



## BLACK LACE

LACE CYBERCASTER ELAN (BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK)

**F**OUNDED IN 1979, Lace Music Products first came to prominence in the mid Eighties with its revolutionary Lace Sensor line of pickups, a design that employs a unique Field Barrier system for reduced electro-magnetic hum and boosted sustain. Over the years, the incredibly popular pickups were featured as a stock item in various Fender Stratocaster and Telecaster guitars (including some signature models) and have been used by a wide range of six-string legends, from Eric Clapton, Pete Townshend, and Jeff Beck to James Burton, Buddy Guy, and The Edge.

Today, pickups still remain Lace's primary concern, but under the direction of Don Lace, Jr.—who took the reigns following the passing of his father, brand founder Don Lace, in 1992—the company has occasionally ventured into the electric guitar and bass worlds, with instruments like the Helix and

the Cybercaster. The Cybercaster, in particular, was notable for its futuristic body shape—something of a cross between a Fender Jaguar and a Tele that had been flattened out and elongated—and some models sported a neck with a 10.8-degree twist at the lowest fret, for improved fret-hand ergonomics.

Lace produced the Cybercaster for several years in the early 2000s, after which time it was discontinued and Lace turned its attention back to pickups. But now Don Lace, Jr., in conjunction with master archtop builder Jim Ellsberry, has revisited the guitar as part of the company's 35th anniversary celebration.

Together, they have produced a stunning reimagining of what was already a truly unique design. The new Cybercaster (which does not feature the radical neck twist) is available in two versions: the Classic and the top-of-the-line Elan.

The Classic strongly recalls its Cybercaster predecessor, despite some changes to input jack placement, pickup configuration, and headstock shape. The Elan on the other hand, is an extremely limited-edition premium model that, in addition to the features found on the Classic, sports a beautifully carved top and a semi-hollow, chambered body. Ellsberry refers to it as a "bespoke" instrument, and it's easy to understand why. Each example is made to order, with Ellsberry himself hand carving the handsome contoured tops.

"It's essentially a hand-made item," he says, "and one that we work closely with the client on." Among the most striking aspects of Ellsberry's top is the offset soundhole "swoop" tucked just beside the bridge in such a way that it appears to be almost an optical illusion. "We've actually taken to calling it a 'faux f-hole,'" he says. "There's a lip that protrudes and kind of covers the opening of the soundhole, so that while the guitar's top is open to the body, when you look at it straight on you can't see through to the inside. Only the player can."

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It's a nice aesthetic touch, but one that also has a functional component. "I wanted to combat feedback issues that tend to crop up with electric instruments that are semi-hollow," Ellsberry says. "Because of the way the Elan's soundhole is positioned up toward the player, it disrupts that transfer-of-sound signal from the guitar to the amplifier and back and forth."

The Cybercaster Elan's body is fashioned from a top of European spruce and a back and sides of Spanish cedar, a tonewood mix that, combined with the chambered insides, yields an instrument that is extremely resonant, responsive, and lightweight. The two humbuckers are Lace Alumitones, an aluminum-based design

that yields higher output and results in what Don Lace calls the "lightest pickup out there." In fact, according to Lace, the Elan weighs in at "around just four-and-a-half pounds overall."

Other high-end features on the guitar include a fretboard and neck fashioned from a single piece of quartered maple and a two-way truss rod that is accessible from the heel-end of the neck, for easy adjustment. That heel, which boasts an extremely smooth and low-profile joint, is another point of pride for Lace. "It has an aesthetic appeal, but the benefit is that your palm doesn't hit against that area of the guitar," he says.

Additionally, the Elan shown here sports a slick black nitrocellulose lacquer finish, a hand-carved bone nut, a steel Tele-style bridge plate, black pearloid dot fretboard inlays, and Gotoh tuners. According to Ellsberry, he and Lace plan to build just five of these exquisite guitars this year, with each taking roughly three to six months to produce. He also points out that, though the tonewoods and carving designs are set, clients can customize various hardware and finish options to their liking. "We'll even change out the pickups," Lace adds, and then laughs. "As long as they still say 'Lace' on them."

LIST PRICE \$6,200  
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