

"IVAN THE TERRIBLE"

Bob Dylan calls it "the love box," but to its creator and owner it will forever be known as "Ivan the Terrible."

Eric Clapton's specially-designed and handmade guitar (the one he plays on the Blind Faith album) reflects the rock-blues artist's love of beautiful, unique music played on beautiful, unique instruments.

The shape and visual details of the medieval-appearing guitar were co-designed by Eric and A. C. Zemaitis, a London guitar maker, with Eric concentrating on the inlays and general appearance and Zemaitis handling the technical and construction side.

The giant Jumbo twelve-string guitar took a total of 12 weeks to make. The body is composed of rosewood and cedar and measures 23 inches long, 20 inches wide and 6 inches deep. Heart inlays of purple-hued amaranth, edged in ebony, circle the heart-shaped soundhole and run down the back of the body. Special lacquering, which took approximately four weeks, has produced a loud and mellow voice that hints of

organ and harpsichord tones.

The neck is made of amaranth, ebony and mahogany with an ebony fingerboard. All of the edging and heart-shaped inlays on the neck are of solid, hand-engraved silver. Nut, bridge saddle and engraved bridge pins are also in silver. Eric requested a shorter neck than Zemaitis usually builds, with only 12 frets clear of the body, instead of 14 or 15. The head is similar to a 17th century five course guitar.

Eric's guitar is unique, not only because it was designed by and for him, but also because few guitars are made, even on an individual basis, that include as much detailed work. Even the label on Eric's guitar is heart-shaped and made from hand-illuminated parchment.

"Ivan the Terrible" also features a complicated strutting system that is essentially a doubled-up "kite" system designed by Zemaitis. The guitar maker only builds one-of-a-kind guitars and has been commissioned by such artists as Ron Wood, Ronnie Lane and Jo-Ann Kelly. ■

