

Based in Croydon, Feline Guitars has been steadily building up a reputation as custom electric guitar builders of note for several years. Feline mainman Jonathon Law is a luthier of no little flair, as his typically exciting output demonstrates, and with a decade-and-a-half of crafting instruments behind him, he remains as passionate about guitars and their construction as ever...

How long have you been building guitars?

About 15 years now. I started out doing a course at the London college of Furniture (now part of London Guildhall University). From there I went on to work for various guitar repair workshops and also for Shadow guitars along the way. I spent a few years working in engineering and telesales environments and learned a lot of other things that I wouldn't have from working in the music industry alone. I still made guitars all the while and couldn't get enough of it, so I left to set up my own guitar business

What were your aims when you set up Feline Guitars?

I had wanted to set up a company that would encompass the professionalism of some of the better major companies whilst continuing to give the personal attention and customer service that a small company offers. With the guitars themselves it's about trying to offer the very best quality available as well as customer choice.

What are your areas of expertise?

My main areas of strength are fretting and fretwork, understanding pickups and guitar tone. I specialise in making solid body electrics, ranging from updated versions of the classic guitars to total one-of-a-kind pieces. My musical tastes had always been in rock music - from classic rock to metal, so I tend to find it easy to understand the needs of rock, metal and blues players as far as guitar tone goes.

You do a lot of repair and set-up work as well as custom building...

About 80% of my work is repairs, customising of existing guitars and set-up work such as refrets and fret dressing. We carry a fairly large range of replacement parts and pickups. We are an authorised Seymour Duncan tone centre and we also carry EMG, Dimarzio, Kinman, Kent Armstrong, Fishman etc.

What leads players to order a custom-built guitar?

Many players know what it is that they are looking for in a guitar, but can't

seem to find it in an off-the-shelf model. Different guitars may have one or more features that they seek, but they are unable to find one that has it all. Rather than keep chopping and changing guitars every few months and losing lots of money on trade-ins, some players have a guitar made that fully suits their needs, meaning that they no longer have to search for that Holy Grail.

Do you have anything approaching a range of 'standard' Feline guitars?

Yes - we have some basic models that we call updated classics.

We keep a few of these in stock, but as most customers like to order them with their own preferences of hardware etc, we end up building mainly to order.

Many of our customers like the pick 'n' mix approach to designing their ultimate guitar - bringing together their favourite features from various different guitars to make their dream guitar. At the other end of the scale we have customers who bring in some very personalised designs - these are sometimes just drawings on the back of a napkin or fully drawn out with all the details ironed out.

How do people usually afford such creations?

The prices for our basic range start at about £900 - prices are affected by the spec, and the choice of timber and hardware of course. The same is also true of the pick 'n' mix-style guitars, but things do get a little more expensive with the total custom creations,



as drawings have to be done and templates made if we don't already have ones for that design.

However, we do get repeat orders from customers who have had one-offs made and second time around it does cut down on costs a bit.

We run a flexible, easy payment scheme that allows customers to pay for their guitar while it is being made.



This lets more people own their dream guitar without worrying about how they will pay for it. Build time usually ranges from about 6-18 months, depending upon the rate of payments.

Any unusual projects on the go at present?

We are making a couple of guitars for a well-known erotic/fetish artist in the form of a reclining lady dressed in lingerie. These are going to be displayed at the Museum of Erotica in Paris. We have also just made a trophy for a guitar college, which has a guitar headstock mounted on an engraved plinth. Recently we did a Les Paul with a Floyd Rose tremolo which was cool, and an axe bass for the bass player in a KISS tribute band that we have made a lot of stuff for in the past. One KISS-inspired guitar covered in Rhinestones is going out to the Hard Rock Café in Florida later this month.



Any thoughts on the state of UK guitar making?

Much of the real expertise in the UK lies with guitar repairers and custom builders. Some work with guitar stores, while many run their own operations. In my opinion these are the best people to turn to for help, whether it's getting the most out of your existing guitar via a set-up or an upgrade in hardware or pickups. They have the best working knowledge to guide you and help you avoid pitfalls along the way. Check out the guitars they make, and if you like what you see then go and treat yourself.



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