

A Sharkfin with Strings

Gary Kramer Guitars Kramertorium

FIRST AND FOREMOST, Gary Kramer's new Kramertorium guitar is a "looker." With its Viper Yellow finish and convex "V" body, it looks more like a Ferrari than your typical solidbody.

Kramer, of course, is well known for his aluminum-necked guitars of the '70s and famed "superstrats" of the '80s. Now officially known as Gary Kramer Guitars (as opposed to the Gibson-owned Kramer Guitars), the guitar maker has several new lines.

So what's under the hood of the hot rod Kramertorium? This American-made axe sports a set-neck construction with a 25.5" scale and a 24-fret ebony fingerboard (12" radius) on a maple neck. Dig the mother-of-pearl sharktooth position markers,

too! The body is mahogany and is all curves, with a sleek, swept-wing top and smaller bottom wing. Gary Kramer and partner Leo Scala earn huge props for creating such a balanced-looking body. There are many "pointy" guitars that are quirky eyesores, but Kramer and Scala really nailed a shape that's asymmetrical, yet pleasing to look at.

The Kramertorium uses a pair of direct-mounted EMG 81/85 humbuckers, a single Volume control, and a three-way toggle. The knob and switch are slightly recessed into the guitar's curved top – it feels ergonomically

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correct. And for what is clearly a heavy metal guitar, a tone knob is simply irrelevant—it's not missed by any means. The input jack is also secretly recessed into the lower wing—again, a very nice piece of design work.

There's also a double-locking vibrato, and all the hardware is finished in black (a stop-tail version is also available). The guitar comes in white, black, or the aforementioned yellow, all two-tone; the color on the top and solid black on the body and neck. My only quibble is the large "Kramertorium" logo printed on the back of the necks in large gothic letters. That may be a little tacky, but if you're a young metaler, it may not bother you.

As expected, the guitar is a screamer. Using a variety of tube amps (Marshall, Fender, Krank), it produces a great biting tone for solos on the bridge 'bucker, and some creamy tones on the neck. The Floyd-licensed vibrato performs as it should and the neck feels great, with super-low action for the fastest shredding. It even makes good clean sounds, some far twangier than you'd expect! But in general, this is a rock axe, clearly made for stagework. And it doesn't disappoint.

Now, if you're a vintage

guy, thinking, "Ah, this is just another heavy metal guitar," think again. Some may eyeball it and say to themselves, "This is a potential collector's piece." Granted, it may not accrue value *tomorrow*, but a guitar this eye-catching and well-built *will* turn heads (think about those angular Dean, BC Rich, or Ibanez Iceman solidbodies from 30 years ago). So if you collect pointy axes, this one might be worth your consideration. It's got looks, style, and a skull-crushing tone. — **Pete Prown VG**



GARY KRAMER KRAMERTORIUM

Price: \$1,399

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