



CLAPTON'S CROSSROADS GUITAR FESTIVAL!

GARY MOORE



Vintage Guitar

magazine



**STEVE
VAI**

**ANDY
POWELL**

**5 FRETTED
FEATURES**

DAION GUITARS

**UKE HALL OF
FAME MUSEUM**

GIBSON LOAR L-5

**CARL RADLE'S
'75 ALEMBIC**

**KRAMER TRIAXE
AND ENTERPRISE**

**30 CD, DVD, AND
BOOK REVIEWS!**

Tal Farlow, Howlin' Wolf, and J.J. Cale on DVD, plus Santana, SCOTS, BR549, Grisman/Garcia, Kentucky Headhunters, Gypsy jazz, more!

FENDER'S Jazzmaster

**GOING
AFTER
GIBSON!**

May 2004 Vol. 18 No. 07

*****AUTO**3-DIGIT 895
119718 MAY 05 S
VINCE VALENZA
8175 S VIRGINIA ST STE 850-207
RENO NV 89511-8922

S257

05



3

\$4.95 U.S./\$6.95 Canada

PLUS

**TUBE AMPS AND
HOW THEY WORK**

PLEK THAT NECK!

HOT NEW GEAR! REVEREND RUMBLEFISH BASS, LOLLAR PICKUPS, MUSIC MAN GUITARS, SOUND ENHANCER

Daion Guitars

At the Sign of the Caribou

UNLESS YOU'RE ASLEEP at the wheel, you may have noticed that there are a lot of really excellent guitar brands out there that deserve the attention of the discriminating guitar aficionado. One that's caught the eye of a small group of enthusiasts, including myself, is Daion. There are even a couple websites devoted to the brand, but little concrete information. Well, it's time to plunge in, though there are still plenty of uncertainties about the whole truth of Daion guitars. That they're excellent works of art is immediately apparent to anyone who sees one.

The Guitorgan Connection

The Daion story begins with acoustic guitars. According to an undated letter that was sent out to prospective customers by one Robert H. Murrell, Director of Musical Products, Daion guitars were the result of a collaboration between MusiConics International, Inc. (MCI) of Waco, Texas, and the Japanese luthier Hirotsugu Teradaira beginning in 1978. MCI had begun back in 1967 and is perhaps best remembered by hardcore guitar freaks as the people who brought us the Guitorgan. They were located at 7400 Imperial Drive. Other names mentioned as contacts at MCI were Patrice Rubel, Mary Lyle, and Scott Pelking.

Teradaira is described as being "a major Japanese guitar designer and a pioneer in the use of brass and solid cedar as design criteria." As intimated in Daion catalogs, the notion of emphasizing cedar came from classical guitars. If it was ok there, why not on steel stringed guitars? Use of brass for nuts

LEFT TO RIGHT
1981 Caribou.
1981 Daion Savage.
1982 Headhunter.

and saddles (or electric bridges) was coming on strong at the time as guitarists searched for the holy grail of increased sustain. I suspect the collaboration Murrell claimed was in the nature of "you make, we sell," but there it is.

Terada?

There is unsubstantiated evidence that Mr. Teradaira's Daion guitars were built by the Terada factory in Nagoya, Japan.

Terada Musical Instruments Manufacturing Co., Ltd., best known today as the maker of imported Gretsch guitars, was founded in either 1912 or 1916, depending on your source. They built

toy violins, among other things. Manufacturing of guitars and other real stringed instruments began in 1955. By 1974 the company was being run by the founder's son, Haruo Terada (b. 1926). Terada, you'll recall, was the company that first supplied Jack Westheimer with his Kingston guitars in around 1959, and later made Cortez guitars for him.

Another name that comes up in several sources in relation to Daion is Yamaki, the name put on some very well made Japanese acoustics in the mid-1970s. Whether there was a Yamaki company or these were made by Terada is unknown, but I suspect the latter.

Two other brand names associated with Daion electric guitars, at least, were Dion in Japan and JooDee, possibly in Europe.

Toiling Through the Years

The flagship of the Daion line introduced in 1978 was a series of acoustic guitars called the Heritage, all dreadnoughts. These reflected the somewhat conflicted tastes of the time, where cosmetics favored a natural look, but technology that would improve performance was not eschewed.

All Daion acoustics had set-in mahogany necks with primarily Martin-style headstocks carrying the trademark stylized tuning fork logo (or it could be a steer head!). Typically, the Daion name was branded into the back of the headstock, not shown on the front. Unless noted, most Daions had rosewood fingerboards and belly pin bridges. Curiously, probably due to the cedar, Daion catalogs recommended light gauge strings. Daion guitars tend not to be labeled, so you have to know the materials to tell what you have.

The Heritage guitars were named after the year they were introduced, although that name continued on through time. The first was the '78 Daion Heritage Guitar. This set the tone. It had a mahogany-finished solid cedar top, mahogany body, maple binding and rose, bound rosewood fingerboard with brass circle inlays, a brass nut and saddle, rosewood pin bridge and

gold hardware. This was accompanied by a 12-string version, the '78/12 Daion Heritage Guitar.

One other Heritage model appeared at the beginning, the '78 Century. This was a little more traditional, with a mahogany-finished spruce top (doesn't say solid, so it's probably laminated), mahogany body, black celluloid binding, bound rosewood with dot inlays, and a double ring rose.

The second Heritage models were imaginatively named the '79 Daion Heritage Guitar. This guitar featured your choice of a solid cedar or solid spruce top over a mahogany body. Initially it was finished in black, though by 1981 it could be had in an optional brown finish. The '79 Heritage had novel "brassloid" binding and double brassloid rose, with real brass circle inlays and a brass nut and saddle. One source lists a 12-string version, but this isn't supported by Daion literature.

The final guitar was the beautiful '80 Daion Heritage Guitar, available as a six and '80/12 12-string. This had a solid spruce top covered in .03 mm of highly figured Ovangcol mahogany, stained a mahogany sunburst. The body was also Ovangcol, with a nato neck, though by 1981 these were simply identified as mahogany. The binding on the '80 was maple. The '80 had a bound oval soundhole and little blobby tortoise pickguard. This also had the regulation brass nut and saddle. Inlays were cool mini-dots of brass set in a "wave" pattern.

In 1981 the Heritage Series was renamed the Year Series, but was otherwise unchanged. All models were offered until the end in probably 1983 or '84.

On Your Mark

Also introduced in '78 was the Daion Mark Series. Again, these were dreadnoughts, but a little more conservative with bone nuts and saddles instead of brass (also no brass inlays).

The Mark I was solid cedar on a mahogany body with black-and-white celluloid bindings. The Mark I had a rosewood/maple/rosewood soundhole rose and a rosewood pickguard with a little point on the rear. Inlays were conventional dots. A Mark I/12 12-string was also available.



The Different Strummer



LEFT TO RIGHT 1980 The '78HE Heritage acoustic-electric and 1982 Power Mark XXB. 1982 Power Mark XX. 1981 Mark X and X-B2. 1981 Barbarian. 1981 Savage Bass. 1982 The '82.

The Mark II was similar, in solid cedar and rosewood. Other trim was the same as the Mark I except for having a rosewood rose. There was also a Mark II/12.

Initially there appears to have been no Mark III, but the line jumped to the Mark IV. Again a solid cedar top with a rosewood body. The head, fingerboard and body were bound in a rosewood-colored celluloid. Instead of dots, the Mark IV had thin maple lines the length of the fret inlaid along the bass side, very tasty. The rose was a 5-piece maple and rosewood affair. One source claims a Mark IV/12, but this does not show up in available Daion catalogs or price lists.

Top of the line were the Mark V and Mark V/12. This was also solid cedar and rosewood. The neck had a volute at the head that Daion called a "diamond cut." All of the binding was ivory celluloid. Markers were maple dots offset to the bass side. The rosette was a cool double herringbone design. Most unusual was a mustache pin bridge with the edges turned up in a smiley face.

In 1980 the series was joined by the Mark III, a bit more daring. It also had the solid cedar top, but now an ash body! To complement the blond effect, bindings were ivory celluloid. The rose was the 5-piece maple/rosewood design. In the catalog the bound fingerboard was rosewood with dots,

however, some Mark IIIs have been spotted with maple fingerboards, black dots, and an odd maple belly pin bridge.

In around 1982 one more guitar, the Mark Jr., debuted. This was the cheapest of the Marks. No details are available, but expect a laminated top and mahogany.

Like the Heritage/Year Series, the Daion Marks were offered until the end in 1983 or '84.

Gentlemen Prefer Blonds

In 1979, anticipating the blondeness of the Mark III, Daion introduced the short-lived Maplewood Series. Again dreadnoughts, the Maplewoods had spruce tops and maple bodies, with mahogany necks. All had bound maple fingerboards brown dot inlays. Each featured a brown rose and the pointy pickguards seen on the Marks.

The MS-100 and MS-100/12 had a laminated spruce top and white/black celluloid line binding. The MS-100S and MS-100S/12 were the same but with a solid spruce top. The MS-101 and MS-101/12 added a tan finish. The MS-101S and MS-101S/12 were also tanned, with solid spruce tops. The Maplewoods lasted only until 1981.

Two Daion classicals were added to the line in 1979, as well. The DC-200 had a laminated cedar top and mahogany body, with a marquetry rosette. The DC-300 came in solid cedar. These made it to the end.

Leaving a Legacy

In 1980 Daion introduced another interesting line called the Legacy Series. These guitars had jumbo-sized lower bouts coupled with a very narrow upper bout, intended to give you both booming bass and well defined trebles. Bridges were rectangular, not belly. Necks had the "diamond cut" volutes at the head. The L-9 had a natural laminated spruce top and mahogany body and neck. Binding was black/white/black celluloid, with white bound head and neck and double black line rose. Inlays were dots. The L-99 put an antique finish (sort of streaked brown) over a solid cedar top and added dark-stained maple binding and maple rose. Inlays consisted of a double snowflake at five! The L-999 was pretty gorgeous, with antiqued solid cedar and rosewood. The fingerboard was ebony, bound in maple. Ebony bridge. Body binding was strips of light and dark maple. The rose was light maple set off with dark rings. The marker was a single pearl tuning fork logo at five. The Legacies also continued to be offered to the end.

By 1981 Daion began offering a transducer pickup as an option on any of its acoustics. As with the '78HE shown above, some were also offered with pickups and

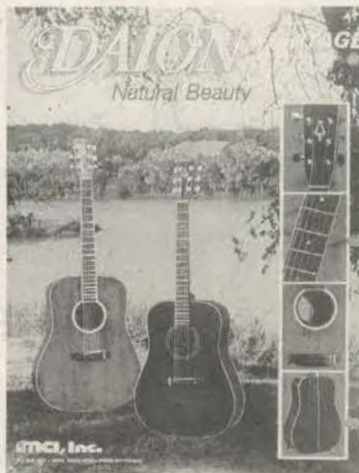
volume and tone with an HE suffix, possibly available by 1980.

Stolid and Sleek

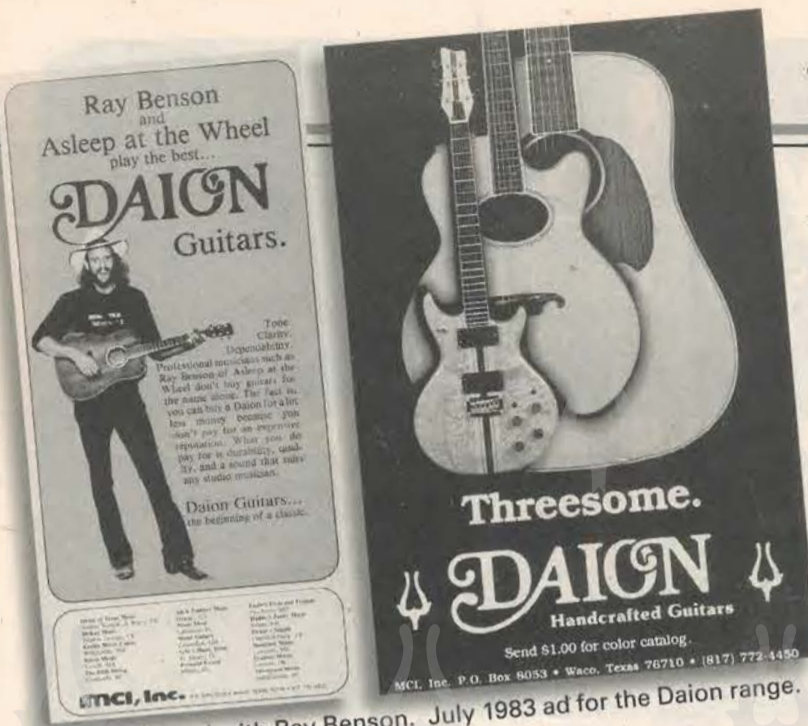
Simultaneously, Daion introduced a fascinating pair of acoustic-electric models in 1981, the '81 Caribou and '81 Gazelle, each with a 12-string version. Both had design features that would typify Daion guitars. Imagine a jumbo with a single cutaway and a scoop taken out of the middle of the lower bout. The heads were a new asymmetrical design, a little extended on the bass side. Both had piezo pickups with a preamp, with a volume and tone control mounted on the shoulder near the neck. The catalog shows these with slider pots, but some are seen with knobs. Soundholes were oval with ring roses. Head, neck and body were bound in multiple strips of white and black celluloid. Nuts and saddles were brass. These had an antique-looking mustache pin bridges with the edges turned down in a frown. Fingerboards were rosewood with mini brass dots. The Caribou had a solid cedar top and flamed maple body. The Gazelle was made of solid spruce and rosewood. Finishes were tan, wine red and brown. These remained in the line.

The Jumbo Series joined the Daion line in

1980 Daion catalog.



The Different Strummer



1982 Daion ad with Ray Benson. July 1983 ad for the Daion range.

1982. This was sort of part of the Heritages, in that the guitars were the '82 and '82/12. This was a big-bodied round jumbo model in wine red sunburst on solid cedar, with a body made of wood in the "rosewood family," whatever that means. This also had the diamond cut neck with a volute. Body, head and fingerboard were bound in the cool brassloid, while the rose was mix of brassloid and maple. Inlays were brass circles but cut in half and split. Nut and saddle were brass. The pin bridge had a little peak or v at the bottom, instead of a belly. Hardware was gold. These continued to the end.

Power...

The subject of Daion electric guitars is partially fuzzy. We know that an innovative line of solid bodies and semi-hollows was introduced in the U.S. in 1981. However, there are also some interesting "copy" guitars that show up mainly in Asia and Australia. These are probably contemporaneous, since copy guitars continued to thrive in Japan during the early '80s. So, let's begin with the known quantities.

In 1981 Daion introduced its very fine Power Series of solid bodies. These are remarkable guitars, with slightly offset double cutaways and neck-through-body construction. These had the new asymmetrical head introduced on the Caribou, a brass nut, and a heavy-duty cast bridge/tailpiece assembly with adjustable brass saddles. Strings loaded through the body. Bodies were very slim, tapering to the edges and highly contoured. 1981 Daion catalog.

The entry model was the Mark X, all ash, with a bound rosewood fingerboard and mini brass dot inlays. Available finishes were tan, wine red, brown and black. Most Mark Xs had the tapered, rounded edges that were typical, but some have been seen with wide celluloid binding on the top.

The deluxe model was the Mark XX. Its fingerboard was ebony. The Mark XX came in several interesting combinations. One was a sandwich of ash with a layer of rosewood in the middle, sexily revealed in the contours. Another was the reverse, with a rosewood sandwich and ash middle. Still cool. A third variation was ash with a maple center. When this variation is encountered, the maple is usually stained a bright color. Finishes were tan, wine red, brown and dark green.

These Marks are the main ones seen. One source lists two more, the Mark XXV and Mark XXX. No details are available. They were probably pretty much the same but less fancy. The Mark XXV came in ivory, black or metallic finishes. The Mark XXX came in black or ivory. This source lists them as available from 1984-90, but the latter date is certainly wrong, and they could have been around in 1983.

Two basses were also offered, the Mark X-B2 and Mark XX-B. Basically these followed the same lines as the guitars in terms of materials. The upper horn was more extended, as usual on basses. Both had a J-style pickup at the bridge and a split-coil P-style pickup in the middle. The Mark X-B came in tan, wine red, and brown. The Mark XX-B came in tan, wine red, brown,

The principal body timber was ash. Pick-ups were twin humbuckers with mini-toggles for on/off and a pair of volumes and tones. These had black bobbins and big heads on the poles.

black, and dark green. At the end of the run there was briefly offered the Mark X-B2 Double-neck. No details are available, but it was probably a 6/4.

...and savagery

Along side the Powers was the Savage Series. These had offset double cutaways more reminiscent of the Caribou, with a scooped-out bass bout. Necks were maple rose bolt-on with the asymmetrical head. Rosewood fingerboards were bound in black with pearloid dots. The bodies had a large white pickguard and a bridge/tailpiece assembly, with strings passing through the body. The Savage had two humbuckers, with a threeway and a series/parallel toggle. The Barbarian had three humbuckers with three mini-toggles. Colors were white, black, red, yellow and blue.

One bass was offered, the Savage. This had basically a similar design to the Savage guitar, with the J/P pickup layout. Same finishes.

Headhunting

Perhaps Daion's most famous guitar was also introduced in 1981, the semi-hollowbody Headhunter H-555. This was one of the more interesting takes on the classic semi. The Headhunter had an interesting internal design with the rims attached to the center maple strip. The Headhunter was an equal double cutaway with the trademark scoop on the lower bass bout. This was made of all flamed maple, with f-holes, mahogany set-neck, and the new asymmetrical head. All bound. The fingerboard was rosewood with brass circles. Brass nut and bridge/tailpiece with brass saddles, strings through body. This had twin humbuckers with a threeway and two coil taps. These came in gold, brown, burgundy, honey sunburst, and tobacco sunburst.

Daion's copy guitars were apparently called the Performers. These included, at least, copies of a Stratocaster (called a Rockson MDL), Telecaster, Flying V, Les Paul Deluxe (called a Performer), and SG. The Strat copy was pretty close to vintage, with the narrow head and Kluson copy tuners (and spaghetti type!). The Les Paul had a near-copy head, without the center dip.

One other Daion that appeared on eBay as this was written was a version of the BC Rich Bich, with twin humbuckers and passive/active circuitry. This looked to be neck-through, and was very similar to those versions made by Hondo in 1983 or '84. One other Daion Performer was on eBay, a superstrat with the hum/sing/sing layout and a locking vibrato system. Could have appeared by '84 or so.

Endgame

When the Daion run ended is uncertain. The last known price list was for November of '82, and the last Daion ads appeared in September '83. Those late era Marks attributed to '84 might be evidence that it hobbled into '84. By that time the rage was for Strat-style guitars and acoustics were a tough sale. The taste for both *au-naturelle* and brass was over, and the yen/dollar exchange rate was making Japanese guitars more expensive than the American market would bear.

According to one former Daion dealer, who was not very clear on dates, Daion shifted production to Korea and changed the brand name to Anea. He said some came in with the Anea logo plastered right over Daion. These included flattops and some copy-style guitars. These apparently didn't last long. It's not known if the shift to Korea was made by the makers of Daion or MCI.

The main endorsers of Daion guitars were Chris O'Connell and Ray Benson of the Texas band Asleep At The Wheel, who appeared in ads beginning around 1979. Other players touted by MCI included Paul Yandell, Tim Weston (with Diana Ross), the Janie Fricke Band, Shelley West and David Frizzel, Steve Wariner, Jon Kurnick, Ronnie Prophet, Jeannie Seely Band, and the Freddie Hart Band. Okay, so we've heard of some of them!

For Daions with a serial number, the first one or two numbers are the year. Thank you!

Though a small chapter in guitar-dom, Daion guitars were always well made and the Caribou/Gazelle acoustics, Power Marks and Headhunters are especially worth seeking out, both for their elegant design and excellent playability. And that's what we know about Daion. 🎸



THE LEGACY SERIES



THE YEAR SERIES



THE MARK SERIES



THE '81 SERIES

