

Hello future guitar builders.

I recently completed the guitar building course with Sylvan Wells and I want to wholeheartedly endorse the course. I am in Kentucky and found Mr. Wells through an internet search. I did quite a bit of research and spoke to Mr. Wells and previous students before I decided to take his course. As you can understand, I was hesitant. The first time I spoke to Sylvan, however I realized he understood his art, had a great deal of experience, had a great passion for it, and would be a great teacher.

The course has the student start with raw materials and end with a playable instrument in 10 days. If you know anything about guitar building you would immediately realize that completing this task is no small feat, however Mr. Wells structured approach, teaching experience, and materials allow the student to complete a professional level instrument in the time allotted.

You will learn the art of instrument building from the ground up. You will approach all aspects of guitar making including but not limited to wood selection, tool selection, jigs, body and neck radius, bracing, minor inlay, neck angle and alignment, fret work, and setup. Sylvan does not have any "trade secrets" simply because he doesn't keep any secrets concerning building. He is happy to convey any and as much knowledge as you can grasp. He allows you to sketch, photograph, or note anything you wish about his methods, jigs, and equipment. I even traced several of his templates and molds and made detailed measurements of a few of his jigs so I could have a starting point in my own shop.

The course is understandably intense and you should come prepared to work hard and long. You should come with a camera to document your work and an extra notebook to go with the course materials he gives you. You should come prepared to grasp a great number of concepts and large amount of knowledge that Mr. Wells has accumulated over the years. And you should come with a sense of humor, because Sylvan is a great guy with great stories and a great sense of humor himself.

Although this all might sound intimidating, Mr. Wells' teaching methods allow him to judge your experience and understanding as you go and tailor the course to your needs. This is one of the beauties of the "One on One" teaching concept. It is as appropriate for the student without any woodworking experience as it is for the seasoned woodworker. He does not expect you to grasp everything the first time he explains a concept and expects questions as you learn. Although your work together is organized and efficient, it is not rushed. He is a great teacher and a patient guy. He will do some of the work as you learn and you will do some of the work. Together you will build a great instrument.

His goal is to build a guitar with you, but just as important, for you to be able to go home with the understanding and skills to start building instruments yourself. Although I understand I have just begun my education as a builder, I am at least 10 years a head of where I would have been without this course.

If your goal is to make a single custom acoustic guitar and simply enjoy the experience, this course is for you. If your goal is to learn skills to become a luthier yourself, this course is definitely for you. I cannot imagine anyone leaving Mr. Wells' shop without a great instrument and a great experience.

Thanks Sylvan.

Will Renshaw