

Warmoth Guitars: The "Original" Custom Guitar Shop

by [Lee "Drew" Andrews](#)



Hidden away in the small Washington town of Puyallup, the Warmoth Guitar Shop creates some of the best high-quality guitar parts in the world. Beginning over 25 years ago, Warmoth established itself as the "Original" Custom Guitar Shop, supplying not only the general consumer but also many high-end guitar makers with well-crafted parts. Warmoth's work is so well known that recently Line6 contacted the company to be the exclusive source for upgrade components for their new Variax Modeling Guitars. Not only does Warmoth offer upgrade necks that retrofit into the Variax body, but you can also order a new body and neck so that the guitar electronics could be installed to create your own custom Variax.



Finished necks and bodies ready to ship.

Company owner, Ken Warmoth, was gracious enough to take me on a guided tour of his facility on my last trip to Washington State. The factory is unassuming, boasting nothing of the beautiful work that goes on inside. I was very impressed with the entire operation as it had a pleasant, genuine feel to it; everyone was busily working and no one looked unhappy. I was able to see the Warmoth customer service and sales staff at work. They were very knowledgeable and helpful, offering insight and customized solutions to each caller.



Stacks of body blanks ready to be cut. (above)
Neck templates hanging on wall. (right)



Raw fretboard materials.



Cart of unfinished necks.

The stock of guitar bodies and necks that Warmoth has ready to ship is amazing. At any given time, they have around 2000 necks ready to go out the door. With the amazing selection before me, I couldn't help but dream of building that perfect guitar. Warmoth can provide pretty much any style, shape, or wood desired. The supply of woods available is almost overwhelming; from standards like ash, maple, basswood, rosewood, mahogany and koa to exotics like zebrawood, bocote, cocobolo, ziricote and bloodwood, they seem to have it all. In addition to necks and bodies they have all the hardware you need to upgrade your current guitar or assemble a new one.



Shelves of laminate tops.



Bodies waiting to be finished.



Custom checkerboard top.



Binding being applied to spalted maple top.

Warmoth has created and built a few custom manufacturing machines in house to better suit their needs. The one that amazed me most was the machine that created the guitar nut. Not only did Warmoth come up with the concept for this machine, they also wrote the software that controls it. Now you can have a nut custom cut to coincide with the radius of the fretboard and string gauge, all to exacting specifications- in other words, the world's first true custom nut! My second favorite machine was the fretboard scalloping machine. The demand has grown over the last few years for scalloped fretboards (think Yngwie Malmsteen), and Warmoth turns out about 10 a month now, as opposed to one a month just two years ago.



Custom nut-routing machine.



A useful hobby.



Pickguard templates.



Finished pickguards.



Stacks of future guitars.



Bookmatched top.

As the tour progressed I marveled at the attention to detail that was given to each piece, through every step of the process. The sanding and finishing were done by skilled and practiced hands. The craftsmanship and quality demonstrated in the finished products are astounding. Anytime I need a new neck or want to assemble a dream guitar, there is no question of where I will go; Warmoth is the custom shop of shops.



Neck fretting area.



Close-up of custom neck inlay
(now available for sale).



The machine that cuts the fret slots.



Never a scrap wasted.

Sincere thanks to Ken Warmoth for a wonderful informative tour!

Drew Andrews