

J 200 Standard Acoustic Guitar Reviews sj 200

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They call it the 'King Of The Flat Tops' – is the J200 Standard really worthy of a crown?

In a back catalogue packed with classic designs, the Gibson J200 still stands apart as one of the US brand's seminal moments. Launched in 1938 as the Super Jumbo, it became known as the Super Jumbo 200

the following year, then to the J-200 in 1955.

Over the years, it has been played by the likes of Elvis Presley, Emmylou Harris, Jimmy Page, Pete Townsend, Noel Gallagher and many other iconic guitarists.

So, what is it about the J200 that makes it magic? Or, is it all just a myth? We take a look at the J200 Standard to see for ourselves. According to Gibson, the development of the SJ-200 came about due to a

demand for deeper sounding, more powerful sounding guitar with better projection than anything available at the time. It hit upon the idea of using a bigger body shape, and the now familiar curves of the

Jumbo were born. In the modern incarnation, the large, curvaceous body is built with a Sitka spruce top, and a maple back and sides, with a matching maple neck, shaped to a rounded profile. In this Natural-

finish example, the dramatic figuring of the maple is particularly pleasing, with that almost holograph-style flame effect wrapping the neck. There's a similarly opulent feel to other aesthetic details. The scratch

plate is engraved with dots and flowers, inlays are mother of pearl crowns, and the reverse of the guitar body and neck are inlaid with thin strip of marquetry. All very kingly.... The bridge is a 'moustache' design,

made of rosewood, as is the fingerboard. Grover Rotomatics tuners, er... keep things in-tune, and this modern example is equipped with a Fishman Ellipse Aura pickup system.

On paper at least, this is very luxurious instrument... Full, yet balanced – powerful, yet controlled. A spec sheet doesn't win me over, however- a great tone does. In this regard, the J200 Standard delivers in

spades. The tone is full, as you might expect from a guitar of this size. Somewhat counter-intuitively, it has none of the 'boominess that you might think would result from a Jumbo. In fact, the sound is very

balanced and focused- most likely because of the maple back. The power and projection don't disappoint either. However, when played hard it doesn't disappear into mush of overdriven notes, retaining a clarity

that is startling. The J-200 can turn its hand to most musical situations as a result: pickers and strummers will all find much to like. It is perhaps those who play live who will truly fall for this guitar's charms,

however. Aside from the balanced tone and projection, the J-200 Standard is fitted with a Fishman Ellipse Aura pickup system. This employs Fishman's acoustic imaging technology, along with a Matrix under

saddle pickup, and lets the user blend between the two via sound-hole controls. It sounds just as great when plugged in as it does when played acoustically. All hail the King?

There are some guitars that, despite decades of critical acclaim and hype, it's difficult to see

what the fuss is about. The J200 Standard is not one of these. Just picking it up and strumming an open chord is

enough to tell you that all that you have heard is true. It has resonance and dynamic that feels alive, but a tone that is just perfectly balanced.

Weigh in the projection and superb pre-amp system, and you have one of the finest acoustic guitars for the gigging musician that money can buy.

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