

\$5.00



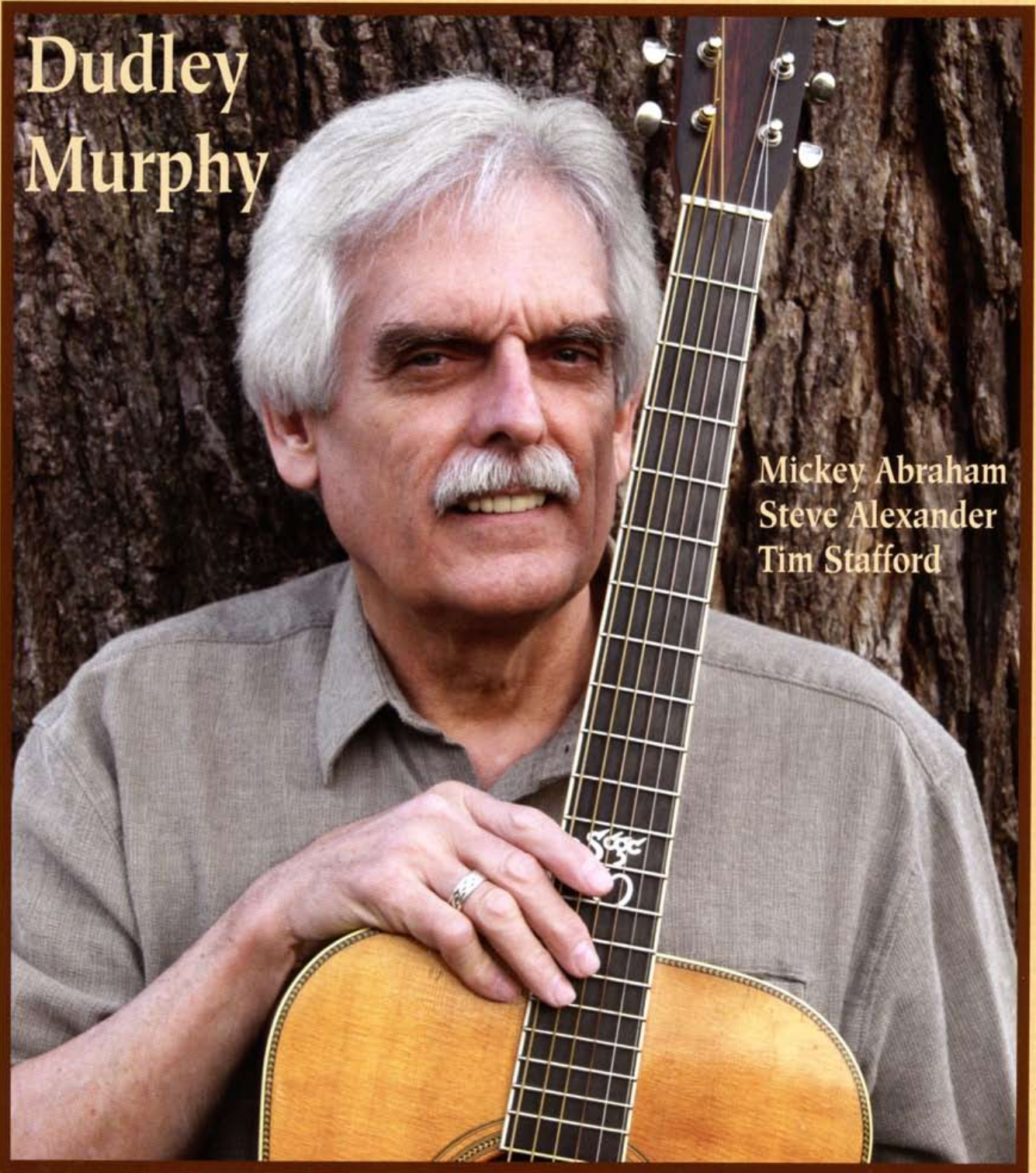
Flatpicking Guitar

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Reviews

**Gitane -
Selmer Style Jazz Guitar
- Modele John Jorgenson
"Tuxedo"
Model Number: DG-330**

Review by Dix Bruce

I've played a Gitane Maccaferri-Selmer Style guitar model D-500 (imported by Saga Music of South San Francisco) for several years now and I love it. It has replaced my Gibson L-7 on just about all my jazz gigs, from duos and trios to big bands. I love the L-7, but I've always wanted a guitar that was easier to hear acoustically in the midst of all the saxophones, trumpets, drums and grand pianos. The D-500 cuts through the din differently and not only was I instantly able to hear myself better acoustically, all the band leaders told me they preferred the sound of the D-500 to the L-5. I should mention here that all of the bands I play with expect a more acoustic, un-amplified guitar sound.

The D-500 has a 12-fret neck, a D-shaped sound hole, and a horizontal cutaway. I like the way it plays, the way it sounds, and the way it records. We used two D-500s on my Gypsy Swing & Hot Club Rhythm project. The D-500 has "that sound," it works well for what I need, and it's relatively inexpensive listing for around \$950.00.

Still, I've always been curious about the Gitanes with the 14-fret necks and the smaller "petite bouche" oval sound holes. If I've been playing a 14-fret guitar, like a Martin or Gibson, it takes me awhile to adjust both to the length of the neck and the fingerboard dot pattern of the D-500. (My Martin HD-28V fingerboard has one dot at fret 5, two at fret 7, one at 9, two at 12, and one at 15. Along the side of the fingerboard are dots at 3, 5, 7, 9, two at 12, one at 15 and 17. My Gitane D-500 has one dot at 3, 5, 7, 9, & 12 [2 dots on the side], 15 and 17 with no side dots at 15 and 17.) Most of the notes I play high up the neck are quite reachable on the D-500 with the cutaway but a 14-fret neck would give that much more access. My main complaint is that it sometimes takes me a few minutes to get used to the real estate differences between the 12-fret and the 14-fret fingerboard.

I recently got the chance to check out one of the newer Gitanes, the Modele John Jorgenson or "Tuxedo" guitar. It has the longer 14-fret neck, with a horizontal cutaway, and the smaller oval "petite bouche" sound hole. It's an amazing instrument.

It's a striking looking guitar: glossy black finish with white ivoroid trim. It would look great against a white dinner jacket. The "Tuxedo" has mahogany back, sides, and neck with an ebony fingerboard and a spruce top. Like all of these Maccaferri-style guitars, it has a "zero" fret next to the nut and an ebony mustache bridge with a movable center for fine tuning the intonation. The top and back are slightly arched and I find that to be a wonderfully subtle touch. All the appointments are beautiful and styled to fit in with the overall design of the instrument. The workmanship is outstanding. Playing it is like driving a big shiny black Cadillac. It really does look and feel classy.

The guitar came with a standard setup and though the neck played fast and true, the action was a little low for the way I play, especially on rhythm. I wondered how difficult it would be to raise the action on one of these mustache bridges. I assume you'd simply shim it.

I tried it at home and on a gig, playing it for many hours, and I enjoyed it very much. Easy to play, nice tone. Having the extra two frets makes a big difference in note accessibility up the fingerboard. It's an inspiring instrument. I don't know that I sounded any better playing it than any other guitar, but it seemed that way!

I did notice that the "Tuxedo" wasn't quite as loud as my D-500. That may be because my D-500 has loosened up and gotten louder as I've played it all these years. My general experience with these instruments is that the "petite bouche" models aren't quite as loud acoustically as the D sound hole guitars I've played. This may not matter all that much as most of the Selmer-style players who perform in public use some type of pickup or transducer.

The "Tuxedo" is a John Jorgenson signature model that he helped develop. Each has a label numbered and signed by John Jorgenson himself. He's

quoted on the Saga web site: "I have wanted to have a black Selmer-style guitar made for a number of years, ever since seeing one in a photo from the 50's made in France. The lines of these guitars are so elegant; I thought it would be very classy to have one all in black and white, like a tuxedo. The result is way beyond my expectations, it looks absolutely stunning— sometimes I like to just sit and look at it! So far I have used it on stage, and in the studio for recording some of my new CD. It has a very clear tone, and it sustains very well. The intonation all around the neck is exceptional too!"

I agree with his assessments and I have to admit that I've spent a fair amount of time admiring the "Tuxedo" design, finish, trim, tuning gears, tailpiece and all the rest. Its list price is \$1,495.00. For more information on the "Tuxedo" and all the other Maccaferri-Selmer guitars that Saga imports, log onto their web site: <http://www.sagamusic.com>.

