



*By Jim Basara - GJD*

The 2009 Winter NAMM show is over. It was another great event and, considering the state of the economy, it was a very upbeat atmosphere. It was clear that manufacturers are concerned about '09, but that didn't stop many manufacturers from developing some impressive new toys for us gear junkies. As always, Guitar Jam Daily took a close look at this year's new offerings to try to identify those products that represent the best new products for the year. This year, there are four award categories:

1. **Best New Guitars** – Clearly the show covers a lot more than guitars, but we're focusing on what I thought were some of the best instruments of the show.
2. **Best New Amps** – It seemed like there were many more new amps than usual this year. These are our picks.
3. **Best New Accessories** – These are accessories that we thought were particularly cool or useful.
4. **Futures** – This year, we found a couple of folks who have some innovative prototypes, looking for partners to take them to the next level.

In today's article, I'm going to name some of the best guitars that I saw at the show. As always, this is the hardest category to select. There were some fantastic guitars at the show from all of the major manufacturers, as well as a large number of boutiques. These picks are by no means an exhaustive list of the guitars that I liked, because there were dozens. These picks are some of the new instruments that I found which were a) particularly well-designed or constructed, b) brought great value for the price point, or c) did a great job of addressing a particular segment of the guitar market.

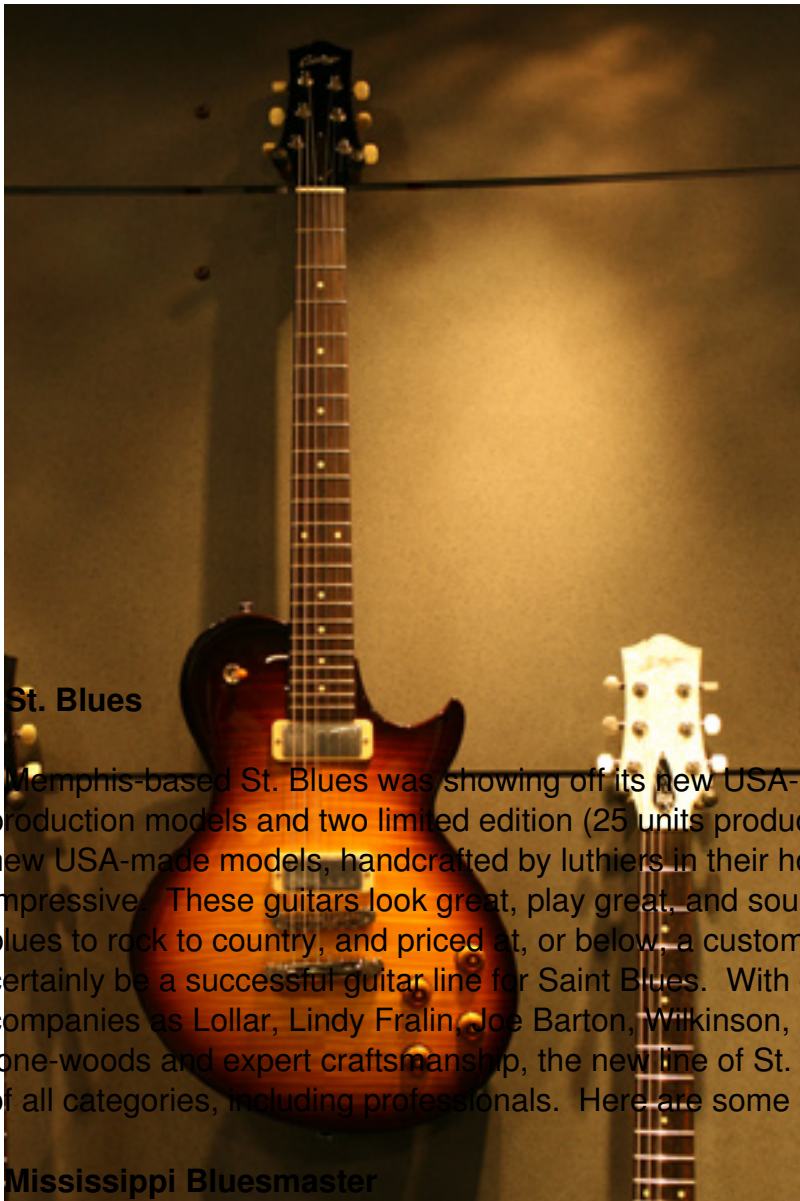
### **Collings 360**

Austin guitar company Collings was showing of some advance copies of their upcoming 360 electric guitar. Once again, Collings has knocked one out of the park. The 360 is a beautiful guitar in every sense. It is esthetically stylish with a "stretched" single cutaway design; the wood selection and finish work is first-rate; and the craftsmanship is among the best of any manufacturer. The 360 comes standard with a solid mahogany body and neck. Options are available for a flame maple top, quilted maple top, and maple neck. All models come with a rosewood fingerboard.

The playability of the 360 is absolutely superb across the entire fingerboard. The wood, craftsmanship and customized Lollar mini-humbuckers come together to create a lush tone that is equally impressive throughout the range from warm to bright. Short of metal, this guitar can

make players of any genre very happy.

Collings says the MSRP for the 360 will range from \$2900 to \$3900, depending on the options.



**St. Blues**

Memphis-based St. Blues was showing off its new USA-made Workshop Series consisting of 4 production models and two limited edition (25 units produced) Silver Anniversary models. The new USA-made models, handcrafted by luthiers in their home town of Memphis, are extremely impressive. These guitars look great, play great, and sound great. Suitable for anything from blues to rock to country, and priced at, or below, a custom-shop strat, the Workshop Series will certainly be a successful guitar line for Saint Blues. With components from such high-end companies as Lollar, Lindy Fralin, Joe Barton, Wilkinson, and Sperzel, as well as high grade tone-woods and expert craftsmanship, the new line of St. Blues guitars is sure to satisfy players of all categories, including professionals. Here are some pics of the new models:

**Mississippi Bluesmaster**



Bluesmaster II



61 South



