
Joyce's Gear Choices

JOYCE FILLS IN THE FANS ON HOW SHE MAKES HER GORGEOUS NOISE

A Fan Writes:

Dear Joyce,

I love your music and play a little guitar myself. I've been learning some of your songs, but my tone is less than desirable. It doesn't sound anything like what you do. What kinds of equipment do you use to get your sound?

By the way, if this is one of those, "If you tell me you'll have to kill me" things, never mind.

Thanks!
A Guitar Fan

Hello Guitar Fans & Friends,

We have had many inquiries about the guitars I have played over the years, so listed below are the instruments I've used in the studio as well as on live gigs. I hope this answers your questions and thanks so much for your interest!

GUITARS

Guitars used on live gigs:

I now use two main guitars for my road gigs – an electric and a nylon acoustic / electric.



My electric is so cool and unique that it defies description and is a must see! Rich Hoeg of Hoeg Stringed Instruments in San Francisco (www.hoegguitars.com) built this incredible axe. I went to Rich with a problem. I needed a guitar that would break down to fit the carry-on luggage specs. The airlines limit you to two carry on items and they must not exceed 45" total (height + width + depth). I also needed something very light. Rich, Jay and I went back and forth tweaking things and I went in for many "fittings." The end result is a

light, perfectly balanced, awesome-looking guitar that plays like a dream. The body is made of alder and the two sides are removable to fit the carry-on luggage requirements. The neck is made of rock maple with a Brazilian rosewood fingerboard. The pickups are Seymour Duncan Cool Rails. The two sides go in a bag with my miscellaneous guitar accessories and fits under the seat. The neck fits in a custom bag made by Glenn Cronkhite (see below) and fits in any airplane overhead compartment. My problem is solved and I never get hassled anymore. I use the same strings as described below for my custom Strat.



I love this guitar. Rich Hoeg is brilliant and he did an amazing job.



The acoustic / electric that travels with me is the Frameworks Modern Classic built by Frank Krockner in Burghausen, Germany. The Frameworks is unusual and it would be best to check out their web site for details (www.frameworks-guitars.com). This guitar is so light and portable that you can carry several of them in a soft gig bag that fits in the overhead compartment of any airplane. I use D'Addario Extra Hard Tension Nylon strings.

MY OTHER KIDS



This custom Stratocaster (also built by Rich Hoeg) used to be my main road guitar and it toured with me for years. I logged in so many hours on this axe that it felt like an extension of me! It has a solid alder body with a rosewood fingerboard and Joe Barden pickups. It also has a piezo pickup by L.R. Baggs in the bridge (that's what the extra knobs are for) that allows me to get some semi-acoustic sounds. You can select either all magnetic pickups or all piezo or a combination of both with the toggle switch.

People have also asked what the extra knob is below my right hand. It's the volume pot. Since I don't use a pick, and play with a combination of finger style and thumb, I kept bumping into the volume control when it was in the traditional position. The easiest solution was to move it.

The piezo pickup installation and re-routing was done by Gary Brawer at Gary Brawer Guitar & Bass Repair in San Francisco (www.brawer.com). I use Ernie Ball Strings - a regular light gauge set with the 10 swapped out for a 12 so the set reads: 12, 13, 17, 26, 36, 46. The heavier gauge string on top seems to help even out the unpleasant "ping" I was getting in the upper register.

This one is a custom acoustic / electric built by Dan Ransom at Real Guitars in San Francisco (www.realguitars.com). This axe is a semi-hollow guitar with an alder back and a flame maple top with a maple fingerboard and an L.R. Baggs pickup under the bridge. It sounds like a cross between an electric and a steel string acoustic. I use regular medium gauge phosphor bronze acoustic strings.



BACK AT THE LAB

For recording and local gigs I also use:

Gibson ES 335 - 1970-ish
(not 100% sure of the year)

Gibson ES 175 - 1967
with "Patent Applied For" Humbucking pickups

Godin Acoustic / Electric nylon string

Gibson Chet Atkins Acoustic / Electric steel string

Gibson Chet Atkins Acoustic / Electric nylon string

Various acoustic guitars



Gibson ES 335



Gibson ES 175



Godin Acoustic / Electric
nylon string



Gibson Chet Atkins
Acoustic / Electric nylon string

AMPLIFIERS

As far as amplifiers go, our gear is rented in each city that we play in, so I usually end up using whatever Fender amps are on the backline gear sheet. Not always great, but it keeps it real.

ROAD CASES

My favorite gig bags, and the only ones I use on the road, are all made by Glenn Cronkhite at Glenn Cronkhite Custom Cases in Berkeley, CA (www.glenncronkhite.com). Glenn's gig bags are ergonomically perfect for me and are built to last.

Glenn at work, his patterns, the machine, and the "Shop Cat"



A BIT ABOUT RECORDING

I started out practicing, playing and recording in small city apartments with nice folks with real jobs living above, below, and on either side of me. I had to come up with a way to carry on noiselessly or risk being evicted.

As you can imagine, someone starting out trying to make records in a small apartment might also be financially restricted. We didn't use anything fancy - just basic home recording gear.

With this in mind, I recorded my guitar for our early CDs in one of two basic ways: The first and simplest way was to go direct into the board or into a tube pre-amp like a Demeter and then into the board. This worked OK for some very clean Strat stuff and for the acoustic/electric guitar tracks.

This direct scenario didn't work very well for my regular magnetic pickup electric guitar sounds. With some experimentation I ended up on late night/wee hour sessions using a PS System Power Tool, which is basically a speaker emulator.

When recording at "decent" hours, I used my old Fender Deluxe or borrowed other vintage amps from friends and stuck a mic in front of the amp and played the old fashioned way. Really, nothing fancy.

Please remember, there are better solutions out there for recording guitars. There are volumes on the subject. Everyone needs to experiment with what they've got and see what works best for them. I was restricted not only by my urban dwelling situation, but also by my dislike of fooling around with gear. I just like to plug in and play. I feel very bogged down and a bit cranky when I have to deal with complicated set ups. I am too anxious to get to the music!

I hope this helps or at least gives you a glimpse into my way of dealing with the recording process. Please don't let my restrictions limit you. Have fun exploring and good luck with getting great guitar sounds!

-- Joyce