



SLIGHT ALTERNATIVES

CASE GUITARS

It's all very well playing guitars, but on the other side of the coin are those that make them. In rock guitar terms the names of Gibson and Fender are at the top of the tree. These days they make guitars in numbers and although not off-a-production-line per se you can still see them lined-up on racks at your local musical instrument store. Their respective 'custom' shops will hand-make certain elements for you, adding bespoke touches and finishes, however.

For completely handcrafted guitars there

are several makers around the world including the UK. One of them is Case Guitars, founded 10-years ago by the incredibly nice, Jon Case, who is based in Birchington, Kent. Unlike many luthiers, Jon didn't learn his craft at Fender or Gibson or at one of the other big makers, rather he followed an art college (Canterbury) route then becoming a graphic designer and even creating a leading agency along the way (Lemon Creative) of which he still is creative director.

All the while though, Jon was mad about music, and Wishbone Ash in particular, but more on that later. He made his first guitar aged just 10 so it was no surprise when he decided to start Case Guitars.

Many manufacturers simply copy or tweak legendary designs like the Gibson Les Paul or Fender Stratocaster, but Jon, having an artistic edge, decided to use those classic designs as inspiration, to create his own range of guitars. They are all his own work, from the drawing board to reality. Design, admin, joinery, carpentry, set-up expert, Jon does it all. A proper luthier in other words.

A guitar, like building a car, has hundreds of components (such as several woods in a variety of flavours, bridge, truss rod, electrics (capacitors, switches) and hardware (tuners, saddles), many of which Jon sources from the UK, unless his client orders a specific item, which he'll try to incorporate.





I LOVE GUITARS. ALTHOUGH I DON'T REALLY DO THEM JUSTICE, I CAN BASH OUT A NICE 12-BAR, STRAIGHT OUT OF THE STATUS QUO BUMPER THREE-CHORD SONGBOOK, BUT MY RESPECT IS ABSOLUTE FOR THOSE THAT CAN PLAY THEM WELL.

He then rough cuts each shape from solid pieces of timber and after sourcing the wood this is the 'easy' part. Next comes the routing and sanding until the neck and body feel right in the hand, and all the time Jon is trying to get the best from the wood's own natural grain to enhance the look of the end product. When he is completely satisfied that each component will sit together smoothly he then sets about assembly. Painstaking care is taken at each stage here to ensure that glue is only applied where necessary, while G-clamps are used to hold the different woods together until set fast. Sanding, using various grits, grain matching and fine sanding then completes this

section of the build.

The skill of an artist is often being able to see the finished article before you've even commenced and Jon has the ability to go to a specialist wood-yard and to pick a piece of timber and to be able see the pattern of the grain within. A skill in its own right, for sure, knowing that when the guitar is lacquered you are merely enhancing what mother nature has already provided.

An elegant 'wave' theme flows throughout his work and can be seen from the top of the headstock, down to the end of the fretboard. If you look closely along his fretboards you can see wave shaped pieces of mother of pearl, each cut and inlaid to

perfection. Some guitars feature a centre strip of Abalone shell, which follows the curves of the carved top. Artisan stuff, but done with a passion because he reckons it looks right. This attention to detail indicates his dedication to getting the job 'just so'. The surface finish of Case's guitars are a work of art. The parts you don't see under the skin, so to speak, are, take my word for it, just as meticulously created.

A guitar has lots of metal parts too, of course, and again Mr Case carefully chooses the components he wants, and will work as he and the client demands. Truss rods are installed like a watchmaker builds an exotic timepiece, while he likes

continued on page 39



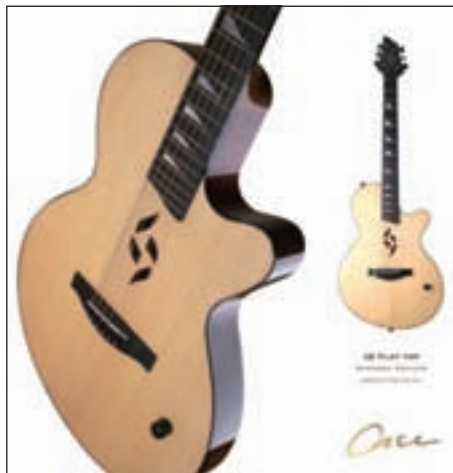


CASE GUITARS STANDARD RANGE



CASE J1

The mahogany body and neck with a deep carved, highly figured maple top and ebony fretboard, gives this guitar a wonderful natural sustain. With a choice of hand-wound Bare Knuckle pick-ups, the sounds are warm and rich. Full humbucking and single coil switching gives plenty of tonal versatility while Sperzel tuners and a Graphtec nut ensure tuning accuracy. The asymmetrical design allows excellent balance and superior access to the top frets.



CASE J2

The mahogany body is 80 per cent hollowed-out with special 'fan' shaped acoustic chambers. It has an ebony bridge, fitted with a Fishman Acoustic Matrix 1 active transducer pickup, which gives the J2 a surprisingly natural acoustic sound. The beautifully-shaped sound-hole helps the centre section to vibrate more easily further enhancing the sound.

Satin black Sperzel machine heads compliment the ebony bridge, control knob and pearl inlaid ebony fretboard.



CASE J3

A traditional semi-solid construction with a maple centre block, spruce in-fills, laminated top, back and sides; topped in exquisite, figured maple veneers. Combined with a mahogany neck, ebony fretboard and hand wound humbuckers, this instrument has a beautiful 'woody' tone.

Master volume, tone and three-way pickup selector, provide a variety of tones simply and effectively. The glorious sunburst finish comes as standard.

use Bare Knuckle vintage PAF style pickups which are hand scatter-wound and engraved with the 'Case' legend. Jon also specifies Andreas Klopmann pickups, Hipshot tremolos, locking Sperzel tuners, Dunlop frets, Fishman or LR Baggs Piezzo systems. All parts chosen because they look great and most importantly, perform on stage.

No guitar leaves Jon's place until he is completely happy with it, the lacquers that are used can take anything up to a month to harden and some of his guitars can have as many as ten coats applied to enhance that special look that he lovingly strives for.

Jon's not a bad guitarist in his own right either, being part of a rock band in his college days, and this means he has a decent understanding of how his guitars need to sound.

There are currently four guitars in his range - J1, J2, J3 and JV - all of which are utter works of art. Materials such as mahogany and maple, well known for guitar making are used, although Jon doesn't order his timber blind, as mentioned he goes to the specialist merchants and personally selects what he wants. Ebony features on his fretboards for example, while top quality abounds throughout.

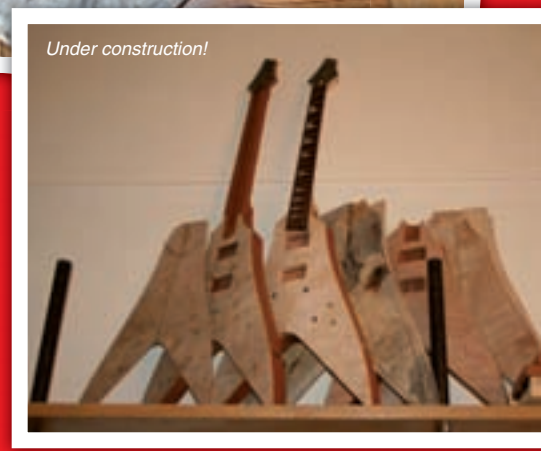
I was privileged to get the chance to play (try to play more like, sorry Jon - ed) his demo J1 and J3 guitars, and they made me want to caress them, hold them, not put them down, with a feel that enhanced even my own feeble ability (It was a weird feeling playing a guitar in front of its maker), and

the difference between them and my mass-made Strat copy is immense.

Anyway, back to the Wishbone Ash connection and one day, Jon decided to take a punt and went to see his hero, Andy Powell, backstage after a gig, with one of his JV's in-hand. As one of the leading protagonists of the Gibson Flying V, Andy of course was intrigued at the sight of Case's JV guitar. Suffice to say, he tried it out, loved it and promptly ordered one, a special example with Buckeye Burl (part of the Chestnut genus) body. In addition to being an incredibly difficult wood to work due to its porous grain and many knots, its tonal qualities aren't the best, however a craftsman like Jon Case can make it work. The finish though is astounding. Incidentally, Powell also uses a J1 on stage regularly too. Other notable musicians using Case's guitars are Nemo Jones and Maxi Jazz.

A tour of Jon's stylish website will tell you all about his range of guitars, and if you want to order one you can expect a waiting time of 6-9 months, while the price for such a lovingly crafted instrument will pleasantly surprise, I thought I'd settled on one of Trev Wilkinson's Fret-King Éclats (as played by Danny Bryant) but now I REALLY want a J1 and a J3 and a JV!

Beautifully crafted guitars, handmade by a true gentleman, designed and made right here in the garden of England, to boot.



For further information contact:
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CASE JV

This JV has a deep carved, highly figured maple top, on a two-piece mahogany body. With two sound chambers beneath the maple top, this guitar sounds extremely harmonic.

The neck is hand-shaped from mahogany and has an ebony fretboard, inlaid in mother of pearl 'wave' markers. The two octave, 24-fret neck, joins the body at the 18th/19th fret giving easy access to the top frets. Master volume, tone and three-way pickup selector give a variety of classic tones simply and effectively.



CASE JV ARCHTOP

The JV 'Archtop' has hollowed out side wings leaving a central block of mahogany. On top of this block is a hand-carved spruce filler that fits exactly beneath the laminated archtop. This guitar is topped in an exquisite, figured maple, book-matched veneer, bound in ivoriod. The combination of the mahogany neck, semi-solid body and hand wound humbuckers, gives this instrument a beautiful 'woody' tone.

Master volume, tone and three-way pickup selector provide a variety of tones, simply and effectively.



Luthier supreme; with a hand-crafted J3