

New Products

Review of DuShane acoustic electric violin from Acoustic Electric Strings

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By Erin Shrader

Wouldn't it be nice if you could simply plug a cable into the side of a violin that you really like and just be louder? Want to plug it in at a gig for a purely acoustic sound, or run it through any kind of effects box and play like Hendrix? Now you can. **Acoustic Electric Strings**—an acoustic violin that comes pre-equipped with a built-in pick up—is the brainchild of **Gary Bartig**, who invented the Eminence Portable Upright Bass and the Dahlia five-string violin. After years of work developing an electric violin, Bartig realized that the best-sounding electric violin is an amplified acoustic violin. And that, he says, only sounds as good as the violin being amplified.

Bartig starts with the best-sounding instruments he can find, pops off the tops, and installs his own bass-bar mounted piezo pickups and a quarter-inch jack. He then does a complete setup with high-quality strings and fittings. "Of course, you can't take one spot and get the whole tone," says Bartig, who finds the bass-bar placement gives the best representation of the instrument. He prefers violins with a warm, clear tone to balance the piezo's brightness.

The four-string Acoustic Electric Strings acoustic-electric violin comes in three models at various prices. The main differences among models are the quality of wood, varnish style, and choice of fittings. The entry-level **Marinette** features a lightweight Schatten element mounted on the bass bar. Bartig inlays his own ultra-light piezo element in the bass bars of the **DuShane** and the **London**.

A five-string model is in the works.

I tried out the mid-level DuShane. It arrived in a sturdy Concord oblong case and I was pleasantly surprised by its appearance—good-looking wood with clean, stylish workmanship, and a tasteful, lightly antiqued varnish. The set-up was excellent, it was comfortable to play, and had a warm, even tone, as described. It wasn't a complex sound, but better than expected in that price range. I took it to a dance gig in a big hall for a test drive. The DuShane sounded fine plugged directly into the soundboard with plenty of gain, no hum, and no feedback, no matter how close to the monitor. The small amount of audible bow noise in the monitor disappeared when the guitar came in. According to the sound man, the DuShane sounded great out in the hall, no bow thud, just pure tone, although he personally missed the driving bow percussion that a microphone picks up. **Acoustic Electric Strings: Marinette model, \$699; DuShane model, \$999; London model, \$1,999. acousticelectricstrings.com**

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