

Meet Shorty Joe

{Mosimage}

Shorty Joe is built for speed and comfort. With its 23 1/4 inch scale, the next note is never far away. Obviously, kids will find it easy to play, but I designed it with professional musicians and songwriters in mind. Every time I pick it up I find new musical inspiration. And everyone else who plays it finds their own.

At 23 1/4 inches, it's sort of like playing a full size Gibson guitar with a capo on the first fret. Each fret is that much closer to the next. And it takes less tension to bring the strings up to pitch, so string bending is easier and a little vibrato goes a long way. Blues players will dig that aspect. That's why a lot of guys tune their fullsize guitars down to E flat... it's just easier.

I once heard Bob Dylan say in an interview that he sometimes writes songs with a capo on the second fret because he likes the voicing of an open G chord, but prefers to push his voice in the key of A. Well, Shorty Joe can easily be tuned up to a full step higher, so that an open G shaped chord comes out sounding like an A (I'm gonna have to give him a call!). When tuned higher, the added string tension really makes the woods come to life! Kind of like a mandolin... or maybe a Tacoma Papoose.

Like all of my guitars, Shorty Joe will undergo continual refinement. The first few models have solid one-piece curly maple bodies, bolt-on necks with 2 angled singlecoil pickup routs. But I've already glued up a few different wood combinations with different pickup configurations for the next round. Number 1 has a one-piece maple neck with a straight headstock. But number 2 has a laminated neck (maple and purpleheart) with a slightly tilted headstock. Some of the early changes will simply be a matter of finding optimum angles and materials. But Shorty Joe is already one of the most comfortable guitars I've ever played. It has good intonation and stays in tune - which are two things I find lacking in most "student size" guitars.

One of my goals with this model is to keep the cost down, or, at least to have a lower cost version of this model. It will have minimal contouring and probably only one P-90 pickup (sound familiar, Junior?). But I promise that they will still be handmade, like every Till Guitar... in the USA.

This might also be the model where I begin to introduce help. Until now - and currently, I work alone. Of course, adding help will depend on sales. I think it's time that American made guitars made their way back into American music stores. So, if you happen to be in a store that is light on domestic inventory, I'd thank you to ask the manager to look into carrying my guitars.

Shorty Joe is currently available on a custom order basis. But stay tuned for a few "Private Stock" issues.