

The **M.A.D. Gallery** is delighted to present the 'Rhodium Birdfish' by Ulrich Teuffel, a beautifully hand-made modular electric guitar featuring two-piece aluminium body; interchangeable wooden tone bars; headless maple neck; and sliding pickups that can be swapped in seconds. Working by himself in his Bavarian atelier Ulrich crafts most of the guitar components by hand. He revels in every single step of the process which is hugely time-intensive meaning he produces only ten birdfish guitars per year!

The birdfish is eye-catching. The unorthodox appearance makes it look like a space-age guitar, but if you take a closer peek, you cannot miss all the classic electric guitar elements.

"I only use classic materials," says Ulrich. *"There is nothing there on the technological cutting edge; I simply redefine the form."*

To make the birdfish, Ulrich combined his experience as a professional luthier with knowledge gleaned from his industrial design studies.

"It was my goal to create an extremely versatile guitar by dividing it into its basic components," says Ulrich. *"I tried to take the idea of legendary guitar maker Leo Fender's modular guitar to the next level – I wanted to make the modules easily exchangeable and then supply the player with component options that resonate differently. I was also interested in an ergonomic design because you hold, feel and play the instrument. It had to have a relationship to the player's body."*

This astonishing guitar gets its name from the two central elements – the 'bird' and the 'fish' – both carved from a solid block of acoustically-optimal aluminium. The tone bars, pickups and neck are all attached to the 'bird' and the 'fish' while the control unit – with a five-way switch like that of a classic 1950s guitar – forms the head of the 'bird'.

The cylindrical tone bars are aligned sideways from the middle of the guitar to provide a percussive, twangy attack. The model in the **M.A.D. Gallery** is a Rhodium Prodigy Birdfish which has quilted maple-wood tone bars (and as a second set Honduran mahogany tone bars).

The Prodigy line has been created in 2008 where Mr. Teuffel developed a high-end line of instruments next to the classic models. Those high-end guitars differ from the serial models in the selection of the tonewoods, the fine metal platings, the pickups, the hardware and the finish. Last but not least, there are only produced at limited pieces.

"A headstock would have just been a decorative attribute," says Ulrich of his decision to endow the birdfish with a headless neck. *"Everything that wasn't essential in form may have been a disadvantage in function, so I deliberately left the headstock out."*

One of the major challenges in creating the birdfish was to manufacture most of its hardware components, including the screws. Ulrich had to master CNC manufacturing so that all the parts are to his own exact specifications, guaranteeing perfect harmonisation.

The unique design of the birdfish has helped it to become one of the most iconic guitars of all time. It has been hailed in books and specialist magazines, won three major design awards, is displayed in museums, and become an exclusive addition to private guitar collections.

Birdfish owners include Billy Gibbons from ZZ Top or Kirk Hammett, the lead guitarist and songwriter of Metallica – who was ecstatic about it when he came back from his tour a few years back. Of course, the birdfish's radical design can polarise guitar aficionados, and Ulrich understands that it might take a leap of faith to feel comfortable owning – and playing – one.

"It's like when we go out and buy new clothes, but we're not confident enough to wear them immediately," he says. "They might be just a bit too extravagant. But one day we put them on and they feel just right. The same thing could happen to you with the birdfish. Playing the birdfish on stage is a strong statement.

"Think back to the 1950s when Leo Fender unveiled his Broadcaster guitar at a trade show. People laughed because his invention had bright colours and a solid body. People thought it was a gimmick, but it set the standard and became perhaps the most important guitar of all. In some small way, I feel like Leo Fender back then."

We are delighted to present at the M.A.D. Gallery the Rhodium Birdfish that features aluminium 'bird' and 'fish', alder-wood tone bars, aged bird's eye maple neck and is priced at CHF 19'500, including Swiss VAT.

Ulrich Teuffel biography

Ulrich Teuffel was born in Kitzingen, Germany in 1965. As a child he was bitten early on by the inventive and creative bug; and started to build guitars at the age of 14.

After high school he did a metalwork apprenticeship in German carmakers including Mercedes-Benz. He studied industrial design and art history, although he didn't actually end up with a degree! No wonder... instead of studying, he spent his time building acoustic and electric guitars, inspired by his self-education. For example, while reading a guitar design book by Donald Brosnac, Ulrich was mesmerised by the stunning creations of guitar designer-builder Steve Klein which inspired him to build his own Steve Klein-style acoustic guitar.

But Ulrich grew dissatisfied with traditional guitar making and began looking for a bigger challenge. At the age of 30, he enrolled on a four-year industrial design course at Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design where he developed an entirely new approach to his work as a guitar maker. Ulrich was uncertain if the German instrument market would be ready to embrace his radical concept of guitar making, but he had faith that his designs would be accepted internationally.

Soon, Ulrich came up with the birdfish 'modular' guitar which he presented for the first time at the Frankfurt music fair in 1995. Other pieces in the Teuffel collection include the Coco series, the Niwa and the Tesla – which has become a standard instrument for experimental Jazz music.

Ulrich Teuffel works like an artist therefore considers his work as art work. *"Teuffel Guitars will end with my end. I don't see a legacy or a need for my work to be carried on when I will be dead. Everything has its end!"*

Technical Details:

The tonebars which are mounted now on your guitar are made from Quilted Maple.

The tonebars in the flightcase are made from Curly Honduran Mahogany.

The fingerboard is made from Ebony.

The pickup covers are made from Ebony.

The trussrod in the neck and the bridge saddles are made from Titanium.

The frets are made from stainless steel.

Each rhodium birdfish gets delivered with five different pickups and two different sets of tone bars.

For further information, please contact:

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