

RB CONTINENTAL CASE



# blues

## Invitation TO THE

**When you make a product that is widely acknowledged as the very best there is, what can you possibly do for an encore?**

For more than three years, that question preyed on the minds of the team at Reunion Blues, whose leather and leather-trimmed bags are semi-legendary among professional musicians as “the last gig bag you’ll ever buy.” The brand had become synonymous with uncompromising quality, the choice of the pros.

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Which, as Reunion Blues saw it, was precisely the problem. Even the coziest of niches is still a niche; the market for “uncompromising” is relatively small and rarified. But how to expand beyond it without abandoning their brand’s defining strength? A more accessible Reunion Blues case would have a lot to live up to — skimping on quality was simply out of the question, but so was offering “just” another high-end case. Inspired by the launch of the Bentley Continental, they set out to

create a case that was every inch a Reunion Blues bag, priced to compete with the bags that make up the bulk of the market.

The solution, it turns out, was to entirely rethink the concept of the gig bag.

Instrument cases fall generally into three categories: cheap soft-sided bags about which the less said, the better; ugly, bulky workhorses, usually made of wood or rigid plastic (think junior high school band); and “investment” pieces that can cost more than the guitar inside — and may or may not keep it from being damaged. Simply put, you usually have to choose between strength and style, and sometimes you get neither.

What Reunion Blues has achieved with the launch of the RB Continental case is an entirely new category: a luxurious, elegant, affordable case that wears like a tank and protects your instrument from anything short of a steamroller. If that sounds like a contradiction, read on.

The first thing you notice about the RB Continental is how fluid and sleek it is. The two-tone black ballistic shell, with its elegant pleating and royal blue accents, is spare without being austere, tasteful without being bland. Only when you really look for it does the rugged construction become apparent — the reinforced stitching, knurled abrasion grids at top and bottom, black chrome-plated hardware, and reversed water-resistant zippers disappear into the silhouette of the case itself.

As it turns out, that word, *case*, is vital when discussing the RB Continental, which was engineered to replace all those ugly, rigid, hard-sided behemoths. Reunion Blues refuses to call it a bag and, upon closer inspection, it’s easy to see why. The case features an entirely new Flexoskeleton protection system of EVA-reinforced 1-inch solid-cell foam in the side walls, and 1-inch dual-layer foam in the front and back faces — softer inside to cushion the instrument, and harder outside to guard against the bumps and grinds of the road. It’s the first of its kind — a hard-sided soft-sided case.

Protection, of course, isn’t everything. Within its sleek footprint, the RB Continental offers a staggering amount of storage; in fact it seems larger inside than out. The outer multi-pocket is large enough to accommodate



a 17-inch laptop, books and sheet music, iPods, pedals, accessories — even cables secured neatly by a Velcro loop. A zippered mesh pocket inside holds picks and other small items, and the headstock offers a QuickStash pocket for pens, business cards, and the like. Unless you travel with enough gear for the average U2 show, you're not likely to run out of space — or even bulk up the RB Continental's clean lines.

Once you get all that stuff inside, the test of a case becomes how easily you can carry it. Operating on the theory that one of the most important components of a case is the point where it comes in contact with the user, the RB Continental sports a weight-distributing Zero-G handle that's contoured to fit in the palm without digging in or cutting off circulation to the fingers. The foam core is just bulky enough to allow a firm, yet natural, grip — no hand cramps here. The case also includes a rugged "subway handle" for close quarters, and hide-away cushioned backpack straps to keep your hands free.

All that, and before you've even opened it up.

The RB Continental may be understated on the outside, but inside it's positively opulent. The lining, a blue velvet tuck that seems to glow from within, is classic and retro and modern all at once, like your favorite dive bar restored to its former glory as a supper club. It would be equally at home in the Blue Note, the Fillmore or the late, great CBGB's.

Inside the case is also where the benefits of the Flexoskeleton system become clear. The 1-inch mesh-covered foam/EVA sidewalls absorb shock, but they also keep the zipper hardware far away from the surface of the instrument. You'd have to *try* to scratch your guitar in this case. The neck brace suspension system — a 2-inch-thick shock-absorbing foam block and double-reinforced Velcro strap — is swathed in



the same blue velvet. And since guitars aren't all smooth curves and lacquered surfaces, the lining is reinforced with strategically placed rubberized pads.

Reunion Blues is having a great deal of fun with a promotional video where they subject their new baby to an informal "extreme" field test, throwing it twice from the roof of a 3-story theatre. In the first drop test, the case hits the ground at an angle, edge-first; in the second, it belly-flops onto the pavement with an audible, wince-inducing smack. In both tests, the guitar inside emerges unscathed, hardly even out of tune. Protection like that — especially in such a stunning package — feels like it should cost much more than the RB Continental's modest price.

With the RB Continental, the quest for an affordable case worthy of the Reunion Blues name can be summed up in two words: *mission accomplished*.