version of the long-running Godin LG body style with different pickups and finish, and 3-way switching in place of the 5-way switching that gives its sibling its coil-tapped alternatives. As such, it's an excellent lesson in how small details can add up to significant changes in character between two instruments. Being a Godin, the LG EMG's relatively simple design also hides some clever twists.

The most prominent of these changes is, of course, the inclusion of the active EMG humbuckers that give the model name its suffix. A high-output EMG 81 is used in the bridge position, and a warmer, rounder 85 is placed in the neck—the same combination sported by Zakk Wylde, and favored by many contemporary heavy rockers. Coupled with shared Volume

SPECS | Godin, (514) 457-7977; godinguitars.com

PRICE	\$885 retail/\$739 street
NUT WIDTH	1 11/16"
NECK	Bolt-on mahogany neck with "C" profile
FRETBOARD	24 3/4"-scale unbound rosewood, 16" radius
FRETS	22 medium-jumbo
BODY	Solid silverleaf maple center block and poplar wings
PICKUPS	EMG 81 (bridge) and EMG 85 (neck) active humbuckers
BRIDGE	Schaller tune-o-matic style bridge with through-body stringing
HARDWARE	Diecast Godin tuners with ebonoid buttons and 18:1 gear ratio, Graphtec Tusq nut
CONTROLS	Master Volume and Tone controls, 3-way selector switch
FACTORY STRINGS	Godin High Definition E-9 Nickel Super Tops Regular Bottom .009-.046
WEIGHT	7.8 lbs
KUDOS	Impressive design and build quality for the price. Fierce high-gain tones.
CONCERNS	Perhaps too aggressive if you mainly play cleaner styles.



and Tone controls, and a simple 3-way blade switch for bridge/both/neck switching, this points at a no-nonsense rock machine aimed at searing, high-gain lead work, and fat, chunky rhythm. As such, the semi-gloss, semi-metallic graphite black finish suits it to the bone, and complements the textured black covers of the EMGs beautifully. The paint hides a body made from a central core of silverleaf maple with glued-on poplar wings—a construction that should lend plenty of snap and definition to the response, while remaining fairly light on the shoulder. The body is just 1 5/8" thick, and it carries a ribcage contour in the back of the upper waist, so it's a comfortable guitar to play both seated and standing.

The bolt-on, solid mahogany neck sits in a deep and extremely tight-fitting pocket, with a slightly sculpted heel for improved access toward the top of the 22 medium-jumbo frets. It's still an athletic stretch up to frets 21 and 22 for players who like to anchor with their thumb wrapped around the bass side of the neck, but it's doable for anyone who needs to make those high notes squeal. I have to say, though, the neck itself is a real beauty. There's a gorgeous grain beneath the light-satin finish, and the profile is extremely ergonomic—to my hands at least—with a smooth "C" shape that forms a subtle "U" behind the lower frets, as well as gently rounded shoulders that make for easy wraparound fretting. (Fittingly enough, Godin calls this their "Ergocut" shape.) Being set as deeply into the body as it is—the lip of the pocket even touches the edge of the rosewood fretboard—this neck sets the string line low across the body of the LG, which requires setting the Tune-o-matic style bridge down into a 3/8" route in the top of the guitar. Coupled with the through-body stringing—which incorporates a brass anchor plate also mounted into a route in the back of the guitar—the entire

system makes for a resonant solidbody that wastes very little string vibration.

Even unplugged, the ring and sustain is evident at the first strum of a chord. The LG EMG's acoustic character offers something of the rounded sizzle of the 24 3/4" scale length, although notes leap out sharply with something of the popping brightness of a longer-scale guitar. In addition to its responsiveness, it's an effortless player, and it arrived beautifully set up right from the factory. I did have to tweak the trussrod a little to make up for some atmospheric disparities encountered on its journey across the continent and back, but, that done, it settled easily into place with a low, easy action and accurate intonation. Les Paul players—and those familiar with many set-neck models of the 24 3/4" camp—might find the LG neck feels a little "forward" at first, as its deep neck and the parallel lines between the fretboard and top eliminate the familiar back angle (pitch) that can make many Gibsons feel so intimate to play. But if you want that feel on the LG, all it takes is a pretty easy neck adjustment.



Godin employs a deep, tight neck pocket for this bolt-on design.

I plugged the LG EMG into a Fender '59 Bassman reissue, a 65 Amps London 18, and a Marshall JCM800 half-stack loaded with Celestion greenbacks. While the LG EMG liked the repro tweed combo and the boutique rig, it felt most at home with the Marshall's high-gain front end and chunky, fat-bottomed response. The bridge position roars with a sharp, eviscerating edge, along with plenty of meat in the midrange, and it excels at gnarly riffing or searing lead work.

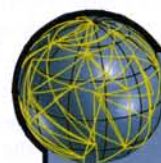
Sustain is impressive, and there's a willing transition into harmonic feedback when you want it. The middle position elicits slightly funky and open sounds from clean amp settings, and a round, airy overdriven tone. Flipping to the neck pickup offers excellent bluesy lead voicings at medium-gain settings, or, with the preamp wound up higher, a smooth, flutey tone that delivers an extremely expressive soloing voice. For an instrument predisposed to high-gain antics, the clean tones

aren't bad at all, and the LG EMG succeeds admirably at everything from wiry, sprangly jangle chords to warm jazz chops. However, it doesn't ooze any particularly succulent tones in these departments, and the guitar really does want to be cranked up.

The Godin LG EMG is a guitar with an agenda, and it fulfills it well. It will really only appeal to players whose meat-and-potatoes style is on the heavier side of contemporary rock, alt-rock, and nu-metal—even though there isn't a vibrato option—but it's a powerful and straight-ahead lead machine that makes a virtue out of its simplicity. **B**



The LG EMG has through-body stringing with a bridge that is set down into a rout in the body top.



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