

One hundred J.A. Personal instruments by Brandin' Guitars

This past year you were able to follow the construction of a concept guitar. They changed the brand name from QGuitars to Radix to Brandin' to finally end with an instrument that just has the signature of the designer on the headstock, so no brand name! Only by examining the case can you see it's a product of Brandin' Guitars. It's been a year now since Jan Akkerman met the people involved with QGuitars from Hulten, a village in the province Brabant in Holland. Owner Peter Herwegh wanted to produce the guitar player's once Gibson Personal in a limited run of one hundred. They soon finalized the details. Peter had found a unique factory in Jakarta and Jan knew precisely what he wanted.

Don't think for a moment it would become an identical copy of the 1970's Gibson Personal. Akkerman had already altered the instrument in lots of ways. It looked more like a Les Paul with a slightly bigger body. It had become a one-off guitar with a fresh style and sound, no longer comparable to the original. NICKY MOEKEN.

During the vibrant seventies Jan was working in a famous studio in New York. He was working on his solo project Eli. He had just bought his Gibson Personal; the original version with two PAF Humbuckers and an extra plug for a microphone. A lot would soon vanish or be altered. Almost immediately the guitar was sent to Paul Hamer in Chicago to have it set-up correctly and to change both pickups. Near perfect it was returned to him in the New York studio. Not long after that, the attachment for the microphone, which Gibson had added, was taken out and covered up. Together with his Black Beauty it became one of his favoured instruments. About ten years ago, back in Holland, he decided the top of the body needed alteration. He contacted Wim Heinz, a guitar builder and modifier to redo the whole top. It was decided to change this into a carved flamed maple top. The curve was staggering! Throughout the years even in Hardware and pickups Jan would keep changing the instrument. Just the shape of the instrument was a reminder of a Gibson Personal. Everything else was changed. It became the J.A. Personal.

Limited to 100 pieces

For Brandin' Guitars it was a great opportunity to set production in stone by contract and limiting production to 100 instruments. Radix was contacted, which was documented about a year ago in GitaarPlus. Owner Toien Radix would personally be involved in the construction of their version of the J.A. Personal.

All woods, mahogany for the body and neck, ebony for the fretboard and a rosewood headstock came from Indonesian forests. Only the carved maple top had to come from elsewhere. Maple apparently doesn't grow well quality wise in Indonesia.

While the original version of this instrument had Kluson tuning machines, Jan changed these to the oversized Gretsch versions. Furthermore he wanted to change his sound back to the Focus period with a TV Jones Filter'Tron single-coil near the neck and a PAF humbucker close to the bridge. It's been well documented that most modern developers of pickups have difficulty to develop a pickup with the limitations of a PAF. In all cases they always sound broader and better. You miss the limited warm sound

In answering that in 2011 Jan had a special meeting with an old friend, Martin Boeijink. He presented a Custom Telecaster variant with two PAF Humbuckers, wounded by Steffsen. Jan would call them ... too wild! Martin died way too early. However, Jan did remember that the pickups (and the guitar) came from a guy that lived in Hoogstraten, just across the border with Holland. His name is Steff Peire. Steffsen Pickups, his company name, had found the right Gibson PAF tone. It was the final detail, because of Martin Boeijink, complete.

Starting with prototypes

Prototypes were built in Jakarta and set-up with pickups in Holland. The choice was made to create 50 instruments in black and 50 in 3-tone sunburst. After the first prototypes came in, it was clear that this could really be a success. The build quality by just over 100 men in a factory in Tangerang (a suburb of Jakarta) was staggering. After some small alterations the second flow of prototypes was approved and production got started. 🎸



Distributeur van de topmerken:

Albion
AMPLIFICATION



Handwired pickups



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Sign with golden pen!

Just as Jan looks the other way, I steal his guitar. This is the very first model he approved and now plays with on the headstock his autograph with a golden pen. Brandin' Guitars delivers the instrument including a certificate, Jan's latest album *Minor Details* and a compact case. Looking deep in the soul of the designer and what he takes out on the road, his preference is black. Personally I prefer the sunburst look.

Quality oozes when you pick the instrument up. That they built by hand in Tangerang doesn't guarantee anything. But in this case you pick the guitar out of its case and you can't be anything else than impressed. Not just the shape, it's also the extreme details in build quality and of course the chosen pickups that make it extraordinary. Only by shape, scale length and colouring can you discover Gibson elements. But after that, this is a complete different animal. It sounds and feels different. Either under his own name or with My Brainbox, if you have seen Jan play in the last year, you will have enjoyed him with his new J.A. Personal.



At a glance

Brandin' Guitars, Hulten, Holland

Model: J.A. Personal

Design: Holland/America,

Construction: Indonesia/Holland

Price: € 1895,-

General specifications:

Unique 6-string guitar, based on a Gibson Personal, with countless alterations, that make it special

Woods:

- A mahogany base with a carved, striped maple top
- One part mahogany neck with an ebony fretboard
- The head plate is laminated rosewood

Measurements:

Total length: 98.9 cm

Scale length: 62.7 cm

Nut width: 4.2 cm

12th fret: 5.3 cm

No radius confirmed

Electronics:

- Neck pickup: TV Jones Filter'Tron
- Bridge pickup: Steffsens PAF variation
- Two tone and two volume pots
- 3-way switch

Hardware:

- Gretsch Custom, closed tuning machines; 14:1
- Stop Tailpiece with Tune-O-Matic Bridge; in height and depth adjustable
- Two strap buttons

Accessories:

- Five years warranty on factory faults
- Luxurious custom case
- Neck wrench
- Certificate
- Album *Minor Details*

Distribution:

Brandin' Guitars, Hulten, Holland, www.qguitars.nl

Not everything is described by hype

Although any guitar player will be happy with the total outcome of this instrument, personally I struggle with its weight and balance. Especially on your lap, you have to rest the guitar on your belly to play with ease. Sitting straight is a tough exercise.

Ever tried playing Akkerman style? You'll always distinguish a fat overdrive, and how the sound reflects *Hocus Pocus* by Focus. It doesn't evolve. It's the man's fingering and articulation. It took him years of experimenting with pickups and his *Black Beauty* from the Focus period before he found this set-up. It colours sublimely on this Personal. As manufacturer and distributor you can't get a better pat on your shoulder than is demanded with this model. Akkerman's original model has been put into a safe place. He just plays this version now.



After three days

If the best-chosen guitarist of Holland states that this, the J.A. Personal is the best guitar he owns and plays, you have to question the objectivity of this review. Let's just say, that the player may have parked his original Gibson in a safe place, this new version is exactly the same. Jan states: "Just a little better!" The major change is the two pickups out his Focus time. Jan changed it to a Filter 'Tron at the neck and left the original PAF at the bridge. The choice of the Steffsen PAF and the TV Jones Filter'Tron makes this version simple different in sounds then the original with two PAF's. ✓