

tones, effortless playability, pots with an actual taper, precise nickel Gotoh tuners that look like Ms.Gotoh had a fling with Mr. Waverly, perfect fret work, and all presented in a finely built and finished work of art that will never be anything but exceptionally rare.

It should also be said that unlike a lot of very unique, custom-built guitars that try very hard *not* to remind us of something else, the Rock-it-Tone completely avoids appearing or feeling odd and quirky. The finer points of fit and finish are impeccable, and the guitar just feels right, with no compromises or miscues. In a world of knockoffs of knockoffs and 'custom-built' wannabe's, this guitar is truly exceptional.

Rock forth...**to**

Options open to discussion include choices in wood, set neck, Bigsby tailpiece, binding, neck size/shape, fret size and finishes. For more information contact: [Jason Allen, www.virtualvintageguitars.com](http://www.virtualvintageguitars.com), 949-635-9797

## Citron Baritone



We first profiled the work of Woodstock, NY builder Harvey Citron in the November 2005 issue of TQR. Armed with a graduate degree in architecture in the early '70s, Harvey couldn't seem to stay out of bands or guitar repair shops, and a visit to Dan Armstrong's legendary shop on LaGuardia Place in the West Village led him to begin winding pickups.

Inevitable guitar prototypes soon followed in collaboration with a classmate from architecture school, Joe Veillette, and their successful debut at a NAMM show launched Veillette-Citron guitars in 1975. Harvey continues to build his unique basses, baritone and 6-string guitars in Woodstock, NY, and our recent encounter with one of his baritones at the January 2008 NAMM show inspired our review of this astounding instrument. Here's the story of the baritone, which is modeled after the Citron CG-2 6-string. Our review follows...

**TQR:** Can you describe the physical construction and materials used for the baritone?



The 2 1/2" thick body is Honduras mahogany – usually one-piece if I can get it. The top is curly maple on the one you have, and it is also offered in spruce. The neck is one-

piece Honduras mahogany (bolt-on), with an East Indian rosewood fingerboard, and two-way adjustable truss rod. The body is almost completely hollowed out with the exception of it being solid under the bridge, and the strings terminate in a brass block. The sides are left at about 1/2" thick. The bridge is also East Indian Rosewood with a thick, compensated bone saddle. The finish is a mix on that one, ultimately polyester on top, and the neck is a satin catalyzed lacquer. All new ones will be gloss polyester on the body with a polyester sealer coat and nitro cellulose lacquer in a satin finish on the neck.

**TQR:** And what about the pickups and wiring scheme?

The pickups are my design, hand-wound by me in my shop. I call them 'custom-blended' because they have two gauges of wire on each coil of each pickup in my own recipe, with different gauges and a different number of turns on the neck and bridge pickups. The magnets are Alnico, and they have a 1/8" thick steel blade in each of the coils. Each gauge of wire has its own intrinsic sound, and then the number of turns also affects the tone as well as the coil form shape, pole piece material, and magnet type.

I used to build what I called 'staged pickups' back at Veillette-Citron, where I took taps out of each coil and bridge across the two coils making humbucking pickups at different resistance levels. They were either two-stage or three-stage. At one point I tried making a two-stage pickup kind of like a traditional Gibson pickup using one gauge for the first stage, and then a thinner gauge over that, making it hotter and a little more midrangy, but being able to call up the original sound as well because of the switching. I liked the sound of the 'blend' the best.

**TQR:** What is the story behind this design? It is so unique that we sense one lurking in the past...

-continued-



At Veillette-Citron, we built the first production baritone to my knowledge for John Sebastian, who really pioneered the concept. John was playing a Fender 6-string bass capoed on the 2nd fret, I believe, using special strings made for him by Tom Vinci (I also had a relationship with Vinci as I had tested strings for him and displayed our first Veillette-Citron instruments in his booth at NAMM). The strings were gauged .016-.080 as I remember, and the instrument was tuned down to an A. I was blown away by the whole thing – couldn't put the instrument down. John wanted one built that didn't need the capo, and the first was built in a shape reminiscent of an old Guild that Zal Yanovsky from the Lovin' Spoonful used to play. It was all maple, neck-through in a 28 3/4" scale. We built a number of them and changed the construction to set neck. The pickups were single coils that I wound.

After a number of years building Citron guitars, Sebastian said he would like me to build a baritone for him. Ever since I started building Citron guitars, I have been experimenting with various degrees of hollowness and different thicknesses. I always thought that my hollow format would be amazing for a baritone, because it was already so wonderful in a regular 6-string. I thought that the openness would only enhance the depth of tone and spatial quality. I used the same shape and electronics I was using in my CG2 for the baritone, and the same electronics (I also used these electronics on my AEG3), but made it hollow and 2 1/2" thick. It has two of my custom-blended humbuckers and an EMG piezo. I insist on having a real separate EQ for the piezo because I believe it is beneficial. I also build the baritone and all my hollow magnetic/piezo instruments with a mono/stereo switch, so that the magnetic pickups can go to a guitar amp, and the piezo circuit can go to amplification that has more headroom and doesn't break up – like a great bass amp, or the house system, or directly to the board in recording, if you wish.

### Review

*"You can go for months, pick up a guitar every day and nothing can happen, then one day you put your hands on it and something just drops out of the guitar and speaks to you. Those are the moments you're looking for."*

– David Gilmour

If the thought of playing a baritone leaves you cold, it's time to get a clue. And with its magnificent magnetic and piezo

pickups blended in *stereo*, Harvey Citron's baritone deserves an entirely separate classification as a musical instrument. The mere term 'baritone' is woefully, pitifully inadequate. No, you can't manage a lot of what may be familiar and comfortable on a 6-string, but that's the point. You won't want to. A *B-tuned* baritone flips the poles anchoring our magnetic center. Suddenly a simple, fingerpicked Bm/G/A progression acquires a mind-altering girth, depth and polyphonic presence that defies description (but we'll try). Imagine a sound that immediately confirms the existence of a higher power... Playing Citron's baritone is not unlike peering through a powerful telescope on a clear night and being confronted by the incomprehensible vastness of the universe. *How did I miss this for all these years?* You never looked. Granted, you won't have much use for a baritone in a Young Rascals tribute band, perhaps, but the rewards are boundless for those with an open mind. Just ask Todd Sharp, who blew us away more than once with his old Danelectro baritone ripping through an Ampeg VT40 with Delbert McClinton. This is 'guitar playing' on a whole 'nuther level, people, and you need to get you some.



The Citron is simply a magnificent instrument in concept, design and sound. The custom wound magnetic pickups present a mammoth sound stage of extraordinary clarity, harmonic content and depth, assisted by the hollow mahogany body and substantial 24-fret neck. We ran the guitar in stereo with the magnetic pickups into our 1960 Gibson GA77 1x15 and the piezo tickling the 1958 tweed Tremolux set clean with a vintage Fender reverb tank. Add tremolo and the world stops as you surrender into creative freefall, lost in undulating, rolling harmonics draped around frequencies that are unobtainable from a 6-string guitar. Yet the Citron poses no significant hurdles in terms of feel, playability, or the quick comprehension of the tone circuit, comprised of 18-volt active EQ by EMG featuring master volume, a blend pot for the magnetic pickups and piezo, a passive tone control for the magnetic pickups, treble and bass boost/cut for the piezo, and a mono/stereo switch. The baritone is flawlessly built and plays just so, with the certain promise of many days in which "something just drops out of the guitar and speaks to you." Yes, these are the moments we are looking for...

[www.citron-guitars.com](http://www.citron-guitars.com), 845-679-7138

-continued-