

Features: ★★★★★

Scatter wound single coil 'strat' pickups, these are 6.4k resistance and are apparently modelled on the 'old' style strat pickups. Pole pieces are staggered, have been lightly bevelled and are well polished. Screws and springs are included and connector wires are of good length and are good quality cloth covered, again in the old style. The pickups are unpotted as evidenced by some residue of wax around the exit points of the connector wires. A choice of colours is available for the covers.

Instrument:

I build guitars as a hobby and I also refurbish and rebuild old wrecks when I come across them. I bought the Bensons as replacements to fit into a 1976 'Kimbara' strat copy from Japan that I had rescued from a colleague at work. The Kimbara is a reasonable to good Japanese copy having a 3-piece solid body, possibly alder, and a good maple neck with a fingerboard. This one was in a real mess. Only one original 'no-name' pickup remained at the neck, the others having been replaced long ago with some old Schaller 'hot-rail' humbuckers. The pickups and electrics were badly installed using cheap pots and switches and so I decided to replace the whole lot including the scratch plate. I already had a PAF style humbucker of about 8.8k which I wanted to use at the bridge and have used the Benson Handwounds in mid and neck positions. The one in the mid position is rwrp. I chose this combination as I already have 'strats' with single coils fitted such as Kent Armstrong, Wilkinson and Tonerider and I particularly wanted to try an HSS combination. I also wanted to find a reasonably priced alternative to use in the future.

Sound Quality: ★★★★★

The output levels seem a little higher than my similar spec Kent Armstrongs and Toneriders, but that is perfect as they match very well to the PAF at the bridge. Plugging in to either my solid state Laney or a modified Epiphone Jr valve amp the pickups are wonderfully well balanced with a clear, ringing tone that stays musical throughout all settings. Wind back the tone of the neck pickup and you get that lovely creamy Clapton 'woman' tone and yes, even the middle pickup which I often find disappointing on strats, sounds great on its own. The in between settings are also great. A little gain on the amp and tweak the volume and you easily get that great 'strat quack'. Perfect for Mark Knopfler. All together these Bensons are a real discovery. They are clear, musical, versatile and above all - they sound great! I play mainly blues and these pickups have helped transform a cheap Japanese strat copy into a guitar that could easily become a future favourite!

Reliability/Durability: ★★★★★

Ease of Use: ★★★★★

Customer Support: ★★★★★

Overall Rating: ★★★★★

I'm going to buy some more of these as soon as my next build project kicks off. I've recently used Catswhiskers humbuckers on a new build PRS style with great results and now Benson is added to my list of great pickups. I've been playing for about 8 years now and have accumulated or made a fair collection of guitars and related gear in that time. My current number one is the PRS style guitar in which I've used Catswhiskers S-buckers (try some, they're wonderful) along with a Lace Sensor Gold. This has a flame maple top on an swamp ash body and a bolt-on maple neck with ebony fingerboard. Looks and sounds awesome! I also have Washburn, Aria Pro II, Eko and Yamaha's along with Strat and Tele copies that I've made as well as various stomp-boxes and the amps above.

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