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GEAR ON TEST: CASIMI GUITARS, C.F. MARTIN & CO, DEERING BANJOS, SANTA CRUZ, BREEDLOVE, EKO



The Casimi's fingerboard is devoid of any position markers and comes with 19 and a half frets – the 20th fret ends in a hook-like flourish that serves only the top two strings



CASIMI C1

Artistic design meets top-class luthiery in this Grand Concert acoustic – David Mead takes a look...

The Casimi's top is made from Carpathian spruce, a wood from central and eastern Europe which is gaining popularity among luthiers for its bright tap tone and similarity with the much sought-after Adirondack variety. Here, it's creamy white with a slightly wider grain than a lot of European spruces – another similarity to Adirondack – and very neatly bookmatched. That black syrup-like liquid trim I mentioned is African blackwood, a wood that features on models throughout the Casimi range and one that is famed for its resonance and bell-like sustain. There's a bevel to the upper side of the lower bout,

which might not stand out in the photographs and this is, of course, for the comfort of the player's right arm. It's very neat with a perfectly rendered smooth contour that fits snugly under the arm and does indeed aid general comfort for the player in this area.

Back and sides are Indian rosewood with a boisterous, good-looking grain pattern and a genuine Venetian cutaway, where the wood has been bent to shape rather than employing a crafty graft, as in some cases.

Moving on to the Casimi's neck we find a fine piece of mahogany with a carved

heel that has been shaped to fit the contours of the player's hand to increase comfortable access to the upper frets. It's shaped a bit like an aircraft's wing and certainly forms a cosy fit under the hand. At the top of the neck, the headstock is a composite of two veneers: rosewood to the back and African blackwood to the front. Its scarfed, elongated design has the effect of making the neck look longer than it is. I had to look two or three times to confirm that the Casimi has 12-frets to the body. My head was telling me one thing and my eyes another! In any case, the tuners are the redoubtable Gotoh 510s, with their 1:18 ratio guaranteeing dead accurate tuning.

The Casimi's ebony fingerboard is devoid of position markers and comes with what I'm going to call 19 and a half frets, as the board ends with a sort of hook-like flourish resulting in a 20th fret that serves only the top two strings.

There's some considerable innovation happening with this guitar's blackwood bridge. Casimi has applied for a patent on the design that sees a magnetic block concealing the string ends which themselves are fed through the body in three pairs, thus eliminating the need for string pins. During a string change, you merely remove the magnetic block and locate the strings through the bridge as normal. Afterwards, you replace the block and everything looks

The Casimi acoustic guitar range is relatively new to the UK market, the instruments being made available over here via The North American Guitar in London. The brainchild of luthier Matthias Roux and designer Matthew Rice, Casimi Guitars is based in Capetown, South Africa, and aims to combine striking original design features with first class workmanship and the very best tonewoods available. You have to admit that the C1 certainly has a very artistic flair to its overall look; in fact it has the appearance of a piece of modern bespoke furniture about it. But good looks aren't everything, it's the sound that counts, so let's see how the Casimi measures up.

BUILD QUALITY

I will confess that I'm always a bit wary when

confronted by an instrument that strays away from the traditional to the extent that this Casimi seems to have done. But in this case the aesthete within me went into override mode and I had to admit that I think this guitar works on all kinds of different levels. The design is both graceful and effective – the trim around the soundboard looks almost liquid, for instance. So, with all prejudices put firmly aside, let's move in for a close-up perspective.





CASIMI C1

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Casimi
Model: C1
Retail Price: £6,950
Body Size: Grand Concert
Made In: Capetown, SA
Top: Carpathian spruce
Back and Sides: Indian rosewood
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 19
Tuners: Gotoh 510s
Nut Width: 44.5mm
Scale Length: 632.4mm
Strings Fitted: Elixir PB .012 - .053
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hard case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Hand-built, beautifully designed guitar with a broad range of good tones

Cons: Might not suit the traditionalists!

Overall: A work of art that sounds very good, is well made and comfortable to play

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	★★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★★
Value for Money	★★★★☆

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.

CONTACT DETAILS

The North American Guitar

www.thenorthamericanguitar.com

www.casimguitars.com



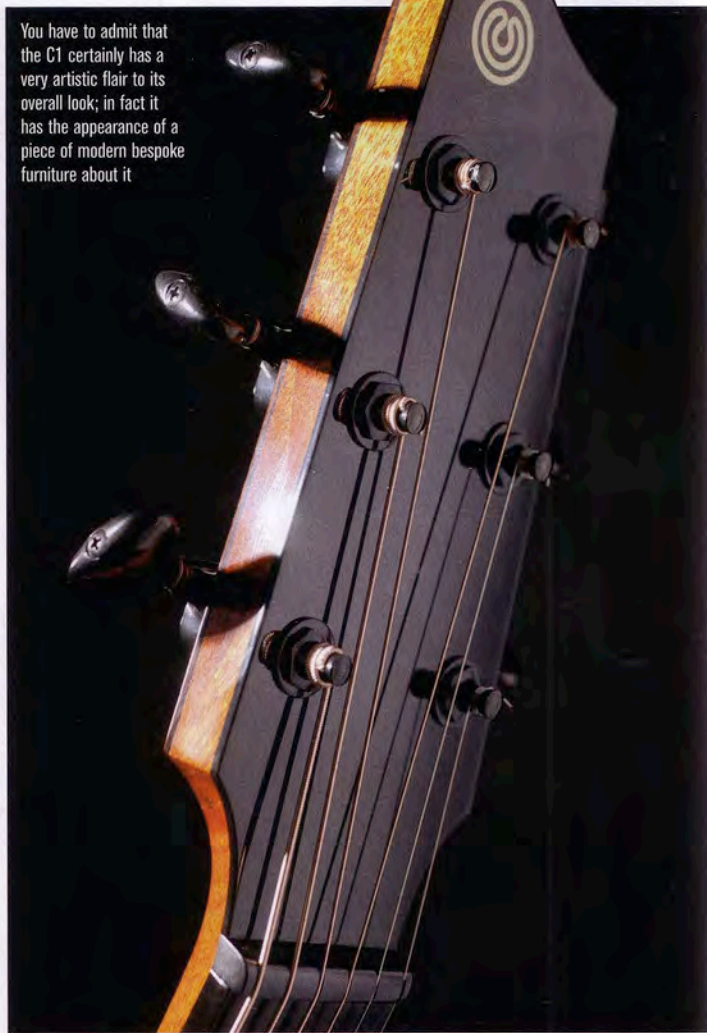
APP EXTRA

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The duo of Matthias Roux and Matthew Rice is one that is absolutely alive with design ideas and idiosyncratic elements that make Casimi Guitars stand out from the rest



You have to admit that the C1 certainly has a very artistic flair to its overall look; in fact it has the appearance of a piece of modern bespoke furniture about it



supremely neat and tidy. It's a nice touch that may well pave the way for the next generation of bridge design; furthermore, it's really simple, like most good ideas usually are. So, the C1 is bristling with good looks and canny design features, I bet you're wondering what it sounds like...

SOUND QUALITY

For one thing, the Casimi is a delight to sit and play. It balances well and, from a distance, those blackwood bindings sort of disappear into the background, giving the appearance that the spruce is merely floating in space before your eyes.

I'm told that Casimi's entire range features 12-fret-to-the-body necks in order to place the bridge at an optimum position on the soundboard, where the body is at its widest. This allows the top to work and

generate more sound to the soundhole, or so the theory goes. In practice, I have to say that the sound of this Casimi guitar wasn't really what I was expecting at all. It has a lot of clarity to the trebles and a reasonably tight and focused lower end, too. There's a good amount of separation between the notes and a lot of sustain combined with a surprising amount of projection.

It handles quite a breadth of styles - everything from fingerstyle blues through to gently strummed chords sounds equally good and so we can add versatility to the list of the C1's attributes.

Drop tuned to DADGAD the Casimi reveals the type of timbre that will delight players inspired by Celtic music. It's sweet with a strong, unobtrusive bass

presence which adds up to a flat response, ideal for either recording or amplification.

CONCLUSION

The duo of Matthias Roux and Matthew Rice is one that is absolutely alive with design ideas and I would encourage everyone to have a look at the various models featured on the Casimi website. Other new initiatives include an amazing-looking hollow headstock, not featured on the C1, and much more besides that.

I don't know how this guitar will be accepted by the die-hard traditionalists, but it would be a great shame to disregard it just because it looks different from the rest of the pack. Once you've got over that slight shock of the new, the C1 really is a fantastic instrument with a great amount of depth and versatility to its name.

David Mead

The bridge sees a magnetic block concealing the string ends which themselves are fed through the body in three pairs, thus eliminating the need for string pins

