

# Edward Klein Ellipse Steel-String

By Adam Perlmutter

**WHILE CLASSICAL AND STEEL-STRING GUITARS** share numerous structural elements, many players experience difficulties when switching between the two, in large part due to differences in string tension. Luthier Edward Klein addressed this problem in this prototype for his Ellipse guitar, which he displayed at the past two Montreal Guitar Shows.

Klein, who is based in Ontario, Canada, conceived of the instrument as an experiment with low-tension steel strings, appealing to nylon-string players who want the sound of a steel-string, as well as steel-string guitarists with hand-strength limitations. For this reason, the neck has a full classical width, and the guitar's body dimensions are akin to those of a classical instrument.

The Ellipse is built with an Engelmann spruce top, curly maple back and sides, mahogany neck, and ebony fingerboard and bridge. But with its bold elliptical styling—a pair of opposing ovals on both the front and back, mirrored by the bridge and soundhole—it wouldn't look out of place in a Cubist painting.

This daring design is highly functional. The placement of the ovals in relation to each other allows the guitar to sit agreeably on a player's leg, while a sloped shoulder grants access to the higher positions of the fingerboard. And the fanned-fret configuration, with scale lengths ranging from 640 to 660 millimeters (25.2 to 25.98 inches), complements the body's asymmetry while affording superior playability and intonation.

Other unusual features on the Ellipse include a set of gearless Steinberger tuners with a 40:1 tuning ratio, offering much finer adjustments than on a traditional geared tuner. And the bridge's individual saddles provide string-to-string separation that lends a bit of sonic clarity.

Due to its radical classical construction and low tension, the Ellipse hybrid has a sweet and evenly balanced tone, with sparkling overtones throughout. It's a joy for both steel- and nylon-string guitarists to play and admire—a triumph of form and function.

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