



Pure Class

Indie IHJ40 Pure

Review by David Etheridge

It is widely known that thinner finishes promote superior tone on acoustic instruments, allowing the wood to breathe and resonate more freely, so why not try leaving a brand new guitar with no finish at all?

When I first started out playing in folk bands many moons ago, the art of tonally tweaking acoustic guitars was in its infancy. Acoustic musos were just getting used to instruments from the Far East that actually stayed in tune and you could play without rattles and buzzes. This was the future, and the slightly dodgy European makes with their wayward quality were definitely yesterday's news. But one day, a fellow band member showed me something quite startling. At first sight he'd vandalised the guitar by stripping off the protective varnish. The wood still looked nice, although it didn't shine so much, but the real revelation was the improvement in sound. This relatively affordable Japanese model acoustic now

sounded almost as big as a Martin. Not quite there, but well on the way. Over the years, this became relatively common practice amongst guitarists who actually played rather than collected instruments.

Move forward some thirty years or so, and this approach has been taken even further by everyone's favourite guitar manufacturer: Indie. Justly known for making their very own way in all things to do with guitar manufacture, Indie fearlessly leap into territory other makes fear to tread. In this case, it's the whole question of acoustic guitars. We're looking this month at the Pure acoustic, which represents a complete 'back to basics' approach, with stunning results

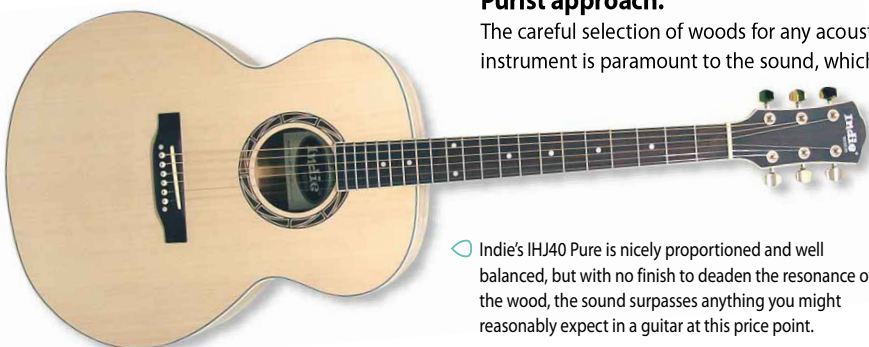
Purist approach.

The careful selection of woods for any acoustic instrument is paramount to the sound, which

is why you'll find that most acoustic guitars will be made up of varying combinations of spruce, mahogany, and rosewood. Carefully cut and finished, the resulting instrument can be a work of art in itself. However, compromise can rear its ugly head in the need to then slap some kind of protective finish over the carefully selected woods. Obviously, received wisdom dictates that the life of a playing muso is filled with potential for bashes and dings to your guitar, spilling drinks on to it between songs, and all the rigours of the road. But the folks at Indie would say that that's no reason to hamper the tone and resonance of an acoustic with a sound deadening lacquer that stops the wood breathing and responding, so they haven't. Indie's Pure is as natural in approach as is possible.

Stage One Separation.

Indie's approach with the Pure acoustic is in the 'Stage One' finish: there's no protective layer, there isn't even any staining applied. What you have is the natural colour and feel of the wood under your fingers with no additives of any kind. The Pure is constructed with a breathable solid spruce top, breathable rosewood back and sides, and a mahogany



Indie's IHJ40 Pure is nicely proportioned and well balanced, but with no finish to deaden the resonance of the wood, the sound surpasses anything you might reasonably expect in a guitar at this price point.

neck with a 20-fret rosewood fingerboard and rosewood bridge. The construction is just about perfect: everything you see on the Pure is just as it should be, with immaculate internal bracing, soundhole decoration and edge binding flawlessly executed. If I was being ultra picky, I would point out the wood grain edges showing at the soundhole -and these are only apparent because there's no lacquer or polyurethane covering it up! Just holding the instrument and running your fingers over it is a tactile experience. To me, it seems a tad lighter than other acoustics, but this may be an illusion due to the natural (lack of) finish. Either way, the Pure is perfectly proportioned and balanced.


Tone and resonance

The sound can be summed up easily: pure tone and resonance out of all proportion to its size. The sound is warm and crystal clear and just seems to fill the room. Bass tones boom and project, while the highs are sparkling. As you play the Pure acoustic, you can feel the tones resonating through the body and into your body in a rather uncanny way. The result is that this is arguably one of the most resonant and responsive acoustic guitars that you'll ever play. Individual strings ring out clearly with delicate fingerstyle picking, harmonics are the clearest

I've ever heard, while full chordal strums produce waves of sound with ease and without having to hammer the instrument. The action is excellent for most acoustic players, although I'll hazard a guess that more advanced players may wish to lower the action for a speedier style, which the resonant nature of the Pure lends itself to admirably.

Sonically astonishing

This is the most extraordinary acoustic I've ever played for sound and tone. It's beautifully made and finished in just about every respect with a massive tone and sound all of its own. As soon as you pick it up it just demands to be played, and the sonic results will truly astonish you. It looks, sounds, and above all feels just the way acoustic guitar should, where the tactile feel of the wood under your hands comes alive with massive waves of pure sound. In this respect alone, Indie have succeeded triumphantly in producing an acoustic for the true 'Purist'. The price is only a fraction of what you might pay for an instrument of comparable performance from the big names; as ever, the extraordinary Indie value for money is very much in evidence. The only drawback may lie in the 'Stage One' finish. Sooner or later you're going to spill something

on it, knock it or bash it in some way. Old classical instruments suffer the same way and bear their scars with honour. At least that way you won't have to go searching the market for a distressed version! 

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Indie IHJ40 Pure £355

Key Notes

- Mahogany neck.
- Rosewood fingerboard, 20 frets.
- Solid breathable spruce top.
- Rosewood, breathable back and sides.
- Indie gold machines.
- Natural Pure Stage One production.

High Notes

- The usual Indie high quality.
- Superbly made with classy decorative touches.
- Astonishingly responsive and resonant.
- A true player's instrument.
- Great sound.

Low Notes

- Susceptible to damage from liquid spills and on the road dings, but that's the whole point.

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