

## FIRST PLAY



**GRETSCH LIMITED EDITION  
STREAMLINER G2420T-P90  
HOLLOW BODY**  
£470

**WHAT IS IT?** Limited-edition full-size hollowbody with P-90 single coil at the neck and a satin finish



**GRETSCH LIMITED EDITION  
STREAMLINER G2655TG-P90  
CENTER BLOCK JR**  
£519

**WHAT IS IT?** Limited-edition down-sized double-cut centre-blocked semi with P-90 single coil at bridge, one-off satin finish and glitzy gold hardware

# Twang Tough

Gretsch's entry-level Streamliners provide plenty of 'Gretsch-ness' at an affordable price. Here are two new limited 'modded' models to tempt us

**Words** Dave Burrluck **Photography** Olly Curtis

**I**t's not always easy to drag a heritage brand into the modern age, but Gretsch – certainly in recent years – has been doing it rather well. Its Players Edition adds numerous player-centric tweaks and the range is a good foil to the 'don't-touch-me-I'm-vintage' Vintage Select models. The Electromatics have recently been upgraded and, until the launch of the Streamliners back in 2016, were the entry-point to those wanting that look without those prices.

A couple of years on and the Streamliners are not quite as affordable as they were, but even at their quoted RRP (and no









1. This 'dog ear' P-90 single coil, with a DCR of 11.48kohms, is made by G&B in Korea, like the Broad'Tron humbuckers. There's no height adjustment, although slightly raising the pole pieces helps with its clarity

doubt lower street prices) they offer, on paper at least, substantial bang for yer ol' buck. Not only are they perfectly good guitars, but they also make for prime modding material, not least because the original models all featured the Broad'Tron humbuckers. These not only provide a more contemporary 'beefed up' Gretsch-y voice, but with a standard full humbucking size, there are trillions of retrofit pickups to choose if you want to change their flavour. However, with a pair of recently released Limited Edition models (limited to 300 pieces each in Europe), it seems Gretsch has been modding them for us. Both new models add a P-90 and come in smart satin colours – only one per model, though – which make a welcome change from the plethora of over-glossed Asian guitars.

Our 16-inch (406mm) wide hollowbody G2420T-P90 is a close cousin of the standard Streamliner Hollow Body, which is offered with a Bigsby or a trapeze tailpiece. Our limited model is Bigsby-only, a licensed B60, and comes in quite a moody-looking Midnight Wine Satin. Finish aside, however, its *raison d'être* is the neck-placed 'dog ear' P-90 single coil, which nods towards the G6120 Eddie Cochran that pairs a similar-style neck pickup with a Dynasonic single coil at bridge. Here, however, we get one of those aforementioned Broad'Tron 'buckers.

Aside from its finish, the G2420T-P90's *raison d'être* is the neck-placed 'dog ear' P-90 single coil

The G2655TG-P90 Streamliner Center Block Junior is again based on an existing model, the 13.375-inch (340mm) wide G2655T Center Block Junior. Gretsch's product specialist Adam Bowden-Smith reminds us that "the 'junior' bit refers to its small body – it doesn't mean it's for beginners or anything like that". Again, while the standard model sports either the V-Stoptail or a licensed Bigsby B50, the limited-edition model is Bigsby-only, in one satin colour, and here the 'soapbar' P-90 sits in bridge position flanked by a Broad'Tron at neck. Incidentally, it's not the first time Gretsch has added a P-90 in bridge position (that was another limited model but in the Professional Series, the G6115T-LTD15 Center Block Junior 'Red Betty').

Entry-level they may be but Gretsch's classic laminated construction, with proper kerfed linings, is replicated here with nice touches, not least the 'secured' tune-o-matic bridge, which sits on a wooden foot on the Hollow Body and goes directly into the





2



3

2. These Broad'Trons (with a DCR of 9.3kohms) were conceived for the Streamliners: "Basically Filter'Tron-style full-size humbuckers – punchy with a higher hotter-than-vintage output"

3. Any Bigsby-equipped guitar needs a little love. Here, some of the nut grooves are a little tight, but with minimal fettling, a little lube and, of course, string stretching, we're good to go

spruce centre block of the Junior. There's a vintage style to the simple black knobs and, although both rosewood fingerboards are bound and feature big pearloid block inlays, neither looks over-blinged like some classic Gretsch models. That said, our Junior goes for gold-plated hardware – a first for the otherwise nickel-only Streamliner range – which accounts for the upcharge in price.

### Feel & Sounds

With an obvious 'little and large' vibe thanks to the different body sizes and depths (the Hollow Body is 73mm deep at the rim, and the Junior is just over 46mm), there's still plenty of shared style. The necks, for example, are pretty similar, despite being quoted as 'Slim U' on the Hollow Body and 'Thin U' on the Junior. Nut widths average 43mm with depths of a shade over 22mm at the first frets, and while the Hollow Body measures 24.4mm at the 12th, the Junior is that deep by the 9th fret before the neck curves into the relatively shallow heel. Those profile descriptions are a little off, though; neither feels slim nor thin and both have a more substantial, full-shouldered D shape that measures and feels slightly bigger than an original-release Streamliner Hollow Body that we have for

comparison. As noted in our original review, 'medium jumbo' is also a misnomer for the fret size. Here it is vintage Fender-like 'narrow' (2mm wide) and not particularly high either, averaging out at 1mm. Both guitars have nicely dialled in setups, though, approximately 1.6mm on both treble and bass sides, and with this style of small fret you certainly get to feel the 'board.

The weight is also light, the larger guitar only a little weightier, although they obviously feel different seated or strapped on. The Hollow Body's depth means it sticks out some way – the smaller thinline Junior is more conventional, although it's slightly neck-heavy but easy to play simply because of its light weight. And obviously there's considerable acoustic volume from the Hollow Body – plenty enough for practice even with another acoustic guitar player – while the Junior attenuates all the low-end and depth, and sounds rather bright and a little harsh in comparison.

Both use Gretsch's Tone-Pot control circuit and from what we hear we'd guess that the master volume has a treble bleed cap – the sounds remain pretty clear as you pull that down, while the individual volumes remove a little high-end when pulled back, as well as some thickness.



4. This 'soapbar'-style P-90 is height adjustable, which can be helpful to balance the different outputs here. This one has a lower DCR of 8.74kohms, while the neck-placed Broad'Tron measures 7.84kohms



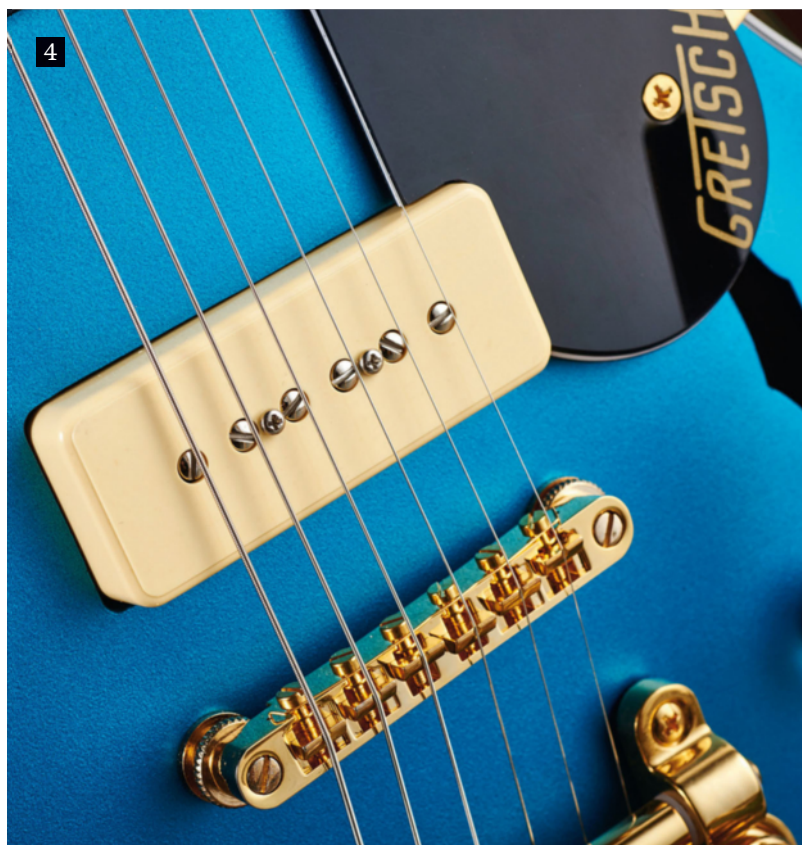
It would be easy to plug in this Hollow Body and ask, 'Where's the Gretsch?' Initially, it appears quite a dark, moody voice that hints at those late 50s/early 60s jazz/blues sounds on the neck P-90, but needs a little more presence, and with only the pole pieces to adjust in terms of height (unless you add another shim) you'll lose some of the P-90's girth. That said, it's worth spending some time here. Not only did the nut grooves need attention but slight tweaks can reap rewards, although the rather-too-dark bridge pickup holds us back from the snap and sizzle we were expecting. But as we listen and compare with other semis, we begin to find much more.

The pickup volumes, especially on the bridge, thin the sound enough to get us into the right ballpark, especially if we pull back the master volume, too (and kick in a level boost from our pedalboard). Reverb and a hint of slapback and/or tremolo just about gets us there. The softer voice of the neck P-90 is helped by raising those poles a little. The tone control could certainly help a little more, though; with the pickup volume up it has quite a slow, subtle roll off that then suddenly dives to a muted woof. Pull the volume back, though, and it's a lot less effective. Still, true to Gretsch, there's always an idiosyncrasy or two, isn't there?

The Junior certainly has more of the high-end than you'd expect. It's a tighter,

These Streamliner models offer any of us on a budget a taste of Gretsch with a bit more oomph

more solidbody voice, but – and this is important – when you're swapping guitars during a set, as many of us do, things need to sound right without making too many adjustments. And this gets us much more into *that* camp on bridge and in mix position (especially with a little neck pickup volume roll-off). The neck humbucker alone, however, certainly has a jazzier thickness, but again it lacks a little clarity full up. We find ourselves pulling the pickup volume back and we're already imagining a pickup swap – perhaps to a humbucking-sized P-90? But this Junior wants to take us on a different journey with on-the-edge-of-gritty amp tones giving hugely 60s-informed Americana or with some fuzzier gain we drop right into Jack White Street via a garage or two. There's certainly some trashier, edgier voices here and a lot more feedback resistance, although it's still easy to coax some musical feedback (which you can manipulate easily with the Bigsby). It's certainly the guitar that got more play time,







yet rather like the Hollow Body, if you're just going to run it with the volumes full up, then you're missing a lot.

### Verdict

Aside from needing a little more attention to the Hollow Body's nut and the general bedding in of both the Bigsby (like the original 2016 Streamliners), these are perfectly well-built guitars for the money. They also offer any of us on a budget a taste of Gretsch with a bit more oomph. These Broad'Tron pickups don't immediately capture *that* sound, but work at it a little and you can get close. That said, the P-90s give each guitar arguably more validity turning the Junior into a punkier proposition, and the Hollow Body into a slightly more characterful and jazzier or Texas swing kinda piece. Yes, the Hollow Body remains a big-bodied ship, and although the Junior actually feels so much more comfortable, there's still that oddity of the shrunken size that might not appeal to everybody. **G**

5. Along with the three-way toggle pickup selector and the master volume on the two horns, this trio of controls provides individual pickup volume control and master tone – the key to unlocking more Gretsch-like tones

6. This Junior is the only Streamliner that comes with gold-plated hardware. Both Bigsby's are licensed versions, but sadly don't have the excellent 'string-through' string attachment of the Gretsch Players Edition Bigsby-equipped guitars



### GRETSCH LIMITED EDITION STREAMLINER G2420T-P90 HOLLOW BODY

**PRICE:** £470  
**ORIGIN:** Indonesia  
**TYPE:** Single-cutaway Hollow Body electric  
**BODY:** Laminated maple back, top and sides  
**NECK:** Nato, Slim "U" profile, glued-in  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 629mm (24.75")  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Synthetic bone/42.95mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Bound rosewood, pearloid big block inlays, 305mm (12") radius  
**FRETS:** 22, small  
**HARDWARE:** Nickel-plated secured Adjusto-Matic bridge, Bigsby B60 vibrato, die-cast tuners  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 52.5mm  
**ELECTRICS:** Broad'Tron humbuckers (bridge), P-90 Dog Ear (neck), 3-position pickup selector toggle switch, master volume, master tone, 2x individual pickup volume controls  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 3.2/7.04  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** The standard G2420 Hollow Body costs £420; the Bigsby-equipped G2420T is £470  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Only the double-cut centre-blocked G2622LH Stoptail (£470)  
**FINISHES:** Midnight Wine Satin (as reviewed) gloss body, satin neck

8/10

**PROS** Tidy build, satin finish, additional P-90 at neck and standard sized Broad'Tron 'bucker

**CONS** It's built to a budget and needed a little nut work to ensure the Bigsby stayed in tune; not for vintage snobs; just the one colour



### GRETSCH LIMITED EDITION STREAMLINER G2655TG-P90 CENTER BLOCK JR

**PRICE:** £519  
**ORIGIN:** Indonesia  
**TYPE:** Down-sized double-cutaway centre-blocked semi electric  
**BODY:** Laminated maple back, top and sides w/spruce centre block  
**NECK:** Nato, Thin "U" profile, glued-in  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 629mm (24.75")  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Synthetic bone/43.32mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Bound rosewood, pearloid big block inlays, 305mm (12") radius  
**FRETS:** 22, small  
**HARDWARE:** Gold-plated secured Adjusto-Matic bridge, Bigsby B50 vibrato, die-cast tuners  
**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 52.5mm  
**ELECTRICS:** P90 Soap Bar (bridge), Broad'Tron (neck), 3-position pickup selector toggle switch, master volume, master tone, 2x individual pickup volume controls  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.96/6.5  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** The standard G2655 Centre-Block Jr costs £420; the Bigsby-equipped G2655T is £470  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Not this model  
**FINISHES:** Riviera Blue Satin (as reviewed)

9/10

**PROS** Tidy build, compact size, feedback resistance, slightly more Gretsch-like voicing, a punkier edge

**CONS** Just the one colour; the Bigsby needed a little TLC; the shrunken size, as compact as it is, might not appeal to everyone



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