



By Ken Volpe - GJD

I have to admit as I sit to write this, one thought keeps going through my head, “Am I actually going to be able to write a full review for guitar strings?” Well, the answer is “Yes” as you will witness in about 600 words from now.

First off, let me tell you that as a professional guitarist I have used the exact same brand of strings on all my electric guitars for the last 15 years or so. This brand will remain anonymous. Let’s just call them “Brand X.” My string gauge of preference has always been a set of .010s (tens). I have always found tens to be a happy medium. They are thick enough to give you a beefy and fat tone yet thin enough to do some aggressive bending when needed. Tens also allow me to play just about any style under the sun.

Over the years I have tested many different brands and types of strings from the different manufacturers. I tend to prefer pretty standard strings.

In terms of coated brands such as Elixir, for my preference they feel too “waxy” to my fingers. Actually, the Elixir acoustic strings aren’t too bad but as I just mentioned I don’t like the feel of them for electric. So when I heard about the Ernie Ball coated strings I was a little hesitant.

I am happy to report that my fears were not realized and I would have never guessed that these were coated strings. They don’t have that ultra slippery feeling and they don’t sound dull, like some of the other coated strings that I have tried. As most of you know, you really have to let strings break in a bit before they feel and sound right. So what I usually do is change my strings before I go to bed and that way they can stretch out while I’m catching some zzz’s. Then in the morning I am good to go with a fresh set of strings. To me the Ernie Ball strings needed a little time to stretch out as well.

So let me get into some specifics about these strings. They feel wonderful on your fingertips. They have just the right amount of “teeth” and the tension is perfect for my taste. Sliding, bending and pull-offs were like butter. These strings seem to stay in tune really well and there were no intonation issues with my guitar. For the record, the guitar that I tested them with was a James Tyler Strat.

Let me tell you a little bit about the tone of these strings; which in my opinion is the most important thing. The high E and B strings were bright but not harsh and offensive. The middle strings had midrange complexity and the two low strings were warm and round sounding. I also enjoyed the string-to-string balance. With some sets of strings I find there to be a string to string disconnect by being too bright and too dark at the same time.

One other really important factor is the life of these strings. "Brand X" seems to be worn out after about 10 days and I always thought that that was par for the course. With the Ernie Ball strings they were still going strong after a month. Think about it, if you have to change your strings more often it's going to cost you more time and money. With these strings you are going to save a few bucks in the long run and avoid the dreaded hassle of changing your strings so often. One more thing, I play 3 to 4 hours a day and after a month I have not broken a single string from this set. That's a beautiful thing.

So, I am pretty confident that if you go out and buy a set of Ernie Ball Coated Slinky strings you'll be quite pleased. For more info about the technical details of the strings goto www.ernieball.com