

## FIRST PLAY



**GODIN 5TH AVE UPTOWN  
CUSTOM HAVANA BROWN**  
£1,449

**WHAT IS IT?** Classic 16-inch cutaway hollowbody electric with Seymour Duncan and Godin pickups and Bigsby vibrato



**GODIN A6 ULTRA DENIM  
BLUE FLAME**  
£1,349

**WHAT IS IT?** Innovative and stage-aimed electro-acoustic 'hybrid' with magnetic neck humbucker, dual outputs and electric-like playability

# Parallel Lines

Godin launched a considerable number of new and upgraded guitars at the start of 2019. We dip in with a very diverse pair of instruments

**Words** Dave Burrluck **Photography** Phil Barker

**W**hile Godin – and the various brands it produces – is one of the largest, if not the largest, manufacturer of guitars in North America, it also remains one of the most diverse in terms of the styles of instruments it offers. Our two very different guitars illustrate the point.

The 5th Avenue range put the hollowbody 'jazzbox' centre stage when it launched in 2008; our 2019 dual-pickup cutaway Uptown takes the concept upmarket. The A6 Ultra couldn't be more different: a bolt-on necked, thinline electro-acoustic with both under-saddle bridge transducer, a neck-placed humbucker and dual outputs.





GODIN 5TH AVE UPTOWN CUSTOM HAVANA BROWN & A6 ULTRA DENIM BLUE FLAME | FIRST PLAY





1. These unique-to-Godin tuners offer different ratios: 18:1 on the bass side, and the very fine-tuning 26:1 on the trebles. Typical of Godin's unique detail

2. This roller saddle tune-o-matic, along with a well-cut Graph Tech Tusq XL nut, ensures that the Bigsby vibrato is smooth in action and stays in tune



### 5th Avenue Uptown

If you're into your rootsy alt-rock, blues and jazz, you'll probably have come across Godin's 5th Avenue range: relatively affordable laminate archtops that also provide a platform for more upmarket versions. Various models have come and gone since 2008. The current six-strong range starts with the non-cutaway Kingpin P90 with a single coil at the neck, the CW Kingpin II adds a cutaway and either dual dog-ear single coils or dual humbuckers, while the three new 2019 models include our review model Uptown Custom, plus the cutaway Uptown T-Armond and non-cutaway Nightclub Indigo Blue.

All use the same 408mm (16-inch) wide body, 76mm (three inches) at the rim, all-laminate construction from Canadian wild cherry (the top is reinforced with two longitudinal braces), which looks far from showy here courtesy of the Havana Brown finish. There's an attractive figure to the back and sides, less so the top, which looks like a wide-grained mahogany. It's all offset by very clean white edge binding to the body, although both the headstock and fingerboard are unbound. It uses a more acoustic-like scale length of 631mm (24.84 inches), slightly longer than the classic Gibson scale, and as with previous 5th Avenues, the neck sits quite high from the body.

If the licensed Bigsby hints at more of a Gretsch style than a pure jazzbox, at least the roller saddle tune-o-matic, which sits on a Richlite foot, means this sometimes-troublesome vibrato holds its tuning well from the off. Richlite has received a mixed response, but Godin has embraced it, not least for its strength and, visually, it's the colour of the jet black ebony we used to see that's now increasing rare. The 'board radius seems flatter than the Gibson standard and the nicely installed small fretwire adds an old-school feel.

While plenty of Godins feature modern electronics, things are kept simple here with just a master volume and tone for the humbucker/dog-ear P-90 setup with the selector switch shoulder-placed. The output jack is side-placed directly onto the wood and as usual the strap buttons are for the Schaller strap locks. Overall, it's a very

tidy piece let down by a little rub-through to the dark brown finish on the rear edges of the headstock – hardly a deal breaker.

### A6 Ultra Denim Blue Flame

As an evolution of Godin's original solidbody-sized electro-acoustic Acousticaster that put Godin on the map back in 1988, our A6 is designed for higher volume use, but still has a chambered body. When the Ultra version first appeared in 2007, it added a neck humbucker creating a dual-voice acoustic/electric 'hybrid'.

Its enlarged Tele-esque outline is thicker in depth at just under 49mm and, again, is crisply bound on the top edge only. The rear edges are quite comfortably radius'd for seated playing and, although it's a bolt-on, the heel is lightly chamfered to reduce bulk. The subtly flamed top under the dark blue translucent finish certainly adds a little bling, but there's a very workingman-like feel here, in a good way.

Once again, mahogany is chosen for the neck with a natural satin finish and topped with a Richlite 'board that has offset small dot inlays. Here it has a glossier finish that looks less ebony-like than the Uptown. Frets, too, shoot for a larger medium-jumbo size. Graph Tech's Tusq is used for nuts and saddles on many Godin electrics and acoustics; the saddle here is accurately

The 5th Avenue fits perfectly within the Godin range: a contemporary hollowbody 'jazzbox' of some potency





This main chamber of the A6 works like a proper acoustic, but the sound exits via the secondary chamber, which allows the air out

3. This nicely voiced dog-ear P-90-style single coil on the 5th Ave Uptown has a measured DCR of 7.94kohms and is paired with a Seymour Duncan '59 at the bridge, which has a DCR of 8.11k

intonated on the Richlite bridge, which has a more ebony-like appearance.

Internally, the A6 is braced back and front, not dissimilar to a conventional acoustic guitar, and while the solid wood sides are a lot thicker, the actual top (which appears to be cedar with that flame veneer facing) doesn't join them until its edge, presumably to give more acoustic-like movement. This main chamber works like a proper acoustic, but the sound exits via the smaller secondary chamber, which allows the air out – effectively, the control cavity on the upper shoulder with its six small sound holes and, of course, the slots for the preamp sliders.

It's this upper shoulder that hides the innovation, too. The under-saddle (piezo acoustic sound) and the humbucker (magnetic electric sound) feed into this control centre, which offers independent slider volume for the acoustic and electric pickups and between those outer controls are treble, midrange and bass sliders, each with centre 'flat' notches, for the piezo





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4. The A6's control centre offers volume and three-band EQ for the acoustic voice, and volume and two-band EQ for the electric side. The preamp runs off a single nine-volt block battery

5. Godin has embraced the eco-friendly and very stable synthetic Richlite for fingerboards (and bridges). It's the most-used fingerboard material within the Godin range



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acoustic pickup. Directly above these are mini rotary controls for treble and bass EQ of the electric sound. The dual sounds can be outputted via two standard jack outputs – one for mixed mono, or acoustic and electric separately if you have the luxury of using both an acoustic amp or PA plus your regular electric rig.

### Feel & Sounds

The neck of the A6 feels very good. Its light satin finish has a slight open pore texture, and the shape is quite a full C with a hint of V and quite mainstream in depth (21.9mm at the 1st fret, 23.9mm by the 12th) with reasonably large 'electric' frets (around 2.43mm wide with a good height of about 1.3mm). The fingerboard edges turn slightly in, as they should, and the top edge is rounded off. Good craft, smartly done.

The 5th Ave's neck feels rather different. It's wider overall by a couple of millimetres, slightly shallower in depth (20.2mm at the 1st fret, 23.5mm by the 10th), with a more D-like feel, or a C with fairly full shoulders. There's less in-turn to the fingerboard edges (bound with thin strips of Richlite so you don't see the fret tangs), which have been barely rolled. The 'board radius seems relatively flat (measuring around

356mm/14 inches) and the smaller-size frets (around 2mm wide, just under 1mm high) with slightly sharp ends, all combine to give a different feel. The wider neck has an extra half millimetre in terms of string spacing at the nut (35.5mm) compared with the A6, but the bridge spacing is narrower at 51.5mm and there's quite a bit of distance from the outer strings to the 'board edge.

As a standalone electro-acoustic, the A6 is certainly no slouch, even though it's supplied with standard electric strings due to the neck humbucker. But with the three-band EQ, it's simple to get a credible amp'd acoustic sound, albeit with less zing to your wound strings but still with a typically fast piezo attack.

The neck humbucker is sensing a more acoustic-like response that's actually quite

With the A6, the money lies in mixing the outputs, the potential of which is only limited by your imagination

archtop-like. The string-to-string response is a little uneven and, like us, you might want to compensate for that with the adjustable polepieces. Fully up, the two EQ rotary controls provide a lot of low-end and dialling the bass back would probably suit most.

Now, it's gloves off. Combining the two different voices – either in mixed mono or through separate amps – seems to offer a limitless palette. Adding a little piezo to the neck 'bucker, for example, produces a very credible contemporary jazz clarity; vice versa you can thicken up the 'acoustic' voice. Running with two systems you can add effects and/or a volume pedal to both or either. With a looper or two, you can easily have duelling acoustic and electric parts and lines. For the creative musician it's quite a tool, but equally usable for higher-volume acoustic slots or, frankly, some surprisingly authentic old-style jazz 'n' blues.

Speaking of which, if that's where you're coming from, the simpler 5th Ave does that exceptionally well. The neck single coil is one good reason why the P-90 style is still hugely valid for jazzier and cleaner blues. The pickup mix adds a little texture and voiced solo the Seymour Duncan '59 at the bridge is matched volume-wise with a smoother high-end that avoids too much





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spike and makes moving into more Western swing or rockabilly really easy, not least with a little colour from the Bigsby. It may feel a bit functional, but sound-wise for the older suggested styles, especially with a little amp grit, it's an engaging piece.

### Verdict

The A6 Ultra is a hard guitar to pigeonhole, but for anyone wanting to combine both acoustic and electric worlds it's a seriously good place to look. Godin specialises in two- and three-voice instruments – this A6 Ultra is more electro-acoustic-like first and foremost and, even at some volume, used sensibly, feedback just isn't an issue. The money, however, lies in mixing the outputs, the potential of which is only limited by your imagination. It's a very creative tool.

The 5th Avenue fits perfectly within the Godin range: a contemporary hollowbody 'jazzbox' of some potency. The problem is, there's no shortage of similar styles at quite diverse prices from the likes of Ibanez, Guild and Gretsch, not to mention more classic 'jazz' brands such as Peerless and Eastman. Competition aside, however, Godin's effective, fit-for-purpose and good-sounding build is not to be sniffed at. Make sure you audition one. **G**

6. These dual outputs allow mixed mono operation or the ability to send both acoustic and electric voices to their own amp/effects setups



### GODIN 5TH AVENUE UPTOWN CUSTOM HAVANA BROWN

**PRICE:** £1,449 (inc TRIC case)  
**ORIGIN:** Canada  
**TYPE:** Single-cutaway, hollowbody electric  
**BODY:** Canadian wild cherry laminate  
**NECK:** Silver leaf maple, glued-in  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 631mm (24.84")  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Graph Tech Tusq/44.2mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Richlite, pearloid dot inlays, 356mm (14") radius  
**FRETS:** 21, medium  
**HARDWARE:** Roller saddle tune-o-matic-style bridge, Bigsby B-30 vibrato, 'High-Ratio' tuners (18:1 bass side, 26:1 treble) – nickel-plated  
**BRIDGE/STRING SPACING:** 51.5mm  
**ELECTRICS:** Godin Kingpin single coil (neck), Seymour Duncan SH-1B '59 humbucker (bridge), 3-way toggle pickup selector, volume and tone  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.76/6.1  
**OPTIONS:** The 5th Ave Uptown T-Armond with dual TV Jones T-Armond single coils and the same finish also costs £1,449  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** Also new is the non-cutaway 5th Ave Nightclub Indigo Blue with single neck-placed TV Jones Classic (£1,599). The 5th Ave range starts at £675  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Only the non-cutaway Kingpin P90 at £709  
**FINISHES:** Havana Burst – all satin except gloss body front and headstock face

**440 Distribution**  
**0113 2589599**  
**www.godinguitars.com**

8/10

**PROS** Competent build, very classic vibe; in-tune Bigsby and quality sounds to match; TRIC case

**CONS** The unrolled 'board and vintage frets won't be for everyone



### GODIN A6 ULTRA DENIM BLUE FLAME

**PRICE:** £1,349 (inc gigbag)  
**ORIGIN:** Canada  
**TYPE:** Single-cutaway, chambered acoustic electric  
**BODY:** Chambered silver leaf maple with flame maple veneer top  
**NECK:** Mahogany, bolt-on  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 648mm (25.5")  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Graph Tech Tusq/42.8mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Richlite, small dot inlays, 406mm (16") radius  
**FRETS:** 22, medium  
**TUNERS:** 'High-Ratio' tuners (18:1 bass side, 26:1 treble) – nickel-plated  
**BRIDGE/STRING SPACING:** Richlite with compensated Tusq saddle/53.5mm  
**ELECTRICS:** Godin GAHN1 humbucker (neck) and under-saddle transducer. Acoustic and electric volume, 3-band EQ (acoustic), 2-band EQ (magnetic). Dual outputs  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.86/6.3  
**OPTIONS:** The Ultra is also available in Black and Cognac Burst (both £999) and Koa (£1,375) high-gloss finishes  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** The A6 Ultra starts at £899 with the Natural (cedar top and satin finish). There are also baritone (£1,149) and 12-string (£999) versions  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Not this model, but the A6 Ultra Natural SG costs £1,025  
**FINISHES:** Denim Blue Flame – all gloss except neck back

**Guitarist CHOICE**

9/10

**PROS** Innovative design and excellent build; electric-like neck; dual voices; feedback resistance

**CONS** Nothing really – in the right hands, this is quite an instrument