

# KTS TITANIUM GUITAR PARTS

THEY MAKE BIKES, GOLF CLUBS AND SPECTACLES OUT OF THE STUFF. MICK TAYLOR ASKS WHAT TITANIUM HAS TO OFFER GUITAR PLAYERS

**Titanium, Ti. It nestles there in the periodic table at number 22, atomic weight 47.867. What that really means is anyone's guess, but what's generally agreed is that titanium has relatively low density, high strength and is extremely resistant to corrosion. It's increasingly found where steel once was – half the weight but equal strength, and typically double the cost.**

So then. Where is strength and corrosion resistance of utmost concern on a guitar? Let's take it to the bridge...

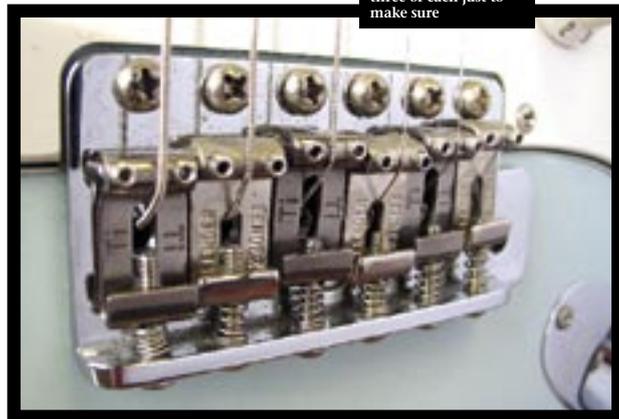
## NICE TI

Distributed exclusively by WD Music Products, these custom titanium parts have some bold claims, including improved tone and a huge increase in sustain, improved clarity and string-to-string definition, and extended life.

We have three examples; a Strat set for US/Mex dimensions (Jap/Gotoh bridge-type also available), a vintage Tele set that are compensated for intonation (non-compensated also available), and finally a set of tune-o-matic-style saddles atop a regular diecast bridge. Aesthetically, the Ti parts score highly thanks to the slightly brushed/off-chrome appearance that lends them an immediately worn-in look. Even better, given the material's corrosion resistance – the Ti will not rust – they will stay that way.

We fitted the Strat set to a 2001 Fender American Vintage 62 Reissue

■ Little difference? We resorted to fitting three of each just to make sure



## GBINFO

### KTS TITANIUM PARTS

PRICE: £65 (PR-11, Strat)  
£69.99 (PR-08WD, Tele)  
£59.95, installed on an ABR-1 bridge

BUILT IN: Japan

FEATURES: Titanium saddles available in a wide variety of types

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## GBOPINION

### KTS TITANIUM GOLD STARS

- ★ Sound as good as high-quality Fender and Gibson parts
- ★ They look great
- ★ Intonation compensation a boon for the Tele saddles

### BLACK MARKS

- Expensive

### GBRATING



■ KTS Titanium Guitar Parts are available in a wide variety of types

Strat and the results are, well, hardly earth shattering. Stay with us, though, because that may be the very thing that scores them points. There are replacement saddles on the market – specifically Graphtech String Savers – that definitely alter the tonality of Stratocasters, which a lot of traditionalists don't like. The story with the Ti saddles is that we are hard pressed to notice any huge tonal difference, so we fitted alternate Ti/Fender saddles to A/B them. If anything, the Ti sound marginally softer than Fender's own pressed-steel saddles, which in the context of a biting bridge pickup is no bad thing. Cost-effective diecast saddles are another matter, however. They sound awful, so the Ti definitely represents an improvement over cheapies, albeit a very expensive one when you consider that WD's own nickel-plated steel saddles are just £11.75 per set.

## BRING ON THE EMPEROR?

We fitted the tune-o-matic-style saddles (and supplied bridge) to a mid-1990s Gibson ES-135. Again, the tonal difference is marginal, if anything a touch more focused, but how much that has to do with the saddles or the different mass and materials of the host bridge is up for debate. On the slight downside for this particular guitar, the string grooves in the saddles themselves are very shallow, which coupled with the 135's shallow break angle over the bridge, means

that even the slightest aggression in pick attack knocks the low E string off. Already an incredibly sweet guitar, unfortunately the Ti saddles did little to noticeably improve it – it was always going to be a tough job.

Which just leaves the Tele saddles. Put in place of the brass saddles on an American Vintage '52 Reissue, now we are starting to hear some difference, and KTS's claims seem less like marketing hype. We're still talking subtle differences, but the tone does seem somewhat more defined and focused with less emphasis on the really spiky high-end stuff. The intonation compensation is a real boon too.

## CONCLUSION

Out-and-out cynics will be tempted to dismiss the KTS Ti saddles as another case of the Emperor's New Clothes when it comes to guitar innovation. While the claims of wildly improved tone and sustain seem a little ambitious – whatever the diagrams on the KTS website show – there is evidence of marginal tonal enhancement in terms of overall note fullness and depth, and a slight loss of the really high-end. While they most definitely don't sound any worse than high-end Fender and Gibson original parts, that price will swing the decision for most people – titanium is clearly not cheap stuff, and for a mid-price guitar, you're better off upgrading pickups first. **GB**