



Godin Summit CT, Velocity HDR, Triumph & xtSA

£696, £666, £541 & £1,044

Based in Canada with five factories there and one in the USA, cosmopolitan North American guitar maker Godin sends a selection across the pond **by Trevor Curwen**

Godin may not be as well known in the UK as some of its North American counterparts but, over the 20-odd years since the company was founded, it has become a respected brand admired for its innovation. The stated goal is to find the perfect balance between the finest traditions of guitar crafting and new design concepts and the company has, for example, been at the forefront of building guitars that offer acoustic tones from bridge transducers alongside the standard electric sounds. What we have for review here are four guitars from the range that constitute a good representative sample of just what the Godin brand is all about.

Three of the four are variations on the standard electric guitar theme: the Summit CT (the CT referring to its carved top) comes equipped with a pair of humbuckers; the Velocity offers a variation on the three-pickup souped-up rocker theme, with a humbucker in the bridge position, while the Triumph combines a three-pickup single-coil configuration with a very tidy retro vibe.

The fourth guitar, the xtSA, is a showcase of Godin's design ethos: a 'three voice' guitar that not only has electric and acoustic sounds onboard, but also functions as a synth controller via a standard 13-pin output that will connect to

a Roland guitar synth or others that use the same protocol.

Godin's design ethic is also seen in the HDR (Hi-Definition Revoicer) system that is fitted to the Summit CT and the Velocity models. This is an innovative

system designed to 'revoice' and augment the frequency range of each pickup at the push of a button. Effectively what it does is bring in an active preamp so that you can switch from passive to active pickups in an instant. It's a true bypass system that, says Godin, keeps the integrity of the passive pickups while making them active without any degradation in tone quality.

All of the guitars are classily finished with fine attention to detail in all the important areas. The necks, in particular, have a very comfortable feel. This probably reflects the fact that they are hand-finished, but is also likely due to Godin's 'Ergocut' shaping technique that bevels the edges of the fingerboard and frets back in towards the centre of the fingerboard. All necks are bolt-ons featuring four recessed screws rather than a neck plate. The neck pockets are extremely tight for a snug neck-to-body fit, which can only help overall resonance and sustain.

With just a few strums the Summit CT reveals itself to be a resonant guitar that's a pleasure to play unplugged



The Summit CT has a string-through-body design and two Seymour Duncan humbuckers

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSE WILD



All four guitars sport Godin's own branded tuners and other hardware, but the pickups are a mix of Godin's own and Seymour Duncans. Each guitar comes complete with a heavy-duty gigbag that has plenty of useful storage pockets.

Summit CT

The Summit CT is Godin's newest electric, introduced at this year's Winter NAMM show. It's a single cutaway, string-through-body hard-tail design that sports a pair of Seymour Duncan humbuckers, master volume and tone controls and a five-way selector switch that, as well as the usual selection of the humbuckers separately and together, offers coil-splitting with single-coil sounds from the neck and bridge in positions two and four respectively. The cream binding and carved top are certainly well done and classy looking, but whether the black hardware complements that look is open to question.

Sounds

With just a few strums the Summit CT reveals itself to be a really resonant guitar that's a pleasure to play unplugged – something that always bodes well for how an instrument will sound amplified. Unsurprisingly, it proves to be no disappointment. In passive mode the Summit CT offers the best of both worlds with humbucker and single-coil sounds serving up a range of tones to suit not just rock, but many other styles and genres.

Flick in the HDR by pressing the small switch that is ergonomically placed between volume and tone knobs and you immediately get a small gain boost that could be useful for taking it up an extra

notch in live performance, but the main difference is that the sound seems to become more alive with a perceived increase in the clarity of the tone and the dynamic response. As we know, active pickups find favour not just for pristine clean tones, but also added clarity for out and out filth. It's like an added dimension control that doubles the versatility of a guitar that was already versatile.

Triumph

First thoughts on seeing the Triumph are that it is one sweet looking guitar – we are quite partial to metal-flake finishes and this blue one looks stunning in juxtaposition to the silver hardware and the three black and silver single-coil pickups. With its dark-coloured rosewood fingerboard, smooth satin finish and slim profile, the neck provides a very pleasant playing experience, while a slight chamfer on the front of the body aids right arm comfort.

Sounds

In terms of control options the Triumph is the least sophisticated of the four guitars on offer here, in that it is equipped with just volume and tone knobs plus a five-position pickup selector providing access to the three pickups individually and the two in-between positions. The available tones are anything but unsophisticated though, with a warm to bright range that will not be unfamiliar to anyone who uses a Strat – although these pickups have a touch of P-90 flavour to them. There's a sweet top-end to this guitar with the single pickup positions providing a lovely, clear bell-like tone that cuts through

nicely, while positions two and four contribute a mellower, funkier vibe.

The bridge position in particular can supply a country twang that would suit anyone used to playing a Telecaster and, as with a Tele, the lack of a vibrato means that there is far more scope for accurate pitching when doing

pedal-steel style or gymnastic blues bends.

Velocity

The Velocity seems like it may be pretty much aimed at rockers with its sleek curves and that combination of a pair of single-coils and a bridge humbucker for added bite and power. The Fender



The whole range boasts top-class finishes and detail where it matters most





scale length gives the guitar a different feel from the more Gibson-like Summit and Triumph, with a little extra resistance from the strings.

The Rivals

Four distinctly different guitars and quite likely a range of rivals for each, but we have to be brief so... there are not many 'three-voice' guitars around but you may wish to check out Brian Moore's iGuitar range and Carvin's SH575 (£1,234). If the cool look of the Triumph appeals then a Duesenberg, Eastwood or Italia might float your boat. The Velocity has a cheaper counterpart in the Ibanez SA260 (circa £250 street price) while the Yamaha ES820 (circa £420 street price) might offer an alternative to the Summit's mix of humbucker and single-coil sounds.

However, the slim neck and the 305mm radius of the maple fretboard combine to make it a nice player. With the Velocity's overall look you might expect it to be equipped with a locking vibrato, but what you get is a Strat-style vintage tremolo that, although user adjustable, comes set-up flush to the body for downward bends and waggles rather than any pitch raising; pretty sensible. It does its job well and there are no apparent issues with the strings returning to pitch. Unlike the Summit CT, where battery access is via the control's cover plate, the Velocity has a quick access battery compartment with a clip catch.

Sounds

The particular pickup configuration on offer here yields plenty of choices with the pure single-coil tones of the neck and middle pickup contrasting with the extra power and aggressive crunch that comes courtesy of the

bridge humbucker. As with the Summit CT, the HDR system adds to the versatility by putting more width of tone at your fingertips – so you get two guitars in one with all the extra clout that that entails. One for the journeyman...

xtSA

If the HDR-equipped guitars are versatile, they're nothing compared to the xtSA. It really is a do-everything guitar. As well as the standard H/S/H electric guitar configuration, it offers acoustic guitar sounds via RMC bridge transducers and also functions as a synth controller courtesy of a built-in 13-pin connection. With all the controls needed for the three voices there is the potential for confusion, but Godin is well practised and has created a user interface that is uncluttered and easy-to-use with a combination of 13-pin output plus two jacks that allow either mixing or separation of electric and acoustic sounds.

Electric guitar sounds are governed by volume and tone knobs, plus a pickup selector, while four small sliders (volume, bass, middle and treble) control the acoustic part of the sound.

For the 13-pin output there's a three-way toggle switch that selects synth only, audio only or a blend of the two, with the volume of synth sound in the mix being controlled by an adjacent knob. A non-latching toggle switch is used to step through the patches on any connected synth unit.

Sounds

This guitar is all about versatility with the electric pickups providing the full range of Gibson and Fender-like tones that might be expected from a H/S/H combination. The acoustic-like tone is both jangly and full with plenty of available tonal variety and does a convincing enough emulation of a modern, bright acoustic for onstage use. As for the 13-pin output, the tracking is



The Triumph has three retro-style Godin single-coil pickups offering a hint of P-90 tone



Godin's own pickups in the Velocity HDR



excellent with instantaneous response, which is all you could hope for – the synth sounds are up to you!

Verdict

Four fine guitars, all with their own particular character, and at a price point that seems reasonable for the level of workmanship that you are getting.

The HDR system in the Summit CT and the Velocity is an innovation that is both well thought out and beautifully implemented. With a single push of a conveniently placed button you are getting two sets of sounds from the same guitar.

While each of these guitars offers a very different aesthetic that will probably appeal to two very different groups of players, neither is restricted to a particular genre of music as both have an extremely versatile tonal range thanks to the way the pickup switching is implemented and that HDR system. We prefer the smooth ebony fingerboard and the shorter scale of the Summit CT – qualities that make it a guitar we just wanted to keep on playing – to the maple of the Velocity, but that’s a matter of personal taste. Indeed, if a maple



The xtSA has RMC bridge transducers enabling the guitar to provide acoustic sounds

fretboard doesn’t appeal, the Velocity is also offered with a rosewood option.

If you are looking for simplicity and a cool vibe that sets you apart from the mainstream, the Triumph may be for you. While the look may scream retro or glam, Godin has ensured that there are sounds onboard for a variety of genres. The range of tones may not be quite as wide as the Summit CT and Velocity, but the sound has real quality.

For the ultimate in versatility, though, the xtSA is a guitar for

If the HDR-equipped guitars are versatile, they’re nothing compared to the xtSA. It really is a do-everything guitar

those of you who need a large variety of sounds on a single gig, but can’t take several guitars. There are other alternatives, of course (you could fit a hex pickup to a favourite guitar and use a Roland VG system), but the xtSA is an elegant solution that not only does a lot on its own, but can also

directly interface with a VG system for ultimate flexibility. It also has great potential for sculpting hybrid tones – a great asset in the studio. Impressive guitars that offer a viable alternative to the traditional choices – it may be time to go Godin. **G**

The Bottom Line

Godin Summit CT

We like: Fast feeling ebony fretboard; versatile range of sounds
We dislike: Black hardware
Guitarist says: We’ve seen better looking guitars, but just close your eyes and play...

Godin Triumph

We like: Retro vibe; well-voiced pickups
We dislike: Not much, but we’d like to see a version with a Bigsby!
Guitarist says: Cool sounds and cool looks combine to make it – and you – stand out from the crowd

Godin Velocity HDR

We like: Variety of sounds; slimline, sculpted body
We dislike: A locking vibrato might better suit the sort of players who would go for this
Guitarist says: This is a sleek souped-up electric with extra sonic clout, a great guitar with which to cover a lot of styles.

Godin xtSA

We like: Well-organised control over all three sounds; fast synth tracking; unlimited potential...
We dislike: You need a synth to unleash its full potential!
Guitarist says: Not all players need synth access, it’s here if you want with acoustic and electric voices. A do-it-all from Montreal!



Godin Summit CT

PRICE: £696 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: Canada/USA
TYPE: Single-cutaway solidbody electric
BODY: Solid mahogany with a high figured carved flame maple solid top
NECK: Mahogany, bolt on
SCALE LENGTH: 628mm (24.75-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: White synthetic/42.9mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony, small dot inlays, 406mm radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Fixed tune-o-matic-style bridge, Godin logo'd tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm
ELECTRICS: 2 x Seymour Duncan humbuckers (Alnico II Pro at neck; '59 at bridge), five-way pickup selector switch, master volume and master tone plus Godin High-Definition Revoicer
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.2/7
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: The LG HB features two Godin Nitro humbuckers
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Natural Flame, trans black flame and sunburst flame
Active Music Distribution
0208 693 5678
www.godinguitars.com

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
GUITARIST RATING	★★★★★



Godin Triumph

PRICE: £541 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: Canada/USA
TYPE: Single-cutaway solidbody electric
BODY: Silver Leaf maple centre with poplar wings
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 628mm (24.75-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: White synthetic/42.9mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, dot inlays, 305mm radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Fixed bridge with adjustable saddles, Godin logo'd tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm
ELECTRICS: Three Godin low-noise, single-coil pickups, five-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume and master tone
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.5/8
OPTIONS: Natural finish guitars have solid mahogany body
RANGE OPTIONS: The Radiator is an entry level guitar featuring two of the Godin single coil-pickups. The LG SP90 features a pair of Seymour Duncan P90s while the Exit 22 features two single-coils and a bridge humbucker
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: High-gloss finishes include black, silver sparkle, red sparkle, blue sparkle (as reviewed). The mahogany version is available in natural satin

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
GUITARIST RATING	★★★★★



Godin Velocity HDR

PRICE: £666 (inc gig bag)
ORIGIN: Canada/USA
TYPE: Offset double-cutaway solidbody
BODY: Silver leaf maple centre with poplar wings and figured maple top
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5-inches)
NUT/WIDTH: White synthetic/42.9mm
FINGERBOARD: Maple, small dot inlays, 305mm radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Vintage-style vibrato bridge, Godin logo'd tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm
ELECTRICS: Two Godin GS-1 single-coils (neck & middle), SH-5 Seymour Duncan Custom humbucker at bridge, five-way pickup selector switch, master volume and master tone plus Godin High-Definition Revoicer
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.5/8
OPTIONS: Maple or Indian rosewood fingerboard
RANGE OPTIONS: Godin's Performance series includes the similar shaped Freeway guitars with H/S/H pickup configuration
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Amber flame (as reviewed), natural burst flame hg, natural flame

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
GUITARIST RATING	★★★★★



Godin xtSA

PRICE: £1,044 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: Canada/USA
TYPE: Three-voice single-cutaway solidbody electric
BODY: Silver Leaf maple centre with poplar wings with a flame maple 'leaf top'
NECK: Mahogany, bolt on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5-inch)
NUT/WIDTH: White synthetic/42.9mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony, small dot inlays, 406mm (16-inch)radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Fulcrum vibrato with tension adjustable arm, Godin logo'd tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm
ELECTRICS: Two Godin humbuckers (GHN1 at neck, GHB1 at bridge), Godin GS1 single-coil (middle), five-way lever pickup selector, master volume and tone. Bridge fitted with RMC transducers, custom preamp with volume and 3-band EQ for acoustic sound plus volume, three-way mix selector and program change switch for synth output. Three outputs – electric, acoustic/mix, 13-pin for Roland GR synths etc
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 4/8.5
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: Godin's other three voicers include the flagship LGX-SA (£1,499) and the LGXT (£1,399) both featuring twin humbuckers
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Lightburst (as reviewed), trans red & trans black

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
GUITARIST RATING	★★★★★