

At a glance**Fret King Elan Super 50 HBP**

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: One-piece mahogany, set-in
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood with dot inlays
FRETS: 22
SCALE: 25"
PICKUPS: 2x Wilkinson WVC humbuckers, 1x W90M P90
CONTROLS: 1x volume, 1x tone, Vari-coil control, 5-way pickup selector switch
HARDWARE: Chrome
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Black (shown), Tobacco Sunburst, See Thru Red, Laguna blue
CONTACT: John Hornby Skewes 01132 865 381
WEB: www.fks.co.uk



£749

The W90M P90 dishes up a bright, punchy tone that you don't normally expect in the middle position

Trevor Wilkinson is the man responsible for the Wilkinson vibrato and other beautifully designed guitar parts. He's also the brains behind the Fret-King and Italia guitar ranges. He clearly knows his stuff. Trevor's latest design, the Elan Super 50 HBP, looks like the result of a gene-splicing experiment between a PRS and a Superstrat topped with a stylised take on the 'batwing' headstock from a 60s Epiphone Wilshire. It's a quirky mix of vintage and modern design that doesn't quite gel for us, although others will no doubt love it. Luckily, there's more to this guitar than its looks.

The Elan Super 50 HBP really begins to make sense when it's plugged into an amp. That W90M P90 pickup may look a bit strange nestling between the two Wilkinson humbuckers, but it dishes up a bright, punchy tone that you don't normally expect from the middle position. Blues guitarists will love it...

The Elan also features the 'Vari-coil', a coil-tap knob that rolls between humbucking and singlecoil tones when the guitar's chunky sounding humbuckers are engaged, leaving the P90 unaffected. Rolling the control down towards zero on either 'bucker produces some authentic singlecoil tones that are perfect

for anything from Hendrix licks to icy surf guitar. It's convincing, but the effect of the Vari-coil is less apparent when you're using either humbucker in conjunction with the P90. You can still hear a difference but the chunky bite of the P90 dominates the tone in those positions.

Tonally, the Elan is a seriously versatile guitar. Just about any player from jazzers to metalheads will find a tone they can work with here. We've challenged it but Trevor's guitar never faltered, while the slim neck profile and smart body contouring make the playing experience as infectious as the tones available. The guitar's looks may have left us a bit cold but we have no such reservations with the rest of the package.

Conclusion: The world is your oyster when you have £750 to blow on a new guitar. At that price-point Fret-King is up against some damn fine competition from the likes of PRS, Ibanez, Washburn and the rest. While Trevor has done his usual great job delivering the Elan Super 50 HBP, we do think it's a bit on the expensive side. If you shop around, you might well find the Elan for less, making this guitar a serious contender and pretty tough to resist.

Ed Mitchell

SUMMARY

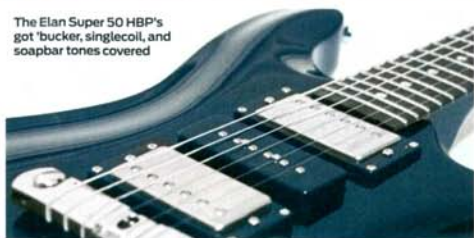
For: Vari-coil control, pickups and playability

Against: Price could be more competitive



TG says... The price isn't quite right

The Elan Super 50 HBP's got 'bucker, singlecoil, and soapbar tones covered



Pickups
 It's unusual to see a P90 pickup nestling between two humbuckers

Neck
 The modern, slim and playable neck is one of this guitar's best features

Control
 The smart Vari-coil control rolls between humbucker and singlecoil tones

