

Ovation Adamas Elite

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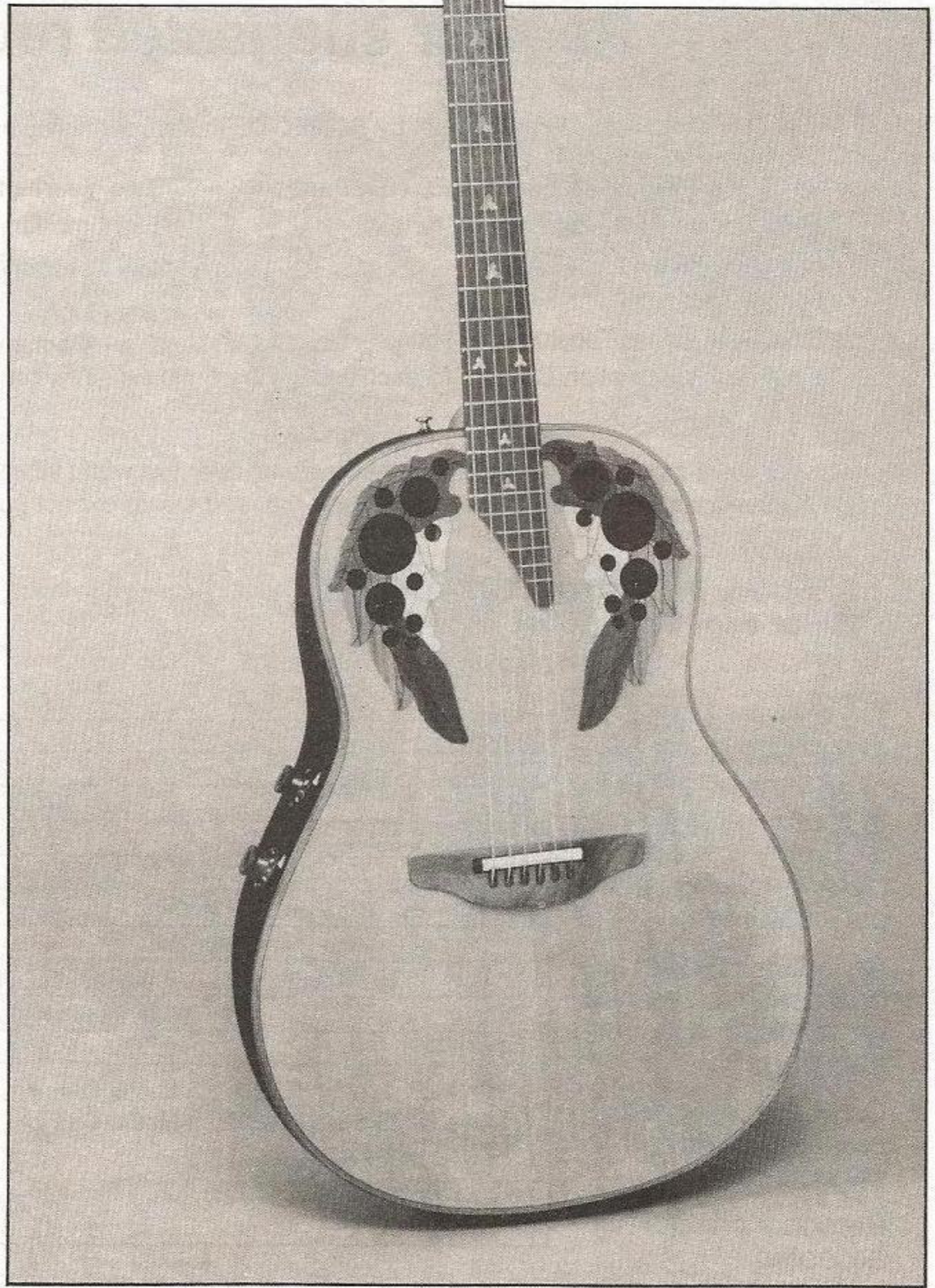
...and it sounds as good as it looks

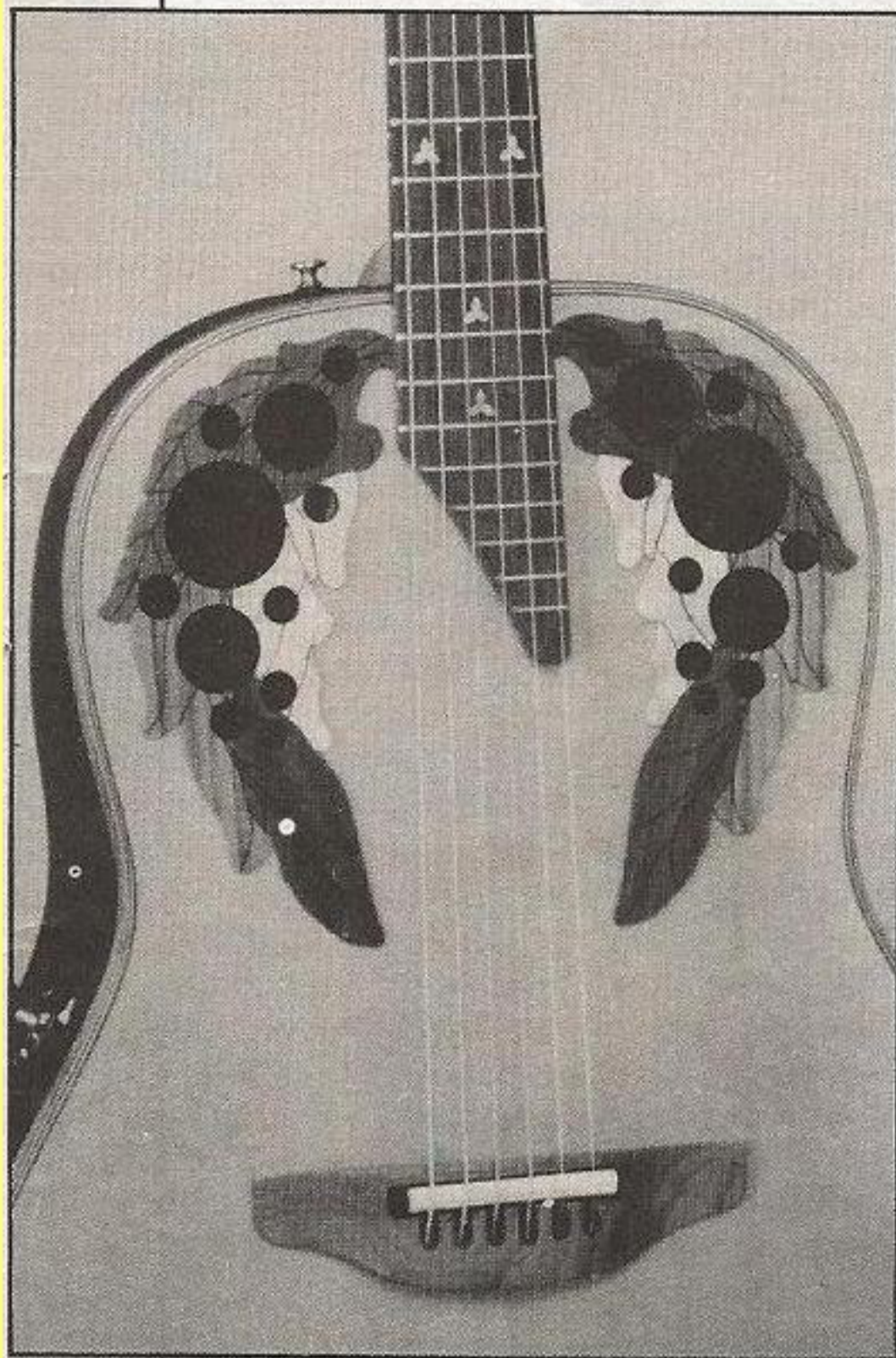
When the original Adams and Adamas II series guitars made their debut, they were striking not only for the unique soundhole arrangement (22 small holes of various sizes spread in a fan-shaped pattern on either side of the fingerboard), but also for the high-tech construction which utilized a carbon graphite top (actually two layers of carbon graphite with a 0.35" birch veneer in the center) and Ovation's Lyrachord material for the back and sides.

While purists bemoaned the lack of a wood top, many pros found that the Adamas guitars were well worth their considerable price tags. They proved to be excellent recording guitars, providing exceptional balance throughout all tonal ranges, and were tough and durable under the most rigorous road conditions. The graphite top added a dimension to the sound that couldn't be obtained with ordinary spruce top instruments, and proved that high technology and craftsmanship could be married.

At the 1982 Atlanta NAMM Show, while playing one of the graphite Adamas guitars, I happened to remark to the gentlemen at Ovation that it certainly would be interesting to see what a spruce-faced Adamas would look and sound like. I felt that such an instrument, incorporating the best aspects of the Adamas sound hole pattern and bracing with the warmer sound of a wood top, would probably look and sound gorgeous. My remark was met with knowing smiles.

Now, just about a year later, I am holding just such an instrument in my hands, and it's nice to know I was right. This is a beautiful guitar from all perspectives — visual, aural, and tactile.





The Adamas Ovation, now sporting a spruce face

Neck & Fingerboard

The neck is a 5-piece maple/walnut laminate, similar to some of the necks on other Ovation instruments, but seems to me, slimmer and faster. It incorporates Ovation's Kaman Bar, the U-shaped aluminum casting bonded into the wood of the neck, incorporating a 1/4" thick steel truss rod. The fingerboard is nicely-grained walnut with maple quasi-triangular inlays at the appropriate placements. There are 22 frets, and the neck joins the body at the 14th. At the 18th fret, the fingerboard begins a gradual cutaway, giving it a rakish, Django Reinhardt look. The fingerboard, like the neck is nice and slippery — very playable. Tuning machines are gold-plated Scaller-type. Scale length is 25 1/4".

Body & Electronics

The Elite is a deep-bowl design, with a depth of 5 and 13/16", with the body formed of brown, pebble-grained Lyrachord. There are two 1/4" phone jacks mounted on the rear of the bowl to accommodate the stereo guitar cord supplied with the instrument. Two wooden control knobs

are mounted just on the descending curve of the lower bout — these control volume and tone. Volume is graduated from 0 to 10, while the tone pit is marked 'Deep' and 'Bright', with numerical values marked in between.

The face is Sitka Spruce AAA grade, with multi-colored wood overlay surrounding the area where the 22 sound holes are positioned. This is a beautiful arrangement, and for me, is an even classier look than the original blue-faced Adamas. The face is left in its natural spruce state, and the body binding is a multi-laminate wood purfling. The bridge is walnut, with a bone saddle, underneath which is located six individual piezoelectric transducers, each with its own individual channel. The signal they emit is channelled through a 9V battery powered FET preamp, and the signal is relatively feedback free and can be cranked up plenty loud. As stated, this is a stereo pickup, and when the guitar is plugged into separate amps or separate channels on one amp, bass and treble response can be tailored very specifically.

Sound

This is the good part. Prior to reviewing this guitar, I must confess I had never been overly affectionate of the sound of Ovation guitars. My previous experience with them had led me to believe that they were all mid and treble, and could never supply the kind of lush bass and rich harmonic overtone I was used to with standard dreadnought, all-wood guitars. My head has been turned around. As good as this guitar sounds in the electric mode, it sounds just as good if not better in the acoustic mode. When I sat down and put it through its paces acoustically, I was surprised at its ability to handle all styles of music, from staccato lead lines to open string full chords, and produce a full, even tonal range. The Elite is warmer sounding to my ear than the original graphite faced Adamas (not unexpected due to the wood top) but it makes no compromises in high end response.

The suggested list prices of the Elite series range from \$1,015.00 to \$1,195.00, several hundred dollars less than even the least expensive graphite top Adamas II. Not in the bargain range, to say the least, but for this instrument, I strongly feel it is well worth it.

Try one and be amazed.

Steven Dupler

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