

GEAR: PILGRIM SERIES VPG001

VINTAGE PILGRIM VPG001

Will you be partial to this Pilgrim?
It has waited a long time for its new debut.



Some of you reading this article may be thinking to yourselves, 'Hang on a minute, I remember seeing a guitar just like this in the early 80s,' and you would be correct in your observations. The Pilgrim guitar as it was back then was highly reputed for its great sound and comfortable playing position. It was considered way ahead of its time due to its then radical body contouring and sculpting. In fact, when taken to the Frankfurt show in 1985, there was so much demand for this guitar that it exceeded what Mr Paul Tebbutt and his humble team would ever be able to produce. As a result of this, small-scale production stayed in place for a while with a UK distributor, but the recession of the latter part of the decade eventually caused production and distribution of this burgeoning instrument to cease. That is, until now...

Build and Features

John Hornby Skewes and the man behind the concept, Tebbutt, formed a good working relationship whereby successive modifications and tweaks were adopted by the factory, under instruction from the designer, in an attempt to produce an instrument that fulfilled the aesthetic and sonic duties envisioned, and in fact delivered,

in the earlier models. After many sessions honing and refining these characteristics, it was determined that the time was finally right to go to market, after waiting many years for the economies of scale, production control and distribution operations to come into alignment.

So what's new about the modern Pilgrim? It still features its definitive contoured fibreglass back and sides, which have been refined not just for the optimal ergonomic comfort but also for consistency in its adherence to the top of the guitar, and overall

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balance. Its distributors, JHS, are no strangers to fibreglass-back instruments, but this is not to be confused with what you may think of as a bowl back guitar. It sits naturally on you without the typical frustration of it rolling

away if you move slightly or twist your torso fractionally when adjusting sheet music. This guitar sits 'in the pocket' in an almost huggable way.

The quality of its now mass-produced construction must be



Fishman preamp ensures quality sounds





PILGRIM SERIES VPG001

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Technical specification

Manufacturer: Vintage
Model: VPG001N
Retail Price: £399
Made In: China
Top: Solid Cedar, satin finish
Back and Sides: Contoured Fibreglass
Neck: Sapele/Maple/Sapele, Narrow width, shallow profile
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 22, 2.2mm Hard, Low Profile
Tuners: Enclosed chrome diecast
Scale Length: 642mm
Onboard Electronics: Fishman Presys+
Strings Fitted: High Quality USA made
Left Handers: No
Gig Bag/Case Included: Yes.

Contact details

John Hornby Skewes & Co. Ltd.
 www.jhs.co.uk

What we think

Pros: Compact, ergonomic and a responsive tone and solid neck feel.
Cons: No figured woods for backs and sides – rather a textured fibreglass.
Overall: Great value-for-money performance tool with excellent electronics.

Our Ratings Explained

5 Stars: Superb, Almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, Hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

Rating out of five

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE FOR MONEY



The bridge, like the rest of the guitar, is plain but functional

[the acoustic sound] translates well when plugged in, with some added punch to the mid range...making for some lively dynamics...

a joy for the original designer to behold – the binding is clean and simple, the fret ends and height and neck profiles are consistent and even. The grain of the fingerboard is smooth, and given the complexity of the moulding process, all the component elements of the guitar reflect a solid-build ethic, including the seating of the EQ. The neck is particularly substantial in both its smooth finish and consistent density. The machine heads are well seated and bridge pins are likewise. It's also well balanced when playing it stood up and does

not rotate away from you.

The textured finish hides the fibreglass body discreetly although the bridge may benefit from a little oiling, but this is more a matter of taste than a criticism.

Sounds

Sporting the Fishman Presys + preamp and Sonicore pickup, the Pilgrim has a new heart inside this reincarnated model. This includes its fast-tracking tuner, which is sensitive and yet is also quick to respond with accuracy. The EQ is a standard three-band affair but you also benefit from a

very useful notch filter, which is particularly handy at cutting out the occasional problem frequency you may encounter when sat near your amplifier. In use, it may not cut out several resonant frequencies at the same time but it is a welcome and practical inclusion.

The pickup may be found on less expensive instruments but is given a wide tonal range to dig into, thanks to the Presys + preamp. Naturally the guitar is quite bright and cheeky in its even-tempered character, and it even exhibits a nicely rounded top end on the bass. This translates well when plugged in, with some added punch to the mid range and when all the EQ settings are at 12 o'clock, making for some lively dynamics.

Conclusion

This guitar's design is something which has stood the test of time, not only because of its proportions and ergonomics but because of the insights garnered over years of guitar repair and modifications undertaken by its creator and his colleagues. Just be conscious of resting your arm too heavily on the lower bout when strumming, as the guitar may rotate away from you as you play with the guitar on your lap. If you are not purist in your views that an acoustic guitar must have a wooden back and sides, I can assure you that you will likely be more than enchanted by this very playable, comfortable and affordable working tool. It represents a melding of the height of modern construction technologies with the integrity of minimalistic aesthetics.

Russell Welton



The bowl-back sits snugly on the lap

