



# Vintage Guitar<sup>®</sup> Gear Reviews

magazine

## Affordable, American-Made

### The Jon Kammerer Leo

**J**on Kammerer started his one-man guitar-building operation in 2000, using a proprietary design for acoustic guitars, then, a decade later,

model with a two-piece maple neck, ebony fretboard, 25½" scale, compound-radius (12" to 16"), dual-action truss rod, and abalone inlays. The neck

contours, a rounded neck with great access to the upper registers, and it's surprisingly lightweight – just over seven pounds – especially for a solid maple body. Hardware included black Gotoh tuners, a black hardtail bridge, black Dunlop straplocks and black dome knobs, chrome is a no charge option. Electronics include CTS pots, Razor Rails humbuckers in the neck and middle positions, and a Golden Age humbucker in the bridge, all coupled to a five-way blade switch

without fear of stripping, and the CNC-machined joint is designed to improve string-energy transfer. Kammerer also uses blind fret slots with glued in frets, leaving no chance for fret tangs to poke out from the edge of the fretboard, even if subjected to dry air.

We tested the Leo plugged into a 30-watt 6V6/EL84/12AX7 head and 1x12 cab with a Celestion Elite 80 speaker.

With its maple body and ebony fretboard, the Leo's tone tends to the bright side, with clear high-end response and aggressive upper midrange, giving it great note separation. The Razor Rails humbuckers and overwound Golden Age bridge humbucker are well-matched to the Leo's woods, keeping the high-end in check without getting brittle, and having an abundance of musical upper midrange to keep the tone thick and present.

With the coil splitter engaged, the guitar offers plenty of classic California quack, with excellent out-



#### JON KAMMERER LEO

Price: \$995 (direct)  
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expanding to semi-hollow and solid-body electrics. He offers instruments with customizable features such as neck shapes, pickup configurations, body, neck, and fretboard woods, and finishes.

We recently tested a Kammerer Leo

on our tester was very comfortable, with a C profile and a rolled edge that gave it a nice, lived-in feel. The body was maple with a bookmatched top stained in a translucent black and a uniquely contoured double-cutaway design.

Ergonomically, the Leo has a good feel, with generous arm and belly

and controlled by a master Volume and master Tone with push/pull coil splitters for the neck and bridge pickups. Hardware and electronics are neatly installed, with the bridge recessed into the body, and there is a cool dugout for the Volume and Tone controls. The ¼" jack and the pickups are rear-mounted, giving the guitar a clean look.

It's worth noting that Kammerer guitars, while being bolt-neck instruments, secure the neck with two ⅛" steel alignment pins and four ¼" machine bolts coupled to threaded brass inserts. All four can be torqued

of-phase sounds in the two and four positions and usable twang with the bridge pickup running by itself. The neck and middle pickups offer a mix of noise-free single-coil/humbucker qualities along with hotter output to match the bridge humbucker while still offering plenty of bell-like tone and high-end snap. With the amp dialed in for higher gain, the pickups did a good job rendering a crunchy, articulate distortion with good sustain.

The Kammerer Leo is a well-constructed axe with excellent playability, an arsenal of great tones all for a bargain price. – **Phil Feser VG**