

VINTAGE ACOUSTIC VEC1400N

Do they never stop?! A blinding guitar from Vintage, again!

Guitars eh? Can't do without em really. Without the advent of electrified, stringed instruments we wouldn't have anywhere near the amount of exciting bands we are used to (but on the plus side, none of the rubbish would exist either). So with a proliferation of acoustic based acts doing the rounds, from Kid Harpoon to Willy Mason, it's quite likely you'll want to bring out the inner trebedour and prove yourself at the salt-of-the-earth level. You'll want to show off your songwriting credentials by foregoing all that

widly, distorted rubbish which only works if you're a pretentious Vai fan. You want to create anthems and singalongs.

See, Vintage are well versed in providing the sort of instruments you're after. Knowing the differences made by different looks, tones and extras, they try to cater for everyone with their range of guitars. Stylised and natural looks, warm or percussive woods, acoustic or electro-acoustic – they all come from Vintage's massive stable. Catering for every taste and style, great quality coming as standard, this is a brand you can trust to deliver when purchasing your next instrument.

The majority of us are itching to play gigs 90% of the time, so it makes sense to have a guitar that's perfectly capable of being brought into a live arena with the minimum of fuss. So what are the requirements to pass your rigorous standards? Well I'd imagine it amounts to, decent tone, sensible, but glamorous, looks and ease of use. The VEC1400N is resplendent in all of these, making it a strong contender for your choice.

As we've said before, while not the be all and end all, looks are pretty important to us. You're just not gonna take a seconds glance at something that is plain or ugly. So Vintage have made sure to retain those authentic acoustic looks with a solid spruce top with the natural wood grain visible. With a natural satin finish, as opposed to those synthetic-looking polished surfaces some guitars insist on having, it makes for a guitar with the feel that it was made in front of you, while you waited. No fancy tricks or paint jobs. However, this would admittedly

We reviewed the non-electric version last month, so this pickup-wielding addition really is the cherry on the cake. Sumptuous tones and a design that belies its price point make for a guitar you'd kill for. Er... don't actually kill for it though, or at least don't blame us



Vintage
Acoustic Guitar
VEC1400N

SRP £399

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WHAT IS IT?

A fine looking entry/mid-level electro acoustic guitar with bags of attitude. Perfect for players of any style with a demanding live gig schedule.

WHY SHOULD I WANT ONE?

Distinctive tone, comfortable to play, flexible pre-amp – there's a lot here to draw your attention if you're after quality.

▶ be pretty ordinary to the untrained eye. So Vintage have laced the outlines of the top with patterned abalone. Pulling off a mother-of-pearl look, it looks even more tasteful than on their V1400CSB – and that already looked delicious. Keeping it restrained rather than bludgeoning you with it, it remains round the sound hole and outline of the guitar without a hint of it anywhere else, apart from the fret markers. The twelfth fret has the V swooshes while standard circular marks are left on the other standard frets. The Vintage logo on the headstock is also engrained in this way. Gold-plated Grover tuners suit the look of the instrument while the rosewood neck and flame maple binding tops it all off.

So with the aesthetics paid particular attention to, what about it's sound? Nothing to worry about here either. Strumming lightly without being plugged in gives off a nice resonance and doesn't drop the treble. The tone is nicely balanced between low and high end, leaving a blend that means the tonal spectrum is pretty broad. The guitar is solid mahogany, meaning a just-as-solid punch is there when you need it. We're talking abrasive Billy Bragg one-man-punk chords that would need that dynamic push when it comes to a particularly lively chorus. Finger picking is perfectly suited to this guitar too, which is good as it's the one thing that can make or break a guitar's performance record.

So this is all well and good, but what about a live performance? You're gonna need more volume. So this is where the Shadow piezo transducer pickup comes in to play.

The SH-863 pre-amp is installed on the top of the guitar, comfortably positioned just where you'd need it most. A simple 2-band EQ – bass and treble, along with volume, of course – the knobs are push-push types. This basically means you push the potentiometers down to pop them out, allowing you to adjust the EQ or volume to our taste. Then you simply push them back in, meaning there's no chance of accidentally knocking your controls out of line while playing

vigorously.

You'll notice two other switches, one labelled EQ-S and one labelled Phase. EQ S stands for EQ-Shape. When pushed in it turns your linear output frequency curve into a V-shape form – which basically means it will boost both bass and treble while cutting the mid. Once this is done you can increase or decrease bass and treble to shape the sound to your exact liking. This flexibility means you can make the character of the sound your own as opposed to sticking to the pre-set mid level which so many pre-amps keep you stuck to.

The phase switch simply inverts the signal and cancels overall feedback.

It uses an active Nanoflex pickup and the performance boost from plugging in, plus the ability to shape the sound to your tailor-made specifications, is a huge bonus. It's a comfortable guitar to utilise with a great action, comfortably scaled fretboard/neck and suitable size. So, even the nastiest chord stretches aren't too uncomfortable. Obviously with the boost in volume you won't struggle to be heard above any other instrumentation you wish to employ and adjusting the EQ shape brings a new dimension to your acoustic sound. It's nice to see some thought going into the pre-amp stage of an electro acoustic, but which doesn't strip away the individual tone of the instrument. Too often a synthetic sound is thought of as a good compromise for flexibility of the EQ section. None of that here, which allays any fears. Besides it's easy enough to leave things alone and have the strong and bright sound of the natural wood amplified rather than tainted.

What it comes down is the fact that this guitar covers all bases. Looks, sound, pickup, comfort, playability – there's not really anything it fails on. As for who should be buying this, we can safely say that no one will struggle to get on with it. Beginners, mid-level players, professional giggers would all find it a useful addition to their arsenal, or as their main instrument.

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IS IT FOR YOU?

It's quite easy to imagine this being the kind of guitar to be picked up in a guitar shop and being bought very soon after. It's just so accessible and it's clear that it has everything you'd want in spades. It certainly seems feasible to be able to carry this across country and play a packed touring schedule, just as easy as if you were carrying it to the local pub to blow everyone away with your emotion-packed folk gems. In fact this is ideal – it means

if you aren't quite at national level, but are getting there, you have no need to 'upgrade' your instrument. You have everything you need in this one. Essentially it's a guitar to grow up, and grow old, with. As struggling musicians, we need this sort of reliability and dependency so it's great that Vintage have taken the hassle out of guitar purchasing. What would we do without guitars like this, eh?