

REVIEWED



Vintage V1400CSB

SRP: £279

Tel: 01132865381

www.jhs.co.uk

What is it?

A fine looking entry/mid-level acoustic guitar with bags of attitude. Perfect for players of any style with glamorous stylings to match.

Why should I want one?

You only have to look at it and wonder why you're asking that question. A distinctive tone, comfortable to play, a genuine contender.

VINTAGE V1400CSB

Looks, personality, great tone? You want it all do you? Look no further...

Words: Brad Barrett

The rise of the folkie is unstoppable. Whether it be a straight ahead acoustic attack like Frank Turner or Dave House, or a multi-instrumental approach, like the laptop meanderings kickstarted by Sam Duckworth (Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly), the acoustic guitar is *en vogue*, more than ever. Strumming without electricity is no longer the sole domain of down-on-their-luck buskers or boring singer-songwriters. It's actually a damn good instrument that can be used in a variety of different ways. Even the past has taught us this. Just listen to Nick Drake for evidence of that. So while this instrument has always been used, it's only now that youngsters are willing to pick one up and use it in more interesting ways than someone like, to pluck someone out of the air, James Blunt (remember him?).

What all this means is that you'll all be wanting some kind of folk standard to get in on the act. With Vintage, you are in safe hands. JHS have a grand history in knowing their instruments. Taking on the Encore and Vintage brands, as well as the Ovation roundback series, shows a company knowing their stuff but also wanting to cater for those of us who can't stretch to a ridiculously expensive option. What it comes down to is that you'll know this is more than an indication of quality, it's value for money too.

See, it's probably alright to get along with that ten quid boot sale jobbie that you bought on a whim, because it looked like you could get a sound out of it. But, in order to write, practice and gig, you're probably going want something

that not only sounds great, but looks great too.

Looks are important. It's an unfortunate fact that many a music journalist has to learn in his/her tender years. It's also true of guitars. You just aren't gonna want to pick up a plain, unexciting guitar that inspires nothing but a workmanlike approach to your playing. You want something the right side of tasteful and flamboyant. You want

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something that looks good without overshadowing your musical message. When you pick up this bad boy, you're going to want to really fire out some great ideas, and to do that you'll need a visual stimulus as well as a sonic one.

The Vintage V1400CSB does just that. With its solid spruce top aflame in cherry sunburst, it's already got an arresting look that is both somehow traditional and exciting. A natural satin finish leaves any horrific glossy ideas on the luthiers floor. It really gives a cleaner, fresher look, as if the tree has been cut down yesterday. If that was all, you'd be pretty impressed already. However, those guitar-builders from the USA have gone to town with the abalone design.

Adorning both the edge of the guitar and the edge of the soundhole, it looks pretty classy. It's not necessarily to everyone's taste,

and some may say it's a bit too dramatic, but it gives the guitar's look a proper polished and finished feel. The abalone is used on the fret markers, with a particularly luscious flourish on the twelfth fret, with the Vintage V's swooshing off in either direction. Add to this some gold Grover tuners upon a rosewood neck with flame maple binding and it's hardly going to go unnoticed wherever it is.

Still, it would be churlish of me to suggest that this is the be all and end all of what this guitar has to offer. It has a personality all of its own and this is what most players will be more interested in. Sitting down with the thing it feels sturdy and comfortable on the lap, with its curvy shape seemingly suited to perching on a stool in front of a pub full of people. Strumming a few chords, the response is bright, with the treble strings resonating wonderfully. The guitar body being made of solid mahogany gives the sound a bit more punch, and you can certainly hear it from just a few hard strums. A quick blast of anything with a few barre or open chords in sounds solid and chunky, as if it were a jumbo. This guitar gives you the feeling that you could hike across country playing your blues licks and country woes to any of the thousands of public houses

in the country and it would be your best companion. Some country finger picking lets the notes ring out, which is always a good test of a guitar's flexibility. The sustain isn't massive but the tone is warm and inviting. This is good news for all you plectrum-phobics out there.

The one thing it doesn't include, which some people expect nowadays, is the option to plug-in. With no way of manipulating the

tone via an in built EQ, all you're left with is the natural wood's tone, leaving the sound as bare bones and exposed as it can be. Still, there will be no shame in directly mic'ing this baby up and allowing it's strong, distinct tone to flow through awaiting eardrums. Deep with a strong presence and brightness, it's an accomplished guitar. It will respond to whichever style you fancy trying out from blues, country, folk to indie-powerchords, if that's what floats your boat.

Essentially this guitar has looks, style and a bit of personality. It's not massively different from others in its price range, apart from its décor, but it's a robust and nicely finished tool for providing music for the masses, your neighbours and their friends in your back garden, or the local open mic night. It's up to you what you do with it. But it'll go with whatever you choose. **PU**