

How to Order a Till Guitar

My guitars are available three different ways: From Private Stock, Modified Private Stock and by Custom Order.

You're welcome, and even encouraged to stop by my shop which is just a bit north of Los Angeles right off the 101 freeway. By sitting down and actually playing the guitars I have in stock we can really zoom in on your ideal guitar. You also might discover a few guitars that aren't on my website by visiting my shop. I usually have a few demos available for sale too.

Private Stock guitars are guitars that I build on my own, without custom orders, which I then offer for sale when completed. I describe them as well as I can in the Available Guitars Gallery.

Modified Private Stock guitars are Private Stock guitars that you want to have changes made to. Maybe change out the chrome hardware for gold or black. Add straplocks and locking tuners. You can even choose from the entire Seymour Duncan pickup line. It never hurts to ask what I can do so feel free.

Then there are Custom Orders. These guitars are built from the ground up to your specifications. You're the architect and I'm the builder. Much of the preliminary discussions can take place through emails but there will come a time when we must actually speak to each other. Preferably face to face but if distance is an issue, a few lengthy phonecalls will be necessary. I want to make sure I understand what you mean, as there is a lot of fuzzy language involved in this business (i.e. "spanky", "warm" and "buttery".)

Below are a few things that you might want to consider before ordering a custom guitar.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

NECKS

Quartersawn lumber means that the log was cut in such a way that the grain is straight and close together. This adds to the strength of the neck as well as to the tone. My necks are multi-laminated, usually with five pieces of quartersawn wood plus added "dogears" to the headstock. I think this adds to the stability of the neck as well as the beauty. The section on wood applies to necks too.

I also tilt my headstocks between 12 and 14 degrees. This allows for a good amount of downward pressure on the nut which helps keep the guitar in tune and adds to the resonance of the guitar.

I use double-action trussrods as a rule. They allow you to positively adjust the neck relief to wherever you want it. Single action trussrods only positively adjust out relief, not backbow.

Scale Length

There's more involved with scale length than just comfort, although that is a major concern - especially for people with short fingers like mine. What you might not realize is that the longer the scale, the more tension is required to reach the same pitch as with a shorter scale. That's why it's so much easier to bend strings on the shorter Les Paul than on a Strat.

On the other hand, the more tension on a string, the more power it has. That's why Telecasters sound so good on the low strings. I believe a longer scale brings out more tone from the wood.

Fretboard Radius

Smaller radiused fretboards (less than 10 inch) can be very comfortable to play but strings tend to fret-out when you bend them. A twelve inch radius seems to be just about perfect. And most bridges are designed for a 12 inch radius. Still, any radius is available. Even no radius.

Frets

Unless otherwise specified, my guitars come standard with 22 frets. The more frets, the less room for pickups. The wider the spacing of the pickups, the wider the tonal range of the guitar. Bolt-on necks are limited to 22 frets but I'll go up to 25 frets on setnecks and neck-thru-bodies.

Fretless is an option, too.

All fretsizes are available too. As a blues playing chicken-picker I tend to prefer jumbo frets. My vibrato improves when my fingertips don't rub on the fretboard. Taller frets can also be redressed a few times before needing to be replaced.

Jazz players are known to prefer smaller frets,

I can get anysize fretwire.

Neck/Body Joints

I now offer all three types of neck/body connections: Bolt-on, glued in (setneck) and neck-through-body. All three have their own benefits and drawbacks.

Bolt-on Necks are fitted into a 3 1/4 inch long routed pocket and attached to the body with 4 large stainless steel screws. The neck can easily be replaced should anything catastrophic occur. But some people don't like the brick wall (heel) you hit at about the 15th fret. I do my best to minimize the abruptness of the neck/body transition by rounding and recessing the heel but it's still noticeable.

I can sculpt the heel further by using countersunk metal ferrules such as you might find on some Ibanez guitars. But I can't swear to the strength of this method. I'd only use ferrules with harder, more dense body woods.

A good fitting neck will cause no noticeable loss of sustain and resonance. I get lots of compliments on the acoustic properties of my bolt-on models. The fact that they're easier to build will be reflected in the final price.

Strats and Teles have bolt-on necks.

Neck-Through-Body construction provides for the smoothest neck/body transition because I can sculpt the heel down to nothing without loss of strength.

However, some people say that having the dense neck woods running the length of the guitar can strangle the frequency response. That can be good or bad, depending on the style of music you play and the amp you use. Modern solidstate amps love neck-thrus while vintage tube amps can sound a bit flat and stale. Be sure to look into this before ordering a neck-thru.

The original B.C.Richs had neck-through-body construction.

Setnecks give you the best of both worlds. Great sustain and easy access to the highest frets. My setnecks extend into the body about 5 inches (depending on pickup selection) which allows me to sculpt the heel down to where you hardly feel it.

And, a skilled repair person can replace the neck should the unthinkable happen (I am not volunteering to do this).

Les Pauls have Setnecks

BODY CONSTRUCTION

My guitars are either semi-hollow or chambered. Solidbodies are an option but I have yet to build a full hollowbody.

WOODS

There are very few definitive statements that you can say about tonewoods beyond their physical descriptions. It is safe to say that Mahogany is "warmer and mellower" than Ash which is considered "bright and twangy". But we'll be getting into woods that the big guys have never even heard of, let alone given such colorful descriptions to.

I use as much recycled wood as I can. I've found incredibly figured maples in in old bookcases and other furniture pieces. Remember Burlwood coffee tables? Redwood, Myrtlewood, even Koa.

BODY

There must be a hundred books on the subject. Someday I'll read one. I've made a concerted effort to ignore the myths that abound in guitar conversations . There are some truisms out there like Mahogany = mellow/warm and Ash = bright/twangy. But to call one better than the another isn't for me to say. By now I can generally "steer" the tone of a guitar by the choice of materials.

NECK

FRETBOARD

PICKUPS

I'm a huge fan of Seymour Duncan pickups. I've been through his shop many times and I see how dedicated his employees are to making the perfect pickup for the job, He's got all the bases covered from blues to jazz, country to metal. He's made his entire catalog available to me including humbuckers, P-90's and strat style singlecoil pickups. Be sure to check out their site www.SeymourDuncan.com for pickup and switching ideas.