

## Bench Tests

# P-90 Prowler

Hamer Artist Korina

By Shawn Hammond

**H**eld in much the same esteem as Gibson and Paul Reed Smith, Hamer is one of today's top guitar manufacturers. The company's forte is custom shop quality at affordable prices, and the Artist Korina (\$1,899; \$1,999 with Duncan '59 humbuckers) is a stunning, lightweight instrument that offers exceptional playability and rock-solid tones.

Formerly known as the Vanguard Korina and constructed entirely of African mahogany or limba (better known as Korina), the Artist cuts a distinct look with its flawless vintage yellow finish. The extremely rigid, 24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"-scale three-piece neck is topped with a rosewood fretboard

### Snapshot

Aided by its semi-hollow Korina construction, Seymour Duncan P-90-style pickups, and a 24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" scale, the Hamer Artist Korina (\$1,899) delivers humbucker-style power and single-coil-like openness. The Artist wins an Editors' Pick Award.



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that sports beautifully crowned, polished, and beveled medium-jumbo frets. With its ultra-comfy, C-shaped profile, the neck is girthy enough to offer a good anchor, but not too thick to hinder playability.

The handcarved top is nicely contoured and beautifully matched. My only workmanship quibbles concern some dripped glue on the sound chamber's inner wall and a slightly rough rout for the upper strap button. A tidy, nickel paint-shielded control cav-

ity features recessed slots that allow the volume and tone pots to match the top's arc. Nice touch!

Tested through a 15-watt Matchless Skyliner Reverb, a '64 Fender Super Reverb, a Matchless Chieftain 212, and a Marshall AVT150, the Artist sounded majestic. The chambered body adds a wonderful sense of air, dimension, and ES-335-like sustain, and the low action and superb setup make this guitar an inspiration to play.

The Artist stays in tune extremely well, and its Seymour Duncan single-coil pickups and

### Contact Info

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simple controls provide astonishing flexibility. You can roar with humbucker-like oomph in the bridge position, purr with fat, jazzy neck tones, and throw down the funk—and just about everything in between—by using the dual-pickup setting and varying the volume on both pickups. Thanks to the location of the knobs, it's a cinch to perform on-the-fly volume swells.

In short, the Artist is voiced gorgeously and plays effortlessly.

While it might not have enough chunk for metalheads, it should get your mojo working whether you're a fan of down 'n' dirty blues or all-out rebel rock. You might find a Strat with more shimmer or a Les Paul that's more ferocious, but you'd be way hard-pressed to find a more versatile two-pickup guitar. With its top-grade tones and craftsmanship, the Artist Korina is one of the most butt-kicking bargains in the guitar jungle.

The Ratings Game	Tone	Playability	Workmanship	Hardware	Vibe	Value
Hamer Artist Korina	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ♥♥♥♥♥



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