Esoterik Guitars offer uncommon boutique intrigue

Fate’s a funny bitch. We were leaving NAMM this year—literally on our way out the door—when some geeky, bespectacled kid ran up and handed us an Esoterik Guitars business card. We exchanged pleasantries and parted ways. Weeks later, a few emails, then a guitar. Well, not just a guitar—a boutique masterwork. This month, Gearified steps in the ring for a few rounds with Esoterik’s handmade-in-the-USA juggernaut, the DR2.

LOOK
The five-piece maple neck has two thin strips of walnut bookending a thick, figured maple center, which is sandwiched by two additional, thick, slightly tinted maple pieces. The brownish mahogany body is flawlessly attached to both sides of the neck-through component. Clear, polyurethane satin finish enhances the pleasing shades of brown and tan from the tone woods. All black hardware, pickups and headstock provide the mortar that glues this ensemble together into an impressive woodworking wonder.

UNDER THE HOOD
Esoterik axes all come equipped with premium pots, jacks, switches, knobs, pins, tuners, hardware, etc. Which is pretty much standard on a piece at this price point. However, like a beautiful woman, the Esoterik still reserves a few surprises for the bedroom. The DR2 rocks a Floyd Rose Pro locking tremolo bridge, which features a low-profile fine tuner section, shorter string lock screws and a narrower string spacing. It also has Gotoh 510 series tuners with a 1:18 ratio and solid lubricated (Oi!) gears. Perhaps the sexiest aspects of the DR2 are its curves and contours. The body features ace beveling, contouring and shaping that facilitates a very luxurious playing experience. Upper fret access, belly pocket and forearm berserker picking rest are all available on this wooded witch.

PLAYABILITY
At the DR2’s heart of hearts is six-string shredding. If you like to play up to your tits in heavy metal hand-jive, tablature testaments or fleet-fingered flurries, this is your bitch. And as such, Esoterik focused a hefty amount of its design energy into the neck. The neck-through maximizes stability and sustain. The slim, flattened oval shape and fingerboard radius team up for speed runs. The satin finish provides the glide, and 24 precisely placed jumbo frets keeps you intonated and sustaining even during bends and dives that would make Jimi get up and do the Thriller. Overall, the DR2 has the solid, sturdy feel that implies a master craftsman is at the helm of this ship.

SOUND
Our Esoterik DR2 came equipped with a pre-installed Lace’s modern metal flagship Drop & Gain pup set. As it turns out, this pairing is a match made in hell! We didn’t just hear the balls coming from our Marshall JCM 800 half-stack—we felt them! Chunk the size of Texas! Skull-cracking crunch! Rip, roar, screech and squeal—it’s all here! The wonderful balance and design of this guitar means it can be pushed into extreme sonic realms, but still maintain a high level of clarity and dynamic range. This is what “professional” sounds like, folks.

SUMMARY
Esoterik has built an instrument that has rock-solid construction. It sounds and looks fantastic, and plays very well. It’s made by a master, for a master. If the price tag of the handmade USA version is out of reach, fear not. Esoterik will soon be offering overseas versions of this animal in the very near future for around half the cost.

RETAIL
$3,746 (includes case) [66]

For more info on this and other Esoterik products, go to: esoterikguitars.com