



Strandberg Boden Standard N2.6T

A new vibrato design, on a guitar we loved already - will we be tickled pink?

BY CONNOR FLYS

▶ **EVER SINCE THE** electric guitar came into the world, there have been vibrato systems to create expressive pitch changes, from the antique Kauffman and Bigsby designs of the jazzbox era, to the double-locking Floyd Rose we see on so many guitars today.

Though they often complicate string changes and setups to the point of sheer tedium, and can create tuning issues unless expertly calibrated, we can't resist them. Give almost any guitarist a guitar with a whammy bar, and you can bet they'll be scooping away at it within just a couple of minutes.

The possibilities are endless and fascinating, and generations of guitarists from Hank Marvin to Jeff Beck, Steve Vai and Mattias Eklundh, have found distinct ways of expressing themselves through the bar.

When it comes to headless guitars, Steinberger developed a couple of pioneering vibrato systems, not least the astonishing TransTrem - designed way back in 1984, if you can believe it. But the recent explosion in guitars that are both headless *and* multi-scale presents even more complexity.

Strandberg hasn't been deterred, of course. Over the past few years, we've seen multiple revisions of the company's EGS vibrato system, and an admirable focus on continuous improvement has now led to an all-new vibrato design, the Arc TILT.

Recently, I was introduced to the company's new Boden N2 Standard range, through the fixed-bridge N2.6 model, and very impressed I was too. Now, though, a chance to get acquainted with the new vibrato design on an otherwise similar guitar. This should be interesting.

Build quality

One other thing is different, and that's the color. Lifting the Boden N2.6T out of its little padded gig bag, the satin Fuchsia Metallic finish is dazzling.

As with the fixed-bridge model, options are limited at the moment; you can only have this shockingly bright pink, or a rather shrinking-violet satin black. Pink being the connoisseur's choice, naturally.

That aside, the same high standard of build quality is evident here. The finish is flawless and all the tolerances seem as tight as you'd hope. The lack of a rear spring cavity cover might be disconcerting to some, but will be a non-issue for most.

Then there's the weight - or lack thereof. It's just as light as any other Strandberg; the company is committed to quoting an approximate weight of 2.3kg for this model, suggesting there'll be little room for variance between different examples.

As for the componentry - again, there's nothing to complain about. Not having extensively sampled the original EGS vibrato, the new TILT system nonetheless appears

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slicker and more evolved. It boasts offset pivot points to complement the fan of the frets, and a new baseplate and block design.

Beyond that, it's a similar story to the fixed-bridge N2.6, with smooth satin black-finished hardware and the same pair of Seymour Duncan humbuckers - the medium-output Pegasus and Sentient, with a five-way selector.

Playability

Playability is a familiar story - it's what Strandberg's reputation is built on. It's magnificent. The proprietary EndurNeck design, always a joy to use, comfortably places the fretting hand in the most ergonomically correct position at every part of the neck.

The body shape is exceptionally comfortable when played sitting down; the lightweight construction makes it easy to stand with for long periods too.

Onto the TILT vibrato, then. Once the arm is torqued up (via the supplied Allen key), it's remarkably smooth in operation and has a wide range too; this is cited as a notable improvement over the previous design.

You can dive until the strings are slack. As for upward movement, I chickened out after three semitones - but Strandberg's own video evidence shows that at least seven semitones is possible.

In amongst all of this, tuning wandered a little, but certainly no more so than I'd expect after committing similar abuses to any other floating two-point, non-locking bridge.

It also delivers the goods for gentler scoops and flutters, working fantastically well as a tool of melodic expression.

Sounds

The sonic delivery is, of course, similar to the excellent range of tones offered by the fixed-bridge N2.6; the Pegasus/Sentient set is a wise choice, modern-voiced and with plenty of definition for technical modern rock and metal, but not so aggressive as to alienate those who prefer lower-gain sounds.

Each position on the five-way switch is equally useful, and it's easy to see how this guitar could do the business equally well for metal, jazz-fusion or function gigs.

Perhaps it's the color, perhaps it's the vibrato, but I found myself playing lots of 80s rock and enjoying the experience immensely.

Verdict

Another knockout from Strandberg, then. As

GUITAR WORLD VERDICT



The N2.6T is just as impressive as the fixed-bridge variant, with the new TILT vibrato being a very elegant and accomplished device that really adds to the experience. If the prospect of a Strandberg appeals, but you've been waiting for the right vibrato model, now is surely the time.

PROS

- + The same magnificent playing experience as other Boden models.
- + The vibrato is lovely to use and works very well.
- + Excellent quality and feature set, but still good value for what it offers.

CONS

- Is pink your color?

SPECS

MADE: Indonesia
TYPE: Six-string headless electric guitar with vibrato
BODY: Basswood
NECK: Roasted maple, EndurNeck profile
FINGERBOARD MATERIAL/RADIUS: Roasted maple, 20" radius
SCALE LENGTH: Multi-scale, 635mm-648mm (25" to 25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Plastic, 42mm (1.65")
FRETS: 24, DHP 28HFS stainless steel (plus zero fret)
HARDWARE: EGS Arc TILT 6-string multiscale vibrato, Arc string lock, black satin finish
STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE: 52.5mm
ELECTRICS: Seymour Duncan Pegasus (bridge) and Sentient (neck) humbuckers, 5-way switch, Volume and Tone knobs
WEIGHT: 5.1lb/2.3kg
LEFT-HANDED OPTIONS: None
FINISHES: Satin Fuchsia Metallic (as reviewed), Satin Black Metallic
CASE: Strandberg standard gig bag included

I concluded in the N2.6 Standard review last year, there's little point spending more on the Original model unless you absolutely must have a maple top and the Fishman Fluence pickups (or you violently dislike pink guitars, for some reason).

This Standard gives you all that quality and versatility, at a price that remains competitive with Ibanez, ESP LTD and Jackson.

The vibrato is a superb design too, and provides that expressive quality that so many guitarists can't live without. Yet again, it's hard to find fault with the N2 Standard series for its position in the market.