

## FRET-KING SUPER-MATIC

£1,399

Trev Wilkinson's latest innovation: the self-tuning guitar

**BRITISH** designer Trev Wilkinson has a host of inventions to his name, from roller nuts to locking tuners and more. His latest brainwave, the ATD440HT, is an advanced automated tuning system, and its first outing sees it built into the Super-matic, a Korean solid body with American alder body, 24-fret neck and H/S/H pickup layout.

First, the guitar. While it's no shoulder-killer, the Super-matic isn't the lightest doublecut solid. Access to the very top frets isn't brilliant, either, but the fret job is excellent, smooth with perfectly

piece of engineering. It's also very smart. A hex pickup in front of the bridge has a small operational 'OP' button on its treble side and a mini display opposite, so the pickup senses each string's vibration and carries it to the system's 'brain'. There's an onboard tuner, five preset tunings – standard (A440), drop D, open G, open E, DADGAD and a 'mystery' chord of GDFCDG – and you can also store tunings of your own.

Tuning itself is easy: tap the button, select the desired preset by repeating the action until it's shown in the display, strum all six strings and wait. The system quietly whirs and in no time it's set. It takes just a few minutes to get used to how it works: it's quicker than a regular tuner, deadly accurate, and works with your volume control off.

Onstage it should present no more problems than using the onboard tuner on an electro-acoustic, but it allows speedier altered tunings than ever before, opening up new realms for any player. What a boon for the slide player – standard tuning to open G or open E in 20 seconds.

There's no doubt the ATD440HT works brilliantly, but unless its host guitar matches it in quality the exercise is pointless. Happily, the Super-matic is well up to the mark. While the pickups lack personality, they supply the expected sounds and more courtesy of the Vari-coil. Together, they make for one of the most advanced guitars available, offering not only infallible auto tuning but also endless musical opportunities. A fine package.

Neville Marten

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★★★★
	SOUND QUALITY	★★★★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★
	BUILD QUALITY	★★★★
	PLAYABILITY	★★★★
	OVERALL RATING	★★★★★

**“The tuning system is a discreet piece of engineering”**

'crowned' tops that make for effortless bending and vibrato.

Fret-King's switching arrangement lets you use each pickup on its own or blend neck/middle and bridge/middle as on a Stratocaster. The clever bit is Wilkinson's Vari-coil: decreasing the tone pot gradually turns each humbucker into a singlecoil. This gives endless tone options, perfect for giggers who want one guitar for all occasions. Spanky singlecoil and not-too-heavy humbucking tones are the order of the day. The in-between settings with some humbucker rolled off were our favourites, especially with added grunt from a pedal.

Built into that guitar, of course, is the tuning system. The ATD440HT bridge mechanically tunes each string when certain tunings are selected. It's not some hulking beast but a discreet and elegant

### AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** Alder  
**NECK:** Maple  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
**FRETS:** 24  
**SCALE:** 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
**PICKUPS:** Wilkinson H/S/H configuration  
**CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 2x tone Vari-coil, 5-way pickup selector  
**HARDWARE:** Chrome  
**LEFT-HANDED:** No  
**FINISH:** Black, Original Classic Burst (pictured)  
**CONTACT:** JHS 01132 865381  
[fret-king.com](http://fret-king.com)

### 1 HEADSTOCK

A SIX-a-side headstock design with enclosed chrome tuners harks back to Epiphone's 'batwing' designs of the 60s, while the Wilkaloid nut provides free string flow

### 2 BRIDGE

THE ATD440HT bridge and hex pickup offer standard and alternative tuning options, all controlled via the OP button and clear mini-display

### 3 POWER

ALTHOUGH it's powered by a single standard 9V battery that Fret-King says will perform up to 250 full tunings, we'd recommend keeping a spare to hand

