

# Gear

TEST DRIVE

## Fano Alt de Facto SP6

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER



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- Eric Gales plays the Alt de Facto SP6—upside down—at NAMM.
- Watch a demo of the Alt de Facto SP6.

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**SEVERAL GUITAR BUILDERS WORKING TODAY ARE**

making great efforts to produce instruments that have the look and feel of long-played warhorses—what we have come to call “relic” guitars—but most base their work on existing vintage classics. Dennis Fano of Fleetwood, PA, has given the approach a new spin with his Alt de Facto series, which includes the SP6 on review here. As much as relic-ing might seem a false imposition on so many new guitars out there, the Alt de Facto models (as in alternate reality) are cleverly conceived “reimagined retro” designs. They are not intended to be perceived as guitars built today with a sly look toward yesteryear, but more as rare, missing links that have been rediscovered and brought forward. As such, the distressing seems indispensable, and is very well done. (And if you still don’t like it, you can order one without the faux wear and tear.)

One glance at the SP6 pretty quickly lays bare its concept, a hybrid approach that defines the entire Fano Alt de Facto range. I would sum it up like this: imagine Fender and Gibson merged in the late ’50s, consolidated their lines, and released this model as a marriage of two great workingman’s electrics, the Les Paul Junior (or special) and the Telecaster—a blend that the cool, nitrocellulose “Junior Burst” finish on this one really hammers home. As such, you get a bolt-on maple neck with back-angled three-a-side headstock and a 24¾"-scale rosewood 'board (maple fretboard is available), mahogany body (alder and swamp ash optional), T-style

control plate, Fralin custom-wind P-90 and T-style pickups, and a T-style bridge assembly.

In its fine points, though, the latter marks one of Fano’s thoughtful upgrades for the modern player. An in-house design, the bridge is milled from a solid billet of aluminum, with thick side walls to keep the Budz brass compensated saddles firmly in place, and a solid brass string block that runs through to the back of the body, rather than individual string ferrules. Other such updates in the name of contemporary performance include medium-jumbo frets, a compound radius that runs from 10" to 16", a Tusq XL self-lubricating nut, a smoothly contoured neck heel, and a ToneStyler rotary control in place of the standard tone pot. Add it all up, and rather than a disparity of direction, the SP6 feels sublimely comfortable in the hand, and strangely familiar strapped on. Playability is superb all up and down the neck, which has a rounded, late-'50s profile that I really dig. Unplugged, this guitar rings with a lively energy and surprising acoustic depth.

Running the Alt de Facto SP6 into a Matchless SC30 and alternating between its jangly first channel and raunchier second channel, I was immediately surprised to find this guitar doing taut, twangy Tele-style tricks that I had previously thought no 24¾"-scale electric could manage. Wound strings are impressively firm and piano-like, without the slight fuzz and fur that so many Gibson-scale instruments give you, yet even on the vintage-spec bridge



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## FANO

pickup it's all extremely meaty, with enough midrange for mucho punch and grind in your rock lead moments.

The ToneStyler—a 16-position rotary switch—works great at thickening the sounds as desired, and seems instantly integral to the SP6's mojo. Switching to the neck-position P-90 yields fat, round, vocal neck tones, but with plenty of bite and excellent articulation. Flicking between the Tonestyler settings, there's a wealth of great tones—capes on tap, and even a quick initial whirl

## SPECIFICATIONS

**CONTACT** Premier Builders Guild, (714) 514-0647; [premierbuildersguild.com](http://premierbuildersguild.com)

## ALT DE FACTO SP6

**PRICE** \$2,495 retail/street price N/A (hardshell case included)

**NUT WIDTH** 1 11/16"

**NECK** Maple, bolt-on, C profile

**FRETBOARD** Rosewood, 24 3/4" scale

**FRETS** 22 medium (6105)

**TUNERS** Gotoh Kluson vintage

**BODY** Solid mahogany

**BRIDGE** Fano "modified T-style" with compensated Budz brass saddles

**PICKUPS** Fralin Custom T-style (bridge), Fralin custom P-90 (neck)

**CONTROLS** Volume, ToneStyler, 3-way selector

**FACTORY STRINGS** Dark Horse nickel-wrapped, .010-.046

**WEIGHT** 7.2 lbs

**BUILT** USA

**KUDOS** Exudes vintage mojo and tonal depth, but with the superb playing feel of a new boutique instrument

**CONCERNS** None.



on this thing found me cruising from country to jazz to blues to rock with equal sonic aplomb. I found it more and more difficult to put down this substitute slice of vintage-guitar reality, and that's why the Fano Alt de Facto SP6 earns an Editors' Pick Award. 