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## Worldwide & Product news reviews

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*By Charles Carr, Reviews Editor*

**Worldwide News & Product Reviews**  
"The latest in tech news and hot product reviews."

## You'll See the Light



The [Fretlight FG-431 Vintage Electric](#) from Optek (\$529 list, some models as low as \$399, interface works with both PCs and Macs) comes in natural and classic jet-black finishes and looks and sounds one heck of a lot like the original vintage guitar, the Fender Telecaster. But this baby does stuff a 1950s Tele couldn't even dream of: connect via USB cable to a PC or Mac

and give lessons watching a DVD while the instrument's light-up fretboard shows precise finger placements for chording and even entire solos. The company likens the process to a sort of musical paint-by-number.



Some stats: The fretboard has a 25 1/2-inch scale length with a Telecaster-style ash body, two single-coil pickups (just like a Tele), a Fretlight bolt-on neck with a head that (in my opinion) is a better-looking head than a Telecaster's, and features six very smooth direct drive sealed tuning machines. Controls include master volume and tone controls, a three-way selector switch and a 1/4-inch output jack. The Fretlight FG-431 Vintage Electric also features a string-thru body design with a fixed bridge and fully adjustable saddles. The big difference, the fingerboard, is Optek's proprietary advanced polymer fretboard (patent pending) with LEDs under every string along 21 frets.



Included are a 10-foot Fretlight guitar-to-USB cable, a CD-ROM with the Fretlight Lesson Player with 31 free lessons, a "Getting Started with Your Fretlight" DVD and other free trial software, installation instructions, and a neck truss rod-adjustment tool.

As a longtime professional guitarist, my only suggestion would be that, even though the guitar is extremely well-made, more experienced players might be put off buying an instrument that has an unabashed learner image. The company might be able to greatly increase the guitar's "coolness factor" by creating a small plug-in module that made the fingerboard LEDs—normally used for teaching—flash onstage in unique ways. It would be a real showstopper—and might capture a whole new market for Optek.

