



# Kitsap Sun

## NEWS

# TV Jones guitar shop sets up in Poulsbo, sending high-end components worldwide



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POULSBO -- Just a block away from the typical tourist sites on Front Street is a storefront captivated by a talkative cockatoo, blocks of wood in every shape and size strewn about, and a man in the next room telling vibrant stories about Brian Setzer's guitars.

This scene is the home of TV Jones, a high-quality guitar shop that makes specialized products that are shipped around the world and has brought its unique feel to the North Kitsap community.

“When I started working here I learned a lot I didn't know about guitars,” Zander Grey, a musician and long-time employee at TV Jones said. “It was very cool to learn the ins and outs... We get to see stuff first-hand and behind the scenes... and the people here are great.”

## The origins of a unique guitar guy

Thomas Vincent Jones, the founder and owner of TV Jones, was born in Los Angeles and became fascinated with guitars in his early teenage years. He was constantly taking his guitars apart to understand how they worked, and trying to customize them.

“My first guitar hero was Chuck Berry, and he had a guitar in the 70’s that was stereo... so I thought, ‘I gotta make my guitar stereo,’” Jones said.

Stereo guitars are guitars with two outputs, which allow each output to be affected differently and deliver a sound out of two sources for a unique listening experience.

Jones attributes much of his early education to Jon Peterson and Saul Koll, two mentors he found while working at World of Strings in Long Beach, California. This company built orchestral instruments such as violins and guitars, and this is also where he learned a lot about the physical construction of guitars. By the early 1990s he had become known as a go-to tech for both local and international musicians.

In 1993, Jones founded TV Jones, a custom guitar and guitar repair shop in California. He began working closely with Brian Setzer, a musician and member of Stray Cats, helping to rebuild old, damaged guitars and creating new custom guitars from scratch. It was around this time that Jones became interested in creating his own guitar pickup, a piece of equipment that senses and transmits the mechanical vibrations produced by the guitar’s strings and amplifies them.

His pickups became very popular, and by 1998 TV Jones had a partnership with Fender and Gretsch Guitars, providing the pickups that would be used in certain new guitar lines. Through both word of mouth and this new partnership, TV Jones gained a respected reputation among high-profile musicians in the industry.

## **How a California company fits on Front Street**

Jones had visited Washington State for guitar conferences through the Guild of American Luthiers, and he fell in love with the Poulsbo area. In 2001 he decided to move himself and his business to Poulsbo. TV Jones has worked out of three different buildings, and is now at 18916 3rd Ave NE.

Unassuming from the outside, the building is a flurry of colour, music and instruments once you enter -- including various bird play structures, set up for resident Cockatoo, a 36-year-old avian and Jones’ pet.

“She’s like the original employee — she’s pre-TV Jones,” Jones joked.

The front of the shop is filled with guitars and guitar parts, ranging from solid wood waiting to be carved to intricately painted and lacquered guitars. Many of their guitars are made from scratch, according to Jones.

While TV Jones is currently most well-known for its handmade pickups, the shop still makes custom instruments. Jones works with various different artists to help create an instrument that uniquely fits their wants and needs.

Setzer wanted a leopard print guitar to play with the Stray Cats. After hours of labour trying to figure out how best to mimic the spots of a leopard, Jones and his good friend Wendy DeLeon ended up hand painting each spot for authenticity. Joe Perry, a guitar player from the band Aerosmith, wanted an accessible way to use a pedal while moving freely around stage, and thus Jones constructed a guitar with a pedal built into the actual body of the guitar. Another custom guitar made for Perry was stained with pipe tobacco and coffee grounds as a creative way to tie Perry's interests into the color.

While value is placed on originality at TV Jones, there is an equal amount of pride in quality and service.

TV Jones pickups have always been entirely made in the United States. American parts tend to have less impurities, and the magnets have a broader spectrum of frequencies, according to Jones. All of these little differences add up to make a big difference in the sound and quality.

While TV Jones once started out as a guitar making and guitar repair shop, the selling of pickups now makes up about 85% of their business. They ship locally and internationally, with about 22% of their shipped products mailed internationally.

“We ship everyday, worldwide. To factories, users, distributors...” Jones said.

Throughout 2020, TV Jones had their best year ever, which Jones attributed to people being stuck at home and wanting to write music during the pandemic. Since then business

has remained steady, but inflation has recently caused difficulty in purchasing parts, Jones said.

Since the pandemic, a guitar manufacturing company in Japan has been unable to keep up with providing finished guitars for TV Jones. So instead Jones will order about 20 unfinished guitars per month and he and Cheyenne Sibitzky, a TV Jones employee, will use different methods like oiling, staining, painting and lacquering to finish each one uniquely.

Innovation is always a goal, as Jones explains that one of his recent goals is to finish all of his research and development projects. He is currently working on various new pickup designs and mounting options.

Even local musicians are calling TV Jones a cornerstone of the rock and roll guitar scene.

"Tom (Jones) is amazing. He's such a patient and giving person, especially to the music community," Paul Ingram, musician and lead singer for Garage Heroes, said.