

Wood & Steel



Fall Guys

**Andy Powers and
Larry Breedlove
dream up the
Fall LTDs**

Sonia Leigh

The Script

**Javier Colon
& Vicci Martinez
from *The Voice***

Find Your Fit

Letters



Backwards Guitar

In the [summer] issue, the fingerboard diagrams in Wayne Johnson's article about playing scales appear to have been rotated 180 degrees. It took me a few seconds to realize that his approach to scales was not as radical as it first appeared. I made copies of the diagrams and flipped them – it was much easier to deal with upside-down numbers than misoriented diagrams.

Thanks for the interview with Ruthie Foster. She is one of my favorites.

Max Honn

Ed. Note: Several folks wrote in with a similar observation. We should have run a note to properly set up the unorthodox nature of Wayne's notation, as he presented it this way intentionally. He explains: "I chose the reverse approach because this is the exact perspective a student has at a lesson while he/she is listening, visualizing and trying to absorb not only shapes and patterns, but even the proper string order from low to high. I started writing diagrams this way because it seems to help my students relate much faster as they look at a diagram and then watch my demonstration of it, since both views are the identical perspective. And in this case, I knew I would also be presenting a companion video, so I was striving for consistency. Depending on the feedback, I'm open to changing it next time around."

Weather Songs

I'm a meteorologist with the Washington DC office of the National Weather Service, an amateur musician, and owner of three Taylors (614, 410, Baby). I read the article "Forest Friends," regarding the use of Honduran woods, with great interest.

In October 1999 an epic hurricane, Mitch, devastated the area with more than one meter of rainfall. In November of that year I wrote a song where I took the viewpoint of a villager watching his town being swept away by the mountain flood waters.

In 2008 our NWS office held an open house. My co-worker Chris Strong, singer Lisa Dougherty and I performed an hour-long show, "Weather in Music and Prose," comprised of weather-related music and poetry, with PowerPoint presentations displayed behind us while we played, dealing with the theme of each song. We did a number of covers but also included a few originals, including my song "Mitchell." Two towns I feature prominently in PowerPoint are La Ceiba and San Pedro Sula, which are chronicled in your article. Given the destruction that occurred 12 years ago, it is great to see the economic recovery.

Andy Woodcock
Ashburn, VA

Fit to Be Tried

I've missed the last few times that Taylor was in Austin for a Road Show or similar event, but I was able to attend the Find Your Fit event at Austin Bazaar today (8/11/11). JR was an excellent representative and was very patient with me as we surveyed the Taylor body styles and types that I don't already own (I have a Baby and a 714ce). It was transformational to get my hands on a Baritone and the GS, and I was sorely tempted by the T3 and T5 that found their way into my hands as well. The hands-on demo of the T5 was especially informative, and it gave me all sorts of ideas as to how to put that model to use.

So, thank you to Austin Bazaar for hosting the event, and to Taylor for sending your people out into the field to educate and tempt those of us who need that personal touch when it comes to choosing the next guitar(s) for our arsenal!

Jay Clement
Austin, TX

Finding a Re-Fit

On Tuesday, July 26 I attended the Find Your Fit session at Harry's Guitar shop in Raleigh, NC. The event was terrific, and I plan to attend more of these in the future. I always get my Taylor 510ce and my Taylor NS54ce serviced by Terry at Harry's. Great service.

This time Taylor technician Sam Eakins serviced both of my guitars. Great guy to talk with and a great technician. We put heavier gauge strings on the 510 and tuned it to D rather than E, allowing me to play it as a 12-fret by using the capo on the second fret. Sam did the same to the NS54ce. I played many of the new models, including several 12-fret guitars. I love them and the attention Taylor pays to detail. Thanks for the guitars and the great technicians you send out.

Don Wright

Soothing Sounds

My name is Marco and I work for the Moline Fire Department in Moline, IL. Our job is very demanding, and we see a lot of very bad things. While trying to deal with the emotions that go along with responding to these calls, my fellow brothers and I all have hobbies. I play my 1999 Taylor 914c. As a longtime Taylor player, I wanted to thank you guys for such fine guitars and for helping me deal with bad times.

Marco Leone

Baby Comes Home

Since 1992 I have purchased a 512, Baby, 555, T5 and GS Mini. I got the Baby the first year you made them, as I really liked the idea of a small, "go-anywhere" guitar, and then bought the GS Mini, well, just because.

We planned a trip to Alaska for 17 days this summer, centered around a seven-day kayaking spiritual retreat near Petersburg in Southeast Alaska. The retreat was run jointly by Inside Passages (Kurt Hoelting) and the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. Kurt is a remarkable person who is a Harvard Divinity School graduate, author, teacher, guide, and former minister and commercial fisherman.

I decided that I would really like to have a guitar along for this, and in the end decided that the original Baby was just more portable. The worship/spiritual part of our retreat involved some silence (not much use for a guitar) and some singing, where it was really a happy addition to the group.

That portability turned out to be especially helpful when we left our cabin for two nights to camp on a much smaller island. I put the guitar in its gig bag and into two plastic bags, and lashed it to the back of the kayak. As we sat around the campfire, I led a few songs. Kurt asked to see the guitar and commented on the Sitka spruce top. Of course we were sitting on an island filled with Sitka spruce,

and we had walked through some amazing forests of spruce and cedar, so there was a sense of at least part of the guitar returning home. Kurt said that he had a guitar at home (coastal Washington State) but had never had one at his cabin in Alaska, and proceeded to beautifully sing a few songs.

The guitar really added to the spirit and sense of community on this retreat. Kurt was clearly taken with this small guitar that was still a pleasure to play, and which had a top of local wood. In the end, I decided that the guitar should stay there, and gave it to Kurt. I will enjoy thinking about others hearing its sound in the amazing beauty of that place surrounded by a spruce forest.

The point of all this is to thank you for the guitar, and also to note that, despite the enthusiasm for the GS Mini, there is still a place for the smaller guitar.

John Eckstein

For Pete's Sake

You have a great dealer in Honolulu. Island Guitars has served my guitar needs for the past decade, and Pete, their repair guy, is fantastic! I have now purchased a total of five Taylors from Pete, and he has set up and done the occasional repair on all of them. I could not be happier with the quality of information in the sales process or the quality of service in setup and repair. I picked up my T5 from Pete yesterday – after a problem with the selector switch and a loose pickup wire – and Pete helped me understand what happened. Then we ran it through its paces to make sure the electronics were working to my satisfaction before I left the store. The only place I have had that kind of treatment was at my old Mercedes Benz dealer before they were swallowed up by a big car conglomerate. Thanks for the good training and excellent products you provide for Pete at Island Guitars, and for the amazing instruments you make.

George Benda

Small Wonder

If it wasn't for my new GS Mini, I would not be able to play guitar anymore. Because of age and diabetic neuropathy, I developed severe neck and back pain while playing. After numerous tests and medical treatments, it became obvious that playing my beloved [other guitar] caused these problems due to the guitar's size and dimensions. Both the scale length and width of the guitar were just too

much for my smallish hands and arms. There was nothing to do but sell the guitar and give up this wonderful musical hobby.

Lo and behold, I came across many rave reviews of the GS Mini. It occurred to me that a smaller guitar might improve the situation, but I needed to try a guitar for several days and find a left-handed model to boot. I am new to Taylor, but I have always heard of their quality build and their musicality. When I heard that Taylor came out with a lefty Mini, I contacted Southpaw Guitars in Texas and took the plunge.

Now, after two straight weeks of playing, I have had no recurrence of pain and am thoroughly enjoying this guitar. The build quality is excellent, the playability terrific, and my mood greatly improved. Thanks to everyone involved in making these fine instruments. You have really added to my days.

Jay Peters

Classical Spark

I have played guitar since I was very young, beginning with rock and jazz. As I grew older I turned to softer, "unplugged" music. A few years ago, I decided to learn classical. I let my nails grow and ventured into the arena of Bach, Sor and others. As the years passed, so did my enthusiasm. Knowing that I needed a new spark, I recently purchased a Taylor NS34ce. I am so pleased with my decision. I've had the guitar for about a month and devote approximately two hours each day to my music. I absolutely love the challenges faced by classical guitar players, and truly enjoy my "meditation" time with the guitar. I am thrilled with my Taylor; it fits me very well, plays and sounds wonderful, and looks awesome! Thank you and your staff for their devotion to craftsmanship and quality, and thank you for the "spark."

Scott K. Smith

We'd like to hear from you

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Cover photo: (L-R) Guitar designers Andy Powers and Larry Breedlove with a koa Fall Limited.

On the Cover

12 The 2011 Fall Limiteds

We spice up the season with a wood-rich collection led by AA-grade koa, blazing cocobolo, and fresh new inlay designs.

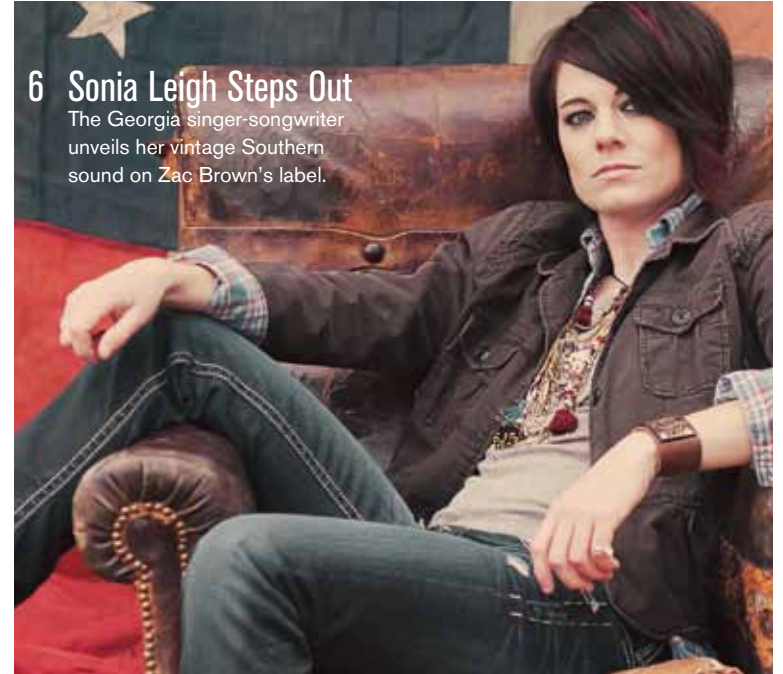


28



8

Features



6 Sonia Leigh Steps Out

The Georgia singer-songwriter unveils her vintage Southern sound on Zac Brown's label.

8 How to Become a Natural

Shawn Persinger explores the "nature versus nurture" issue among guitar players. The good news? You can develop into a natural.

16 The Next Wave: Andy Powers

He's Bob Taylor's favorite new luthier and player. Gifted guitar maker Andy Powers brings a heap of talent to our product development team.

20 Voice Recognition

Meet Javier Colon, winner of the show *The Voice*, and runner-up Vicci Martinez, both of whom are passionate Taylor players.

22 Backstage Pass: Mark Sheehan, The Script

The guitarist from one of Ireland's most popular rock acts compares his 816ce to Harry Potter's wand and can't live without his GS Mini.

28 What Are You Working On?

A lot goes into making a Taylor guitar. We thought we'd drop in on a few folks to give you a closer look.

30 A Fitting Experience

Our first-ever "Find Your Fit" tour made a big splash this summer. Here's a recap.

Departments

2	Letters	5	Editor's Note	27	Taylor Notes
4	Kurt's Corner	10	Ask Bob	31	Calendar
5	BobSpeak	24	Soundings	32	TaylorWare



Kurt's Corner

Taking the Reins

One of the nice benefits of starting and growing a company to where it's established and mature, and you have a great team of people helping you run it, is being able to take time to explore other areas of interest, whether business or personal. As I write this I'm in Wyoming, and Bob is in Africa. I'm enjoying the fall in the mountains, and Bob is researching sources of guitar wood.

For the third year in a row, my wife Jenny and I attended the Western Design Conference here in Jackson Hole. It's the preeminent western design show and competition, and it attracts artisans from all over the country and abroad. What I enjoy about this show is similar to what I like about the musical instrument industry and our trade shows: It's made up of really creative people who are excited about their ideas and their crafts. They're excited enough, and self-reliant enough, to risk putting their ideas and their finances on the line in the hope of being well-received and achieving success.

The key element, of course, is their level of persistence – their ability to firmly take hold of their dream and not let go until they master the skills they need to achieve whatever level of success they envision for themselves. I can't tell you how much I admire this trait.

The Western Design Conference features western-themed clothing and

jewelry, hand-crafted shoes and boots, handmade furniture and home furnishings, and antique western furniture. The best part is you get to meet and chat directly with the designers and crafts-

Montana Dreamwear. She also does her own photography, writes the script, and composes the music for her runway shows. Celeste does it all, and her vision comes through loud and clear.

A business, no matter how large, has to stay willing to completely change, sacrifice and remake itself in order to stay fresh and relevant.

people who have chosen this creative and rewarding life.

Until I attended this show last year and met Dr. Jim Ciaravella, I hadn't quite realized that surgeons are craftspeople who enjoy working with their hands. Jim, you see, is the proprietor of Dr. C's Designs, and he crafts incredible western artifacts with leather, in addition to painting and sculpting. Jim is a retired cardiac surgeon who, during his medical career, performed 200 surgical procedures each year.

The most beautiful ladies' knitwear I've ever seen is designed and made by Gretel Underwood of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Gretel left Los Angeles more than 20 years ago, learned about natural plant dyes and techniques, and took up weaving. Her handmade clothing and throws are stunning.

Celeste Sotola is a gifted artist who designs and crafts each piece of her western haute couture line known as

I mention these artisans because this is how every business starts, with creativity and a vision. As a business grows and matures, this is the most important thing to hold onto. I think there's a tendency for a business to get stale as it gets bigger, but it can't be allowed to. That creative spark has to be nurtured, and a business, no matter how large, has to stay willing to completely change, sacrifice and remake itself in order to stay fresh and relevant.

If you like western design and culture and would like to be inspired, make a point of attending the Western Design Conference in Jackson Hole during the annual Fall Arts Festival. You'll be glad you did.

— Kurt Listug, CEO

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2011 Taylor Factory Tours & Vacation Dates

A free, guided tour of the Taylor Guitars factory is given every Monday through Friday at 1 p.m. (excluding holidays). No advance reservations are necessary. Simply check-in at our reception desk in the lobby of our main building by 1 p.m. We ask that large groups (more than 10) call us in advance at (619) 258-1207.

While not physically demanding, the tour does include a fair amount of walking. Due to the technical nature, the tour may not be suitable for small children. The tour lasts approximately one hour and 15 minutes and departs from the main building at 1980 Gillespie Way in El Cajon, California.

Please take note of the weekday exceptions below. For more information, including directions to the factory, please visit taylorguitars.com/contact/factorytour. We look forward to seeing you!

Holiday Closures

Friday, October 14
(Taylor Guitars Anniversary)

Thursday-Friday, November 24-25
(Thanksgiving Holiday)

Monday, December 19 through Friday, December 30
(Company Vacation)



An Age-Old Discussion

I've been thinking.

People trade their guitars too often, like they were baseball cards or marbles. I see this a lot when I read the forums or when our service department helps owners. Now, before I continue, I'll acknowledge that this same group of guitar enthusiasts might be our best customer group, if measured by the number of guitars they buy. And I'll confess that we like selling multiple guitars to one person, as it helps our economy here in El Cajon. But there seems to be a lot of people buying guitars that they plan to keep for a year or two before they trade out of them. I've even read forum posts from guys who've kept guitars for a week or two, and traded five or six times until they felt like they got a "keeper."

Right next to these posts, which have lots of participants, might be a thread titled something like, "When were Taylor's best production years?" Open that thread and many of the same people are part of the discussion. You'll read posts saying that the mid- to late '90s were our best years. A person has proof because they have a 1997 model that sounds better than their 2009 model. Others post that they, too, have an old one that they think edges out their new one.

On another post, someone will ask how this or that guitar will "age." Then people start discussing how guitars age and recommend that a player get their guitar to that aged point because

that's when a guitar sounds its best. Then they talk about trading guitars again, which leads back to the discussion about old Taylors being better.

I always have an urge to post and point out that the old guitars do sound better, because they've aged! There isn't anything a maker can do to a new guitar to make it sound aged. Even if they did, that guitar would age as well and sound better. Then you compare it and forget that it aged, and think the new guitar isn't made as well.

I still have every Taylor I've ever made for myself or bought. (Yes, I have to buy them. Hard to believe, but I really do!) I have a 20th Anniversary model that sounds incredible now; nothing like when it was new. A new guitar can sound wonderful, but as it ages, and I've noticed that it starts noticeably after the 8- to 10-year mark, it just gets more beautiful tonally. It doesn't have *more* highs or lows, just a *better tone* of the highs and lows. It's like the difference in tone between the singing voices of people. Some people have beautiful voices and some don't, even though they sing the same notes. And your guitar's voice, or tone, will improve with age.

Don't ask me why. I don't really know. I don't think anyone really knows, and it really doesn't matter. What matters is that if you trade your guitars every few years you never get there, unless you're acquiring an older guitar. When you do, if it sounds so incredible,

don't think it's because we made better guitars then. Instead, remember that it's had 10 or 12 birthdays and is beginning to age nicely.

I get reminded of this over and over when I visit dealers or do appearances. When people know I'm coming to town, some want to show their guitar to me. I've met people who've disappeared from the event only to return 45 minutes later because they drove home to get their guitar. It's very nice to see these guitars. In the '90s people would bring guitars made in the '80s, and I'd play them and think, "Wow, we made good guitars back then!" A decade later, I'd play guitars made in the '90s and think the same thing. I've experienced this so many times that I'm sure it's completely real.

So, trade away your guitars if that's fun for you; it helps the world go around in many ways. But keep one or two, and let those guitars stay in your possession for years and years. You'll enjoy the benefits of letting them grow old. The more worn they get, like your old leather jacket, the more cool they become.

— Bob Taylor, President

Editor's Note

Fits Found

This summer brought our first wave of Find Your Fit events to music stores across the U.S. As we note in our recap this issue, the in-store hang time proved to be fun and informative for the many who participated. Each interaction between our staff and interested players served to spotlight the process of personal discovery that accompanies each person's search for a guitar. As many of us can appreciate, the right guitar inspires us in a special way, inviting us to express our musical ideas more freely, without the obstacles that otherwise might have been blocking our creative paths. As we coax sounds out of a well-matched guitar, that guitar often coaxes something out of us in return.

This issue is filled with stories of people who have found the right guitars to express themselves. For guitarist Mark Sheehan from *The Script*, it was a 514ce, followed by an 816ce and a GS Mini. For Javier Colon, winner of *The Voice*, it was his NS62ce and 814ce. For runner-up Vicci Martinez, it was a 510ce. For singer-songwriter Sonia Leigh, it was a custom Grand Auditorium that we built to complement her musical approach.

Our profile of guitar designer Andy Powers looks at the guitar-making side of the equation, revealing Andy to be something of a guitar whisperer who understands how a complementary instrument can raise an artist's game. Having a designer with his level of talent and sensitivity on our team portends well for Taylor's continued guitar development, and Andy's insights about guitars and tone on these pages – including his take on this year's Fall Limiteds – will no doubt help players enrich their understanding of tonal nuances.

Last but not least, we're happy to mark the one-year anniversary of the GS Mini, a guitar that, in a short time, has already captivated so many people in interesting ways, a few of which you'll see in *Soundings*. One of the best things about the Mini is that the appeal is nearly universal – it's a guitar that seems to fit everyone.

As you read this, we're already into a new season of Taylor Road Shows, with more Find Your Fit events sprinkled in as well. We hope you'll join us if you can.

— Jim Kirlin

Wood&Steel **Online**

Read this and other back issues of *Wood&Steel* at taylorguitars.com under "Resources."



SONIA LEIGH AMERICAN GIRL

THE GEORGIA TROUBADOUR BLENDS HER AMERICANA ROOTS
— INTO A SOULFUL SOUTHERN MASH —

By Jim Kirlin

A MODEST BUT RECEPTIVE CROWD GREETSONIA LEIGH AND HER BAND AS THEY TAKE THE STAGE

at the House of Blues in Anaheim, California on a Thursday night in late July. Leigh has top billing on the evening's country radio-sponsored new artist showcase, the latest stop on a tour that's found her courting radio stations and playing on-air acoustic sets around the country. Her new single, "My Name is Money," just dropped, and her debut album on Zac Brown's Southern Ground label is due for release in September.

Though tonight's crowd is a far cry from the 70,000 she played to the previous month in Nashville as part of the CMA Fest, when she joined Zac and his band on stage, it doesn't matter. As Leigh's rhythmic acoustic picking on her custom Grand Auditorium ignites the chugging country-rocker "A Poem From the Ocean Floor," the band's musical energy fills the room, and the attendance seems to double as listeners slowly swarm in front of the stage. By the time she belts out the spirited line, "I feel alive, feel alive, I feel alive" midway through the song, so does the entire room.

Leigh's voice is rich with character – husky, gritty, punchy, and well-suited to infusing her songs with soulful Southern passion. At times she'll wrap her Georgia drawl boozily around words, not unlike Lucinda Williams. It's a voice that's unvarnished and real, loaded with conviction and capable of channeling the many moods that make up her collage of Americana – vintage country, rock, folk, gospel, blues. It'll likely be country radio that plays her stuff, but like a lot of young, emerging Southern acts these days, Leigh's music is a melting pot of different cross-strains of soulful American music. Leigh's wide-angle musical lens definitely comes across on her new record, *1978 December*. I tell Leigh as much when we chat by phone a week later – that like her friend and mentor Zac Brown, the songs feel cohesively Southern, yet each one seems to forge its own unique stylistic path.

"I appreciate that you notice because that's absolutely how I write," she says. "I don't sit down to write a country song or a rock & roll song. I start to feel something inside when I know I'm about to write. I mean, it would be great to sell records, but to me it's about a need for expression. So, when I start to feel like I've got something to say, I sit down and kind of just let it roll. I'll start to strum a little bit.

Sometimes the good ones will be the first riff that I play, and then the lyrics start coming."

In conversation and through her music, Leigh comes across as both young and old. She has a youthful energy, a tomboyish look, and one can sense that she's still acclimating to the higher-profile exposure she's starting to receive nationally. But she also has the poise of a seasoned troubadour who's put in the time, logged the miles, learned her craft, and who genuinely loves being on stage. At the House of Blues, the interplay of her band is tight and fluid. It's clear that they've all gelled and enjoy playing together.

If there's an "old soul" vibe to Leigh's persona, it may come from the fact that music is in her blood. Her grandfather, Roy Harmon Rolling, who passed away this year, was a songwriter who penned a tune for Hank Williams.

"When I found my guitar player, Will, I told him, 'Don't make any plans for the rest of your life; you're in this band.'"

"He was a great inspiration for my music and for me as a person," she reflects. "I actually dedicated the record to him. He really had that old country sound."

Leigh's dad also plays guitar, and taught her her first guitar chords when she was a girl. At holidays the whole family would get together and play.

"My uncle plays drums, and my grandfather's brother and my grandmother's brother played the fiddle and mandolin, so, especially at family reunions, we would have big old shindigs."

She says she's gotten into collecting records lately, which has helped spur memories of the music she listened to growing up.

"The Oak Ridge Boys, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Alabama, Kris Kristofferson," she rattles off. "Old time gospel, too. My dad was into CCR and I got into the Steve Miller Band...I love all kinds of music, from Ozzy Osbourne to Tupac to George Strait. I was a huge Crystal Gail and Loretta Lynn fan

when I was growing up, and of course, Melissa Etheridge and Sheryl Crow. I'm a huge Springsteen fan, and Jackson Browne. I was home for eight hours last night, and the first thing I did was put on my Jackson Browne record [*Late For The Sky*]."

Coming up in Georgia's music circles, two of Leigh's biggest influences were Zac Brown (custom NS74ce), who she's known for seven years, and acclaimed blues artist Sean Costello, one of the scene's brightest talents, who passed away unexpectedly in 2008. The loss inspired the opening track on her record, "Ain't Dead Yet," and helped reaffirm her commitment as a musician. Before she plays the tune in Anaheim, Leigh tells the crowd it's one of her favorite songs that she's written.

Leigh had put out a couple of independent releases (one of them produced by John Hopkins from Zac's Band) before signing with Southern Ground. The way she describes the environment and the people sounds ideal for a developing artist – a comfortable place that nurtures creativity, provides a home base for working with other like-minded artists, and challenges her to push herself artistically. She recorded *1978 December* at



Sonia with "Jackson" on stage at the House of Blues in Anaheim

times it's like you're opening up the diary. I think I had a little bit of Percy Sledge in mind when I was writing it. I wanted to get into that vein of the blues. I almost can't even listen to him; his music pierces your spirit that hard, kind of like Adele. It's so incredibly touching that it's overwhelming sometimes."

One of the album's grooviest tunes is "Roaming," a sweet acoustic ditty that Leigh started writing years ago but shelved until the recording sessions with Zac.

"It had kind of a reggae-ish vibe to it, and I think that's why I brought it out with Zac," she says. "And we just sat there and finished it."

Leigh says she feels fortunate to be part of the supportive, collaborative culture that Zac has created with his Southern Ground roster.

"A lot of artists are on labels with people whose music they don't really know or don't pay attention to, but we're all really in each other's corner," she says. "We all really enjoy writing together, hanging out together, and being on the road together. We definitely represent for one another because we really love each other's music."

Leigh will be part of Zac's fall tour and says she's looking forward to playing with some of her label mates.

"There's so much coming out of Southern Ground that I'm excited about – Nic Cowan, Levi Lowry, the Wood Brothers – it's a plethora of talent that I'm proud to be a part of."

www.sonialeigh.com **W&S**

Sonia Finds Her Fit

When Taylor guitar designer Andy Powers was enlisted to help Sonia select a Taylor model, he was happy to oblige.

"She's got this real powerful voice," he says. "So, we got to talking, and I said, 'OK, I'm going to build you something.' So I built a guitar that matches her voice, something that complements her powerful register. It has a little warmer low-end response, and a bit more of a low-end punch continuing through the midrange...it's a powerful-sounding guitar."

The guitar is a Grand Auditorium with mahogany back and sides and an Adirondack spruce top.

"It gives her tons of headroom, because I knew she would be playing the snot out of the thing," he says. In terms of the look, Andy envisioned something more traditional. "A little darker looking, not super polished, not real glossy, not overly flashy," he says. "I worked with our finish guys and we did a more traditional sunburst with a real dark, rich fade toward the center, and then did a classical guitar-style finish. It's a real thin, hand-rubbed final polish, so it doesn't have that bright, wet, polished-out gloss to it. It's a real responsive, immediate kind of a sound, and it has this sort of vintage persona. And it fits her music really well. When she came to get it in Nashville, she was like, 'It's exactly what I wanted.'"

Leigh paid tribute to her new Taylor by naming it Jackson, in honor of one of her favorite songwriters, Jackson Browne.

"With a guitar, it's really all about the ju-ju for me," Leigh says. "And you can feel it almost immediately. Jackson has ju-ju."



How to Become a

NATURAL

**Think you lack the innate talent of other players?
With enough desire and commitment, you can
transform yourself into a “natural.”** By Shawn Persinger

When it comes to my guitar-playing ability, people often say to me, “You really have a gift. You’re a natural!” While I’ve learned to stop resenting this statement, I still feel compelled to explain that the only gift I may have is one of tenacity. I am in fact a very *unnatural* guitar player. I practiced a lot to get where I am today, and I continue to practice, study and refine what I do.

It is this lack of natural ability that

makes me particularly sympathetic to students who struggle with their own playing, and who, despite their genuine desire, make only scant progress on their instruments. As a result, I have come up with several tips for players who are grappling with growth, have plateaued, or are simply looking for a new approach to the instrument. While these guidelines are not guaranteed to make you a better guitarist overnight, hopefully they will help you through the rough patches as you

progress and give you a solid foundation for years to come. I’ll also debunk some myths that supposedly account for making a great guitarist.

The Truth Behind the Natural

Perhaps you know of a seemingly natural guitar player – someone who can play anything they want or figure out any song instantly. I had a good friend like this when I started learning, and it made me incredibly discouraged at first. Jeff was playing Carlos

Santana songs, by ear, after playing the guitar for only a month! I’d been playing for over a year, could barely play a major scale without making a mistake, and the F chord was completely out of the question. So, how did Jeff do it? I found out much later that although Jeff had only been playing guitar briefly, he had been playing upright bass in the school orchestra for three years. I, on the other hand, had no musical training whatsoever. Jeff’s mother was quite musical and had played woodwinds since she was a teenager. As supportive as my parents were, and as much as my father loved bluegrass music, he would often say, “I can’t even play the bass on the radio.” Finally, Jeff played the guitar a

lot. I was spending most of my time skateboarding and mostly just *listening* to guitar music.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, it’s easy to see why Jeff was such a fine player and I was so crummy. He simply played more than I did, took it a little more seriously, had training from a young age, and had a musical role model in the family. As good as Jeff was (and still is, even though he is now a pharmacist), he was *not* a natural. So, if you find yourself bemoaning the state of your talent, particularly if you are comparing yourself to someone else, get the full story. In all my years of teaching and surrounding myself with musicians, I have yet to find a great player who wasn’t, if

not obsessive about practicing, at the very least highly habitual and persistent regarding their playing time.

When I have come across young players who I initially regarded as “naturals” with ostensibly boundless talent, I soon learned that they typically were excellent players only at what they liked to play, and at what came easily to them. It was difficult to convince them to practice something that was a challenge, something that lay outside their comfort zone or their innate ability. Instead, they would discount the challenge with a shrug and the dismissive statement, “I don’t want to play that.” Their natural talent was expressed only in a narrowly defined range.

Play to Remember

My “off the top of my head” repertoire includes several hundred pop/rock/country/jazz songs, a dozen classical pieces, and about 50 of my own compositions. Now, to some of you that might sound like a lot, but in the grand history of song that is a miniscule amount of music. While I do have enough memorized material to last me three or four sets, my recall is by no means flawless. I have studied every Beatles song in-depth, but I could only tell you something trivial about each tune. I could not play every one of them perfectly from memory. Perhaps this is obvious, but I, and most professionals, remember the songs we play the most. It’s the old cliché, “Use it or lose it.” There are in fact many mnemonics for remembering songs, but most of them require a pretty thorough understanding of theory. Chances are if you can’t recall the chord progression to a common jazz standard (Ex. 1), you will have even less luck remembering that the progression is just the circle of fourths starting on the ii chord. (This circle of fourths progression shows up in several songs, including: “Fly Me to the Moon,” “Take Five,” “My Favorite Things,” and even the Gloria Gaynor disco classic, “I Will Survive.”) If you really want to remember more songs, you just have to play them more often. And I don’t mean just practice them but play them in public, with friends and for an audience. Repetition will reinforce your memory and expand your repertoire.

That said, why do you actually need to memorize a piece? I play at least two dozen Bach compositions, but I have to sight-read every single one – there are far too many complex passages, unusual fingerings, and notes (Ex. 2) for casual playing. I am not planning a classical recital; I’m playing Bach for my own enjoyment. There is no shame in using sheet

music for complex compositions. Have you ever seen an orchestra perform a symphony from memory? And I’ll let you in on another little secret: When I sight-read, I read the tab! While my notation sight-reading is passable, my tab reading is better than most classical musicians’ notation, so I usually start with the tablature first and use the notation for rhythmic fine-tuning.

Design a Meaningful Practice Routine

A regular exercise routine is certainly helpful, but if you are practicing aimlessly or without tracking your progress, your growth will be much slower and difficult to evaluate. Here are a few tips that will help you improve your guitar playing by leaps and bounds.

Keep a notebook. I can’t emphasize enough the importance of keeping a notebook of all the music you work on. While ultimately it is best if the book is organized into techniques, songs, genres, etc., simply having all your music in one place is of tremendous value. I strongly suggest keeping more than one. I have over three dozen three-ring binders filled with almost everything I have ever played, composed or taught over the course of 20 years.

Buy songbooks. Your ear is a fabulous tool, and judicious use of the Internet can be extremely useful, but I also encourage you to invest in some published music books. Though you will still find mistakes in books from even the finest publishers (legend has it Beethoven had nine proofreaders for his symphonies and they all found mistakes), the skill level of most professional transcribers is far beyond that of the average guitarist. A good book can highlight, among other things: proper fingerings, unusual chord voicings, altered tunings and subtle notational nuance unavailable from DIY tabs. For starters, I recommend “The Beatles Complete Chord Songbook” (Hal Leonard). While it contains no tabs, it does include every chord voicing and all the words, for every song they released. Seriously, if it was the only music book you owned, you’d be doing OK.

Keep a core list of songs you do know. Regardless of the number of songs you know, whether it’s 10 or 100, when put on the spot, many players become a deer in the headlights. Make a list and keep it in your guitar case or tape it to your instrument (à la McCartney’s Hofner bass). A quick glance at your personal repertoire of

How to Become a Natural

Ex. 1 Chord progression: Am, Am7 5fr., D, D9 4fr., G, GMaj7, C, CMaj7 3fr., F#m7(9s), B7, B7(9), Em, Em7 7fr., Em, Em7 7fr.

Ex. 2 Melodic line with complex fingering.

Ex. 3 Rhythmic pattern with guitar diagrams and fret numbers.

Ex. 4 Rhythmic pattern with guitar diagrams and fret numbers.

memorized songs should give you confidence and inspire you to play your best. Keep the list updated with your ever-increasing titles, and keep playing them whenever and wherever you can.

Teach. One of the surest ways to really prove whether you know what you are talking about is to teach it to someone else. You might think you know how to strum the intro to a folk-rock classic (Ex. 3) or the chorus of a hard rock staple (Ex. 4), but once

you have to explain it in its simplest terms to someone who is looking to you for answers (and possibly paying for your time), you find out very quickly how much you really understand about rhythm guitar and how your right hand functions. You may also be lucky enough to have smart students who ask multifaceted questions that require you to go beyond your realm of expertise and become a bit more studious. It would be fair to say I’ve learned more as a teacher than I did as a student. Then again, as an “unnatural”

guitarist, I don’t think I’ve ever stopped being a student, no matter how many players I’ve taught. **W&S**

Shawn Persinger, a.k.a. Prester John, is a self-proclaimed “Modern/Primitive” guitarist who owns Taylor 410s and 310s. His latest CD, Desire for a Straight Line, with mandolinist David Miller, showcases a myriad of delightful musical paradoxes: complex but catchy; virtuosic yet affable; smart and whimsical.
www.PersingerMusic.com

Ask Bob

Spruce runout, stainless steel frets, and gloss necks made slick

I have a new 814ce I ordered with a short-scale neck and Engelmann top. Very nice! Can you explain why half the top appears to be a lighter shade of wood?

John C.

You bet, John. Imagine standing in a forest of spruce in Southeast Alaska, the rain water dripping down from the forest canopy into the soft moss on the ground. Think about looking up the trunk of that tall spruce tree that's been growing for 500 years. Now, what you see is the trunk of the tree, the bark, and if you look closely you can see if the tree grew straight and without twist. Imagine discovering that the tree twists round and round, almost like the stripes on a barber pole. Some trees do this. Some have a lot of twist, some have a little, and a rare few have none at all. Those are the prized trees, but there aren't many left in the world.

So, you pick the tree with the least twist. Now, you cut that log into two-foot lengths and split wedges from it to saw tops from. The wedges naturally have a twisted face. I hope that makes sense. Now you saw a straight piece off the face of that split wedge. What you'll have is some grain running out the face of your cut because your saw cut a straight surface right through the twisted surface. Now cut a sister piece, the book-matched second piece of your top, and open it up like a book and glue the two together. When you look at that top, there is grain running slightly out of the face of both halves, but at different angles, so it catches the light differently. Look at your guitar and make a mental note of which half is lighter, and then rotate it 180 degrees, like from right side up to right side down, and you'll notice that now the other half looks light. We call that "runout," and it's pretty normal. We allow up to about a half-inch of twist per foot of length of the tree trunk, and that will make a good guitar.

I have never seen an acoustic guitar with spruce sides and back. Have you guys experimented with one? What sound qualities would it have?

Charles Vance

Nope, Charles, we've never experimented with that. Not that it wouldn't sound good, but because there's probably not a sellable application. I've seen and played guitars that I didn't make, with spruce all around, and they sounded good. All theory aside, it sounds like it sounds, which is nice, but not amazing. It also looks a little unlike how you naturally think a guitar should look, so we shy away.

For many years I lived where humidifying my instruments was unnecessary. Now I live in the Midwest. I was using Dampits in my Taylors (355, 614ce and 710-L9) and switching an Oasis hygrometer from case to case every few days. Things were pretty consistent. Then I had a conversation with the guy who makes the hygrometer, and he said the accessory compartment makes the headstock area like a completely different case, and so the Dampit does nothing for the headstock area. I know the Planet Waves [Humidipak] has a piece for under the headstock, but the one time I did try that they leaked stuff all over my case. A friend who is a world-class violist says just cut a potato and put it under the headstock. What are your thoughts about the compartment causing a problem, and if it is one, what do you recommend?

Ben Sendrow

Ben, there is some truth to everything you say and what your friend said. First, let's start with Humidipaks. They have figured out the leaking problem, so feel free to use them. However, if you like using Dampits, they work very well. If you put them in the body but leave out the plastic soundhole cover, the neck will receive the benefit, even up to the headstock. Your whole case and guitar become one humidity level and tend to equalize together over time. Be sure to leave your case closed when you remove the guitar; that way it won't be sitting there drying out while you play. So, bottom line, I wouldn't worry about the two halves of the case. While what your friend says is true, it's

not that severe, and your guitar will be just fine. Don't put a potato in there. That's gross.

A few years ago, I became the proud owner of a Taylor T5 Standard. My beautiful "Belle" is everything I've ever dreamed of, and she'll do things I don't even ask her to do. But I have a bit of a problem. Like every other guitar I've ever owned, I'm beginning to groove the frets already! The first solidbody electric I ever owned was an original Vox, and I grooved the frets so badly it couldn't be tuned.

My guitarist friends tell me I need to switch to stainless steel frets, that they are harder and wear better. My question is, will there be a noticeable difference in tone between nickel and stainless, and do I have to have all of my frets changed, or can I change just the ones I'm wearing out? (I tend to play a lot of open chording, so the trouble is all in the first three or four frets.)

On another note, have you ever heard of anyone using stone or ceramic for the nut and saddle? I'm just wondering what the tone would be like for those?

Tim Carr

Pretty sneaky, Tim, getting two questions in like that! OK, stainless steel frets. Yes, they do sound different. I don't prefer them on acoustic guitars, at least based on the last time we decided to try them in production. We decided we preferred the sound of nickel-silver. By the way, Tom Anderson Guitars uses SS frets on their electrics, and they sound great.

As for stone and ceramic nuts: ceramic, yes; stone, no. The Tusq nut and saddle we use is almost ceramic. It stops shy and sounds great because of it. Pure ceramic sounds, well, kinda like ceramic. I'm not trying to be smart, but it's amazing how you can imagine in your head the properties of ceramic and know before you listen what it will sound like. Shrill, overly brilliant, and not all that great. That may be a moot point because even if it delivered tonal nirvana, it still wouldn't be used because



Even though I don't yet own a Taylor guitar, I have been reading past issues of *Wood&Steel* and scouring the Taylor website for many months. I've even had the opportunity to play my friends' 414ce and 354ce guitars. Now I am on the hunt for my very own Taylor guitar. I primarily play contemporary praise and worship songs at church. Do you think the GA or the GS is a better fit in P&W music? Also, does Taylor have any plans to release a GS3e or 316ce in the near future?

Kyle Dobbins
Bossier City, LA

Yes, the 316ce is coming. Soon. And truthfully, I think neither fits into P&W music better than the other. The GS is bigger and louder, so use it for your joyful noise. Strum it hard! The GA fits in the pocket with other instruments very well. In this case, Kyle, get the one that speaks to you personally the most, because your playing situation will change, but you will always want to love your guitar when it gets down to just you and it!

it's ridiculously hard to work, and there is a practical side to guitar building to consider.

If I could, please let me gloat about my brand new 2011 GS8e! It has growling bass, tremendous mids, and glorious, soaring trebles. It is the most even guitar I've ever played. How did you determine how thick the top, back and sides should be? Was it trial and error? If it's too thin, I could see it being brittle and not as strong acoustically. If it were too thick I could see it really deadening the sound.

Josh Reynolds

Josh, you have guitar building rules down pat! But kinda like how I know how to fly a plane. Push the stick forward and the houses get bigger. Pull the stick back and the houses get smaller. And like a pilot who knows the rest of the story, so do we when it comes to making the best-sounding guitars. Trial and error? Certainly, but that was done a long time ago. Now, we just know what to do. The difference between a side that's too thin and one that's too thick is the smallest micro-fraction of an inch, and we just know what they should be on a Taylor guitar.

I just received my new 416ce from Trinity Guitars a couple days ago, and some friends and I have been enjoying it like no other guitar I've had recently. The sound of ovangkol happens to be what moves me more than a lot of other tonewoods. A question came up while a buddy was playing the guitar last night. What would ovangkol sound like if used as the top of the guitar?

Dennis Miller
Miami, FL

Dennis, if you've ever heard a koa-topped guitar, it would sound a lot like that. A little more compressed than spruce, a little more centered. Boy, it's hard to describe tone with written words. Think of a koa-topped guitar.

I'm saving up for a BTO acoustic and was wondering if you could share your thoughts on the following BTO specs I have in mind from the standpoint of my playing style. Although I play fingerstyle, I tend to go against the fingerstyle standards such as cedar/mahogany in

a smaller body like the GA or GC. I happen to like dreadnoughts. Would the Taylor BTO style police be out in full force if I ask for the following: a 6-string, short-scale Dreadnought in ovangkol/Sitka spruce with a Venetian cutaway, 1 7/8-inch neck, with full gloss, ebony headstock (gloss), ebony binding, abalone single-ring rosette with bound soundhole?

Dave Weresin

No, Dave, the style police would wave you on saying, "This is not the droid we are looking for. Let him pass!" And there you have it.

After reading about how you created a nylon-string guitar for Zac Brown that could be tuned down a half step, I got to wondering. I've tuned my 1995 Taylor 412 down a whole step for years (DGCFAD). I use medium D'Addario EJ17 strings and then replace the E and B strings with a .014 and a .018. This tightens up the feel on the treble strings, which works well for fingerstyle and drives the soundboard a little better. My question is whether a Taylor Baritone would be a better fit for tuning a whole step down than other Taylor models. For me, the DGCFAD tuning is here to stay. I'm a baritone singer, and this tuning allows me to transpose songs more easily into keys that suit my vocal range.

Jim Lowry

Jim, the answer to that is "yep." Zac's guitar isn't "tuned down," but rather tuned the same. It just has an extra fret, so it's naturally a half step lower. Do you remember the Dan Crary Signature Model from way back? Well, the guitars we made for Dan himself had two extra frets, so it was a long-neck guitar. That allowed him to play in the lower key of "D" with normal tuning tension, and then he'd put a capo on the second fret to be at standard pitch.

If you started with a baritone guitar, it would tune to your desired pitch very nicely, and you wouldn't be forced to use super fatty strings for loosening the tension.

I have two acoustic Taylors and thought I'd go check out the SolidBody. I love the sound and look and couldn't wait to get my hands on one to try it out. But once I did, I found it an awful experience. All that shiny gunk on the neck (which makes it pretty) makes it hard to slide your hand up and down the neck. I com-

pared it to several other brands and they all had the same sticky neck. My hands were clean. Can you or will you be offering a neck finish similar to the acoustic product line on the electrics so that the hand slides easier?

John Hazell

John, yes, some people dig a gloss finish, and others think of it as shiny gunk! But remember, our SolidBody Classics have a maple neck with a satin finish very much like our acoustics. Give them a try. Also, for any of you others reading this who have a gloss-neck guitar and are raising your fist with John in agreement, here's a tip. Go to the auto care store and buy some nice car wax. Come home and put a nice little wax job on your shiny neck, and your hand will slide freely just like your butt slides off your fender after you wax your car. You learned it here.

My 15-year-old granddaughter has begun playing the guitar and is succeeding very well with it. About two years ago, I bought her a cheap one just to see if she would get interested in playing it, and in the last six months she has gotten very serious about it. She is a country music singer and now is learning to accompany herself as she sings. Now I would like to buy her a better guitar to continue her playing, but I am lost as to which one to get. She wants an amplified acoustic. I know the price range on guitars goes from one extreme to the other, and I can't afford to pay over \$1,000 for one. Can you make any suggestions as to which guitar(s) I should be considering?

Joan Granger
Louisiana

Will you be my grandma, Joan? I mean, whose grandma spends \$1,000 on them for a guitar? We're all jealous. Buy her a 114ce or a 214ce and she'll be set for life, except I'm lying because everyone always wants a new guitar, but let's say it won't be your problem anymore, if you know what I mean. If I would have had a 114ce that my grandma bought me when I was a kid, Taylor Guitars might not exist today – I'd just be happily playing, to this day, and would never have had to build one.

I've always wanted a 12-string but have never been able to find one that I like. Perhaps I can't get what I hear in my head, but to me, every

12-string I've ever played seems to lose its acoustic warmth and just sounds like 12 strings strapped across a 2x4! Is it not possible to get a warm, full-bodied tone, but with that 12-string chime? Most of the work I use acoustics for is for strumming to thicken up guitar tracks in a mix. Lots of a rhythmic tone, but not too cutting. I like the warmth and the body, but [with] some sparkle to support the rhythm.

Steven G Kelly

Well, I hope our 2x4 models aren't the ones you're talking about, Steven. Compared to other brands, I think ours are at least a 2x8! This is a hard question to answer because it's so subjective. But I'll give you a hint. Whatever 12-string you're playing, tune it down a full step to D, or even further with fatter strings, and then back your tracks with a lower-tuned 12-string. See if you like that better. The guitar will be warmer, richer, looser, and maybe have the tone you're looking for. Use mahogany guitars. Maybe try a Leo Kottke Signature Model, because the last time I heard him in concert it sounded way better than a 2x4. And he tunes low.

I am aware of taking care not to leave a guitar in a hot car, but we are in the midst of record heat. As I type this my Taylor 555 is sitting next to me in my home at 93 degrees and 70 percent humidity. How hot does it need to get in a house to damage a guitar?

Jeff Bolek
Cleveland, OH

A lot hotter than that, Jeff. A lot hotter. A car can get up to 180 degrees in the back window. I've measured! But keep your guitar in its case when you don't play it. And maybe loan it to Steven Kelly (previous question) for a recording session if you guys ever hook up. Let him hear the glory of a 555 tuned low.

As the owner of a 714ce and a 912c, I really like your guitars. My dream guitar for my jazz/swing gigs is a Gibson ES-330 with a Bigsby. I got excited when Taylor introduced the T3 and T5 models, because I thought I could get a Taylor thinline fully hollowbody [T5] guitar with a Bigsby vibrato. When I inquired about this with your custom shop, I was disappointed that it was not an option. Why not?

Paul Metzger
Denton, TX

Paul, the "why not" question is the hardest of all questions to answer, because sometimes the answer is "because we don't want to," and that makes people think we're arrogant and don't care about them. But in this case, we don't make a T5 with a Bigsby simply because we don't want to; we don't like the idea. We just can't see a Bigsby with an acoustic guitar bridge like that on a T5. You can get it on a T3 because that makes sense; it's part of the model, and you can buy it all day long. And it's really cool.

I live in the Pacific Northwest and I proudly own a 210ce. Since the humidity in my house never really drops below 60 percent, do I need to worry about a humidifier? Since the humidity can get into the 70 percent range, do I need a dehumidifier?

Russell Moser
Sedro-Woolley, WA

Russell, I drive through Sedro-Woolley every time I visit our spruce cutter. Did you know all our tops are cut from spruce trees right down Highway 20 from you, in Concrete? No, you don't need to humidify your guitar living there. The only time you'd need to would be in the winter, when you heat your home, if that humidity drops below 40 percent, but it rarely does. Keep your guitar in its case and you'll be fine. By the way, a Humidipak will also dehumidify, and if you tossed a couple of those in with your guitar, it would be a safe bet. An over-humidified guitar sounds "wet," and it's not too hard to imagine that you don't want that.

Got a question for Bob Taylor?

Shoot him an e-mail:
askbob@taylorguitars.com.

If you have a specific repair or service concern, please call our Customer Service department at (800) 943-6782, and we'll take care of you.



THE 2011 FALL LIMITEDS

GUITAR CIRCLES

A new rosette anchors the wood-rich look of our koa and cocobolo limiteds, rosewood sits in on the 400 Series, and a cedar top warms up the NS24.

One of the aesthetic virtues of Taylor's annual Fall Limiteds is that each year begins with a clean creative slate. The design process is often catalyzed by a stroll through our wood reserves to revisit what's been set

aside for special occasions such as these. Inevitably the wood assumes the role of muse, sparking ideas that begin to coax new models to life.

This year, a cache of dazzling AA-grade koa and an arresting batch

of Mexican cocobolo called out, each bonded by bold visual complexions. The rich personalities of the woods in turn inspired the notion of a wood-centered appointment package.

Bob Taylor and guitar designers Larry Breedlove and Andy Powers felt a new rosette was in order. Bob recalled a design that Larry had worked up a year earlier that he had liked but that hadn't been used. Larry refined the rosette further within the fresh design context, and the group decided to use it for both the koa and cocobolo

series, but with different wood pairings for each to uniquely complement the respective woods. From there, the rosettes informed the aesthetic of the fretboard inlays: For the cocobolo models, Larry designed a new "Split Diamond" motif, while the koa models inspired the return of our "Engraved Twist" inlay, which debuted with last year's Fall LTDs, only this time the materials would be wood.

Speaking of twists, one of the other aims of the Fall Limiteds has been to put a value-added spin on an existing

series within the guitar line. This year solid rosewood makes a guest appearance on the 400 Series, and we bring a cedar top to the rosewood laminate Nylon Series.

For full details, read on. To see additional photos and complete specifications, visit taylorguitars.com. The Fall Limiteds are currently available at your local Taylor dealer.



Cocobolo LTDs

Back/Sides: Cocobolo

Top: Sitka Spruce

Key Appointments: CV Bracing, Cocobolo/Boxwood Rosette, Boxwood Split Diamond Fretboard Inlay, Figured Maple Binding, Cocobolo Backstrap, ES® Electronics

Models: Cocobolo GAce-LTD, Cocobolo GSce-LTD

Thanks to a reliable sourcing partner in Mexico, we've been able to acquire some choice cocobolo in recent years. We've also fine-tuned our milling specifications (milling it thinner) to optimize its tonal properties, as it's one of the heaviest, densest rosewoods around. For this offering, the design team wanted to bring cocobolo's bold, vibrant hues to the guitar top. Larry Breedlove's rosette motif incorporates cocobolo as an S-curve that contrasts with buttery boxwood, a slow-growing wood traditionally used for tool handles

and precision mechanical parts like clock gears and piano actions, and with a density comparable to ebony.

Larry also used boxwood as the material for a new Split Diamond fretboard inlay, and visually referenced the S-curve to relate to the rosette. While light-colored woods like maple are often less practical for fretboard inlays – they can get grimy over time – boxwood's density makes it a favorable choice, since it has almost no discernable grain line.

Another wood-rich aesthetic touch

is a band of cocobolo trim around the top, which pops nicely between the spruce soundboard and figured maple binding. A cocobolo backstrap adds a refined finishing touch.

Tonally, cocobolo yields a bright, articulate voice. "These guitars have a beautiful bell-like tone, especially on the low notes," Andy says. "There's a certain clarity when you strike the note; it sounds like you're hitting the low notes on a big, giant piano. It's the density of the wood that gives you that."



Koa LTDs

Back/Sides: AA-grade Koa

Top: AA-Grade Koa or Premium Engelmann Spruce

Key Appointments: CV Bracing, Koa/Cypress Rosette, Koa/Cypress Engraved Twist Fretboard Inlay, Indian Rosewood Binding, Gotoh Tuners, Bone Nut/Saddle, ES® Electronics

Models: Koa GAce-LTD, Koa GSce-LTD, Koa 12-Fret GC-LTD, Koa 12-Fret GA-LTD

The flamey AA-grade koa earmarked for this series was so seductive we couldn't resist going all-koa (although a premium Engelmann spruce top is optional). Larry Breedlove's rosette design incorporates a serpentine swath of koa set against creamy Mexican cypress. The koa/cypress pairing carries over to the Engraved Twist fretboard inlay, in which the design's swirling complexity is tempered with the subtle,

organic quality of thin wood lines. A shaded edgeburst around the entire guitar – including the neck – adds a touch of vintage Hawaiian charm that's complemented by rosewood binding, a thin white purfling accent, and Gotoh tuners.

Tonally, a koa top should make koa's natural midrange sweetness even more pronounced, especially after the guitar has been played in. Koa guitars also

tend to be well-suited for the stage, as Andy Powers explains.

"That initial attack isn't quite so boomy," he says. "The emphasis is on the sweetness in the middle register. An aggressive player could really go to town, and the guitar will respond with this really well-behaved, well-balanced, sweet response."

The Koa LTDs are offered in four model options: a cutaway Grand

Auditorium and Grand Symphony, along with a pair of non-cutaway 12-fret models, a Grand Auditorium and Grand Concert. Players can expect a warmer, richer overall tone with the 12-frets due to the bridge's more central placement on the lower bout.

"If you imagine the lower bout of the guitar as a snare drum, moving the bridge is similar to a drummer moving their hit spot from near the rim to the

center of their drum," Andy explains. "By articulating the top from a more central location, you end up with a warmer response overall. Most players will end up attacking the strings farther away from the saddle when they play in their natural position, which contributes to the warmth."

Cedar-Top NS24 LTDs

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood Laminate

Top: Cedar

Models: NS24ce-LTD, NS24e-LTD

Rosewood 400 Series LTDs

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood

Top: Sitka Spruce

Key Appointments: Small Diamond Fretboard Inlay, Gold Tuners, ES® Electronics

Models: 410ce-LTD, 412ce-LTD, 414ce-LTD, 416ce-LTD



*L-R: Cedar-Top NS24ce-LTD,
Rosewood 412ce-LTD*

Cedar-Top NS24 LTD

A nylon-string guitar has the ability to evoke so many different musical flavors from around the world, or simply add an interesting acoustic texture to contemporary pop music. Our Nylon Series has always been about making that distinctive tonal palette more accessible to steel-string players through slimmer necks, inviting them to explore fresh musical genres and expand their repertoire.

Our rosewood laminate NS24 models in particular are priced affordably enough to justify as a non-primary guitar that can diversify your six-string tool box. This year we're pleased to offer a pair of limiteds – either with or without cutaway – featuring a cedar top, which is normally only available at the NS72/74 level. Maybe you've always wanted to learn a little Brazilian music, explore some Latin jazz, or master a classical piece. Having

an affordable, reliable nylon on hand is a great way to keep yourself musically inspired.

Rosewood 400 Series LTD

One advantage of being a manufacturer is our ability to periodically offer premium quality at a more accessible price point, and that's just what we did with this year's rosewood 400 Series limiteds.

"That's one of the things I love as a

builder and a designer here at Taylor," says Andy Powers. "Our production methods allow us to give any musician a pro-level instrument at a reasonable price."

The 400 Series LTDs feature the time-honored pairing of solid rosewood and Sitka spruce, while cosmetic upgrades include a small diamond fretboard inlay and gold tuners. These guitars make a great choice for gigging musicians who want a top-notch musi-

cal tool to be a great-sounding, reliable workhorse without it being so highly appointed that they're wary of using it out in the world.

"You could play club dates, stadium shows, backyard parties, you name it," Andy says. "You could take these guitars anywhere and they'll perform at a high level."

SUPER POWERS

Photo by Sam Wells



AS

Andy Powers retraces his guitar-making journey over an afternoon espresso, one can't help but be caught in the current of his enthusiasm. For starters, there's a mellow California coolness about the 30-year-old luthier, and as the conversation unfolds, other qualities resonate like notes that form a rich chord: a zen-like clarity that belies a deep thinker; a rekindled sense of

honor to have a relationship with a luthier; someone who's going to give you the gift of music to your specifications, creating for you a one-of-a-kind instrument," he says. "Andy always did so with genius and grace, able to see and hear the finished product in my hands and on my stage before I could. I relish his instruments, especially his baritone ukulele that's traveled with me on many tours."

Andy was raised in an environment that sounds ideal for nurturing a guitar builder. His father was a carpenter who specialized in high-end custom-finish woodworking. His mom had an artistic eye and painted, sculpted and arranged flowers.

"My dad would bring home wood scraps for us to play with," he recalls. "He taught me how to use his tools, and there was a huge stack of *Fine Woodworking* magazine issues that I pored

with drywall screws or whatever was convenient. It didn't work. But I had fun doing it, so I thought, I'll try it again."

He was only 8 or 9 when he built his first guitar. With his dad's encouragement – and a steady stream of wood scraps – he kept at it, shifting to ukuleles because they didn't require as much wood. "The ukes actually got pretty decent," he says.

By the time he was 13 or 14, family friends were offering him \$50 to \$100 for his ukes. "I realized that if I built a uke and sold it, it would give me enough money for a new surfboard. So I did a lot of that." Eventually he started making and selling guitars, too.

Meanwhile, he was also playing in several bands, honing his chops and exploring a mix of musical styles. He says he was lucky to be exposed to a number of older, established musicians who lived in the area.

work with one of Boss's guitars.

"He had a 1930s Gibson L7 arch-top – it was a guitar that had been used in Tex Ritter's band a lot back in the day," he remembers. "The bridge was broken; it couldn't be played. He asked if I could fix it, and being kind of naïve enough to believe that I could, I said I'd try. So I made a bridge, got the guitar put back together, and it sounded great."

Encouraged by his success, Andy would ride from garage sale to garage sale on his bike looking for cheap guitars.

"I'd buy them and either cut them up to see what they looked like inside, or if they looked like maybe I could fix them, I'd pay the \$5-10 and try. So I got into repairing and restoring guitars after that because word spread. I ended up doing a lot of work with music stores in the area."

and chew you up as a pop sensation or some teen type thing. That's not a good way to live. And you'd be a prime candidate for it.' So I kind of heeded his warning. I already knew that I didn't really want to be a huge touring musician because I liked being around the ocean and building guitars."

Another experience that would profoundly affect Andy's development, both as a player and as a builder, was attending college at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). He had earned a scholarship, and the fact that the school's location was two blocks from his favorite surf spot sealed the deal. While there, he played in the school's big band, which was led by jazz trombonist Jimmy Cheatham, who had played with Count Basie, Charlie Parker and Duke Ellington.

"He was one of the last classic old-timers from around here who lived that

MULTI-TALENTED GUITAR MAKER ANDY POWERS IS POISED TO PUSH TAYLOR'S GUITAR DESIGNS TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

By Jim Kirilin

wonder as he revisits his woodworking epiphanies as a kid; a tone of humility as he shares his accomplishments; and a calm air of contentment that confirms that he's doing exactly what he wants to do in life.

In conversation, Andy often uses the word "neat" to describe things he likes, which adds a wholesome throwback charm to his ruminations. In fact, it's one of the many things his music and surf buddy, singer-songwriter Jason Mraz, admires about him.

"I can think of no other man who refrains even from saying the word 'crap,'" offers Mraz. "Bad words just don't exist in his lexicon. THAT is most inspiring to me."

Mraz owns several of Andy's instruments, and has enjoyed the one-on-one connection with Andy that has helped produce them.

"Just like knowing your local farmer, chef, or surfboard shaper, it's a real

over. I got a lot of good instruction from those."

He grew up in the coastal community of Oceanside, California, located on the northern edge of San Diego County. His dad was a surfer, so Andy was always down at the beach and got into surfing early on as well. Both parents were also hobbyist musicians, so there were always instruments around the house. Andy picked up the guitar early enough that he doesn't remember how old he was. Music, surfing and woodworking all blended into an idyllic SoCal youth.

"I was doing all this woodworking and playing music, and then I started to get really into the Ventures and '60s surf music," he says. "So, when I got into guitar playing, because of my woodworking hobby, I started making surfboards, and then I thought, hmm... make a guitar. So I started cutting some stuff out, screwing it together

"A lot of times it was through my dad, because he ended up working on different clients' houses," he says. "Some days I'd work with him. That's how I got to meet a bunch of folks who were really influential, because at that age I was thinking, maybe I'll play music for a living. I'm pretty good at it"

One of them was jazz guitarist Bob Boss, who lived around the corner from his family.

"I fell in with him when I was probably 12-ish," Andy says. "He's played with people like Sarah Vaughan, B.B. King and other greats. He was playing every night of the week, so we both had days open. I'd go over there in the morning with my guitar, he'd make some coffee, and we'd get his record collection out and just sit there listening for an hour, two hours, three hours, and we'd play. He really showed me a lot about how the jazz world works."

Andy also started doing guitar repair

He was also starting to build a reputation as a versatile player.

"I was in a rockabilly band, a jazz band, a surf band, a classic rock band, a country band – all kinds of stuff," he says. A career as a pro musician was starting to sound like a possibility. As a young teenager, he met another established guitar player, John Jorgenson, known for his fretwork with the Desert Rose Band and, at the time, the Hellecasters. Jorgenson's advice would help guide his career.

"He was doing an interview at a local radio station about two miles from the house one day, so we went down there and met him, and we stayed in touch," Andy recalls. "He gave me a lot of good direction as a musician the more I got to know him. He told me, 'You're a good guitar player; be really careful in the music world. You could go out with some band and make some records. A record label will grab you

era of music," Andy says. "He was amazingly good. He could play one note as a solo and it would be incredible. I got to spend a lot of good one-on-one time with him, learning about the roots of jazz music and his experience in it."

At the same time, Andy also studied with modernists like Roger Reynolds and Steven Schick and Ed Harkins, all of whom were on the cutting edge of modern, intellectual music.

"We'd spend ridiculous amounts of time listening, thinking about the ways music is put together, thinking about the instrument," he says. "UCSD was and still is such a modern music school and such a forward-thinking environment – a lot of the real well-known composers and musicians who came out of there were developing their own instruments. You saw guys who were really trying to push the boundaries and get as many

continued next page

different sounds, colors and textures out of their instruments as possible. It was a neat environment because it fostered careful listening and clear, well-developed thought."

Another payoff from life at UCSD was that Andy ended up working on the instruments of almost all of his professors and building guitars for them and his classmates. By the time he graduated, he had a waiting list for his guitars, he was doing a lot of restoration work, and was handling repairs for several stores.

leader and author, who said that you shouldn't ask yourself what the world needs; you should ask yourself what makes you come alive, and then go and do that. Because what the world really needs is people who have come alive.

The Guitars

A survey of Andy's body of work reveals a luthier who has covered remarkable ground. (To see a sampling of the custom guitars Andy has built in his shop, visit www.andypowersinstru

of the mechanics of instrument making are really similar. So rather than limiting myself by thinking, 'I'm only a steel-string builder or an electric builder or an archtop builder, I would take what I learned from this and apply it to the whole package.'

One particular guitar-making skill that Andy's customers love is his ability to process their playing nuances and apply that understanding to the instrument he's building to help them better express themselves artistically. Three years ago he built an archtop for his

ing together 25 years, and I feel like I'm hearing you for the first time!' We played a couple more tunes, and he says, 'So *this* is what you've been trying to do all along?'" Boss laughs.

Even the instruments that weren't individually commissioned but were simply discovered in a store have made a big impact on people. Like the time Elvis Costello strolled into a high-end ukulele store in Hawaii and picked out the uke Andy had built and left for consignment after playing at a festival there.

across the fretboard. It even travels up the vertical face of the fretboard binding.

"The whole thing is breathtaking," Boss says. "People often tell me, 'I think that's the prettiest guitar I've ever seen,' and I say, 'Yeah, it is!'"

On an electric guitar he built for Jason Mraz, he designed a unique fingerprint fretboard inlay.

"It was inspired by an early '60s Fender Jaguar he had," Andy says. "When it came time to think of inlays, we were out surfing one morning, talk-



"At that point I had more time to do all the work I had in front of me," he says. "So I started making more guitars. I feel like guitar making wasn't something I chose to do. It was something that chose me because I was doing what I was interested in. I had the interests and the desire, and when I combined all those things, it just so happened that it paid my bills. I also got to play with a couple different bands, and I was doing some session work with different guys. So it was just this kind of whole musical thing that kept moving forward."

Despite the organic way that Andy's career path unfolded, he says it wasn't always easy.

"Like anything, there are days when the work in front of you is a struggle," he maintains. "But the flip side is that I did what I wanted to do. I remember a quote from Howard Thurman, a civil rights

ments.com.) Steel-string acoustics, nylon-strings, ukuleles, mandolins, archtops, solidbody electrics – all are represented. He relates the breadth of his craft to the cross-pollination of musical interests he's embraced over the years.

"I have such a wide interest in different music styles," he says. "I love some of the old country western stuff, I love bluegrass, I love classic rock and the singer-songwriter stuff, and all this jazz and classical, especially romantic classical music. And what I would find is that figuring out a new technique while I was building a mandolin could also be used on this guitar. Or I learned things in the way the top of a guitar wanted to move that affected everything else. So in certain ways, spreading out what I was interested in increased my understanding of the way things tend to work, because a lot

jazz friend Bob Boss that was meant to be a backup to the one he had been playing for 30 years. When he got it, Boss was floored.

"What he came up with and how well it played the minute I got it was way beyond my wildest dreams," Boss explains. "He says to me, 'I watch people play and I see what they do to overcome the shortcomings of the instrument. I've seen you play a lot, and I kind of knew what those were, so I just got rid of those.' I was too dumfounded to even ask him what they were."

Boss wasn't the only one to notice the improvement.

"My friend Marshall Hawkins is a great bass player who's worked with Miles Davis and Roberta Flack and all kinds of people, and he just happened by my house with his bass on the day that I got the guitar. So we played, and later he said, 'We've been play-

"I didn't know about it," he says. "And the next month I was glancing through *Rolling Stone* and there's a two-page spread of him with this uke that I had made. Well, dang! I reached out through some distantly related associates and asked, 'Did Elvis end up with a uke that I made?' And the guy said, 'Oh, *you* built that? He won't go anywhere without that thing now. He made us stop the photo shoot so I could run back to the hotel and get it for him! That made me feel good because I was 18 when I made it."

Another distinctive trait of Andy's instruments is his stunning and often envelope-pushing decorative inlay work, in which he breaks the boundaries that traditionally confine the designs. His archtop for Boss features a "four seasons" tree motif that includes an inlay of a tree that starts in the pickguard and branches out

ing about it between waves, and he said, 'Hey, have you ever inlaid fingerprints?' After we got out of the water, we drove over to the shop and I pulled out an ink pad, like, alright, let's take your prints."

It was a Taylor gig that Andy played with Mraz at Winter NAMM in 2010 where Andy reconnected with Bob Taylor after a long hiatus. They'd first met years earlier at a Harvey Reid concert, when Andy was a teenager who'd brought a ukulele to show Reid, and ended up showing it to Bob, too. Their paths had crossed intermittently over the years, and they had mutual friends, but at NAMM, he and Bob had a chance to talk, which led to more conversations.

"As a guitar maker, there aren't a whole lot of other people to relate to on that level," Andy points out. "So we got together for lunch a couple of

times. What's funny is the more we get to know each other, the more startlingly similar I realize we are. It's kind of freakish. I was reading Bob's book a while back, and I'm going through these stories from when he was a kid. Little things like taking apart a bicycle brake, and how it went everywhere. I did the exact same thing with the exact same bicycle brake! It's kind of uncanny. But where we're different in some regards is my goal was always to build the very best guitar at any cost that I could possibly build, and

form. People get to take this thing that we've made and make it uniquely their own and present their ideas with it. So that's a really exciting place to be as a guitar maker and a musician. I can't think of anything better."

Since his official arrival in January, Andy says he's been blown away by the talent that surrounds him in every department at Taylor.

"The people here are the real resource," he says. "We have people who are amazingly talented in their specialty fields. Take the guys in the



in his case, he ultimately wanted to build a lot of guitars and be able to put them in the hands of more players. Both of those are noble goals."

Transitioning from One-man Shop to Taylor

The more Andy pondered the prospect of bringing his talents to El Cajon, the more he realized that despite the dramatic change from working solo, in reality it allowed for the continuation of his core mission as a builder to build the best possible guitars – only with more resources and on a larger scale.

"I still want to build guitars that are going to allow musicians, whether they know three chords or are reinventing the repertoire for the instrument, to contribute to their artistic vision," he says. "Only it's on a far broader plat-

form department. Those guys are so crazy good at doing finishes. They're really good at doing colors and sunbursts, and they know the chemistry behind the finishes. The guys here in the machine shop are really talented machinists and designers who can build amazing tools and figure out ways to do things. And by narrowing their focus they got so good in those areas. It's liberating to not be stumbling over my own weaknesses in certain fields. I got good at using certain finish materials, but I don't know half as much about the modern materials as these guys do."

Andy's work environment at Taylor is located in the company's R&D building, which houses the company's machine shop, electronics development team, and custom woodworking shop, a domain that he and longtime Taylor guitar designer Larry Breedlove share.

"That's just a straight-up, old school guitar-making shop," Andy says. "I even brought in a bunch of my old hand tools because I still use them every day. We've got benches set up. We put the radio on and go to town making some sawdust."

Larry has enjoyed the fresh infusion of talent and energy.

"You can't get past Andy's enthusiasm," he says. "He's like the wide-eyed, bushy-tailed kid who just wants to do everything, which is great. But the fact is that he brings an incredible amount of knowledge and a background that you wouldn't expect at his age. He has already done a lot of amazing things that can work their way into what we do. We think we're outside the box, and yet he's outside *our* box," he laughs.

Among the projects Andy currently has on his plate are the continued development of a classical guitar – a project he began last summer when Bob Taylor assembled an informal guitar camp to jump-start the process. He worked with Larry on the Fall Limiteds [see page 12]. And as many of you are surely wondering based on his background, he's been developing some ukulele prototypes, including a tenor uke that Bob Taylor has had a hard time putting down. He also recently made a beautiful Taylor uke for Taylor Swift that she loves and has been playing live on tour.

Other R&D work includes a lot of experimental building in pursuit of new tonal frontiers, including the use of ultra-thin, tone-enhancing finishes, as well as new bracing ideas. Andy says he's excited about the prospect of pushing Taylor tone to the next level.

"Taylor makes arguably the best production guitars on the planet," he says. "These are really consistently high-quality, well-designed, beautiful and musical guitars. And they're going to continue to get better. I see myself taking this amazing thing that Bob has created his entire working life and developing the guitar even further into something that's a little better than any musician could ever ask for." **W&S**

Opposite page, from left: Andy's beautifully detailed oak tree inlay on Bob Boss's archtop guitar transitions from the pickguard to the fretboard; Bob Taylor with Andy in Taylor's design studio

Bob on Andy: Born to Build

There's no doubt that Bob Taylor has found a kindred guitar-making spirit in Andy Powers.

"From my perspective, I thank his dad for making my son," he muses. "When I go down the list of the qualities I would want for the person who could be the wellspring for the next generation of guitars at Taylor, I can check every box with Andy."

While Bob has no plans of checking out anytime soon, as the chief steward of Taylor's guitar-making vision, he knows the importance of planning ahead.

"My feeling is that I've built a solid foundation and a weather-proof roof on this company, and the next generation gets a chance to do the decorating inside," he explains. "We've come a long way. We have great products, but I don't expect to go six feet under and our products just try and stay as good as they were. I expect them to advance because we have the right people here. And we need someone like Andy to come around while I'm here and still interested."

Bob says he had compiled a mental list of qualities he wanted in the next guitar designer for the development team.

"I need a guitar maker who's better than me as far as raw guitar-making talent goes," he says. "He doesn't need to be the same industrialist or factory builder as me, but as far as just building a great guitar, he needs to be better than me. He also needs to be self-taught. That was important because there's a difference between someone I bring along as my protégé and someone who was born to do it and is going to do it one way or another."

Bob also wanted someone relatively young but with experience. "I joked that he needs to have 20 years experience and be less than 30," he shares.

It was also important to bring someone in who was from the San Diego area.

"That was very, very important to me," he says. "Southern California guitar is different than Northeast guitar. It just is. We think differently here. So I needed someone who understood what Southern California was about. I didn't want to teach that culture. And being from around here, chances are they would already know a lot about us and feel a sort of kinship with us because we're from the same place."

Having a guitar designer who was also a pro-level player was another vital prerequisite.

"Andy's ability to play makes a big difference," he says. "By being Bob Taylor I've sort of been able to transcend that. Andy is as good as anybody, and better than most. That will be his entrance into the circles he needs to be in to gain respect with pro players, and we do a lot of work that way.

"What's also fabulous about Andy's playing ability," Bob notes, "is that he really puts these guitars to the test. He sits down and plays them for a half hour or hour every day when he comes in. It's actually one of my favorite times of the day, to hear him playing. He's my favorite guitar player right now, because he just plays like a songbird. While I look at a guitar as a musical instrument, I really look at it as kind of an engineered item. Most people will agree that Taylor makes the best-playing guitars, or the best intonated guitars, or the most consistent guitars. But they won't all agree that they're the best-sounding. I believe Andy can take the sound to another level than I've been able to, in part because he can play. He's a sensitive player and he listens really carefully, and he gets in there and he plays beyond what the guitar designers here at Taylor, me and Larry, are able to play. How can that not be anything but better for the guitar?"

"So here he is. Andy can make fabulous guitars, and we know how to manufacture them. It's pretty neat for him to come up with a guitar and know that he can replicate it 10,000 times over, or for 20 years in a row as a standard model. It's a really good thing for Taylor, and for Andy, and for players, to know that there's a person who has found this home and who can bring all that goodness to a lot of people. Andy's unique. I'm excited to have him here."

Raising Their Voices

Javier Colon and Vicci Martinez were already seasoned performers when they went prime time on *The Voice*. They hoped the show would let their true voices shine through.

By Chalise Zolezzi

For the two talented musicians, it was a long shot, but the payoff would be a level of success both had long dreamed of. One was a bluesy, progressive Ani DiFranco-type songstress who found her footing near grunge music's ground zero. The other was a soulful singer-songwriter who had flipped-flopped genres at a record label's urging to try to hit it big.

Vicci Martinez and Javier Colon both arrived in Hollywood with Taylors in tow to compete on *The Voice*, a vocal talent show based on Holland's top-rated *The Voice of Holland*. Hosted by former MTV VJ Carson Daly, the U.S. show paired hopeful stars with one of several popular recording artists turned "coaches": vocalist Christina Aguilera, Cee Lo Green (Gnarls Barkley), Maroon 5's Adam Levine, and country star Blake Shelton. Each coach blindly selected the contestants they wanted to mentor, based on their voices alone. The contestants were then free to choose from the interested coaches. The winner would score a recording contract with Universal Republic and a cash prize of \$100,000, not to mention instant fans and fame. By the end of the show's 12-episode run, it came down to fan votes. Martinez was named runner-up, while Colon was crowned the new "Voice."

For Colon (814ce, NS62ce), a lefty guitarist with a degree in music education from Hartford, Connecticut's Hartt School of Music, winning *The Voice* meant a new direction for his music — and his family. Back in 2003,

Colon signed with Capitol Records and released two R&B albums under their management: his debut, *Javier*, followed in 2006 by *Left of Center*. After poor sales, waning label interest, and little creative control, Colon struck out on his own, releasing 2010's *The Truth-Acoustic EP*, which featured a mix of soul, folk and original acoustic material. But his dreams of stardom were tempered by the realities of providing for his wife Maureen and their two little girls, Solana and Amaia. Then an e-mail arrived from a producer of *The Voice*.

"I knew I had to do something if I wanted to keep performing and singing as a career," Colon shares. "As recently as two weeks before we got the e-mail, we had a showcase for Blue Note records, and unfortunately they passed on me. They said they had too much on their plate. It was devastating, as it had been about five years since I had another deal, and I really thought that was going to work out."

With high hopes, Colon auditioned for *The Voice*, and his stirring performance of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" made a strong impression — every coach lobbied for Colon to join their teams. He says he went with Adam Levine because of his energy, and over the course of the season, Colon consistently wowed the live audience and at-home viewers with his renditions of songs like Coldplay's "Fix You" and "Stitch by Stitch," an original tune that was released as a single and peaked at #17 on *Billboard's* "Hot 100" chart. His underlying goal,

he says, was to let viewers know the "real me."

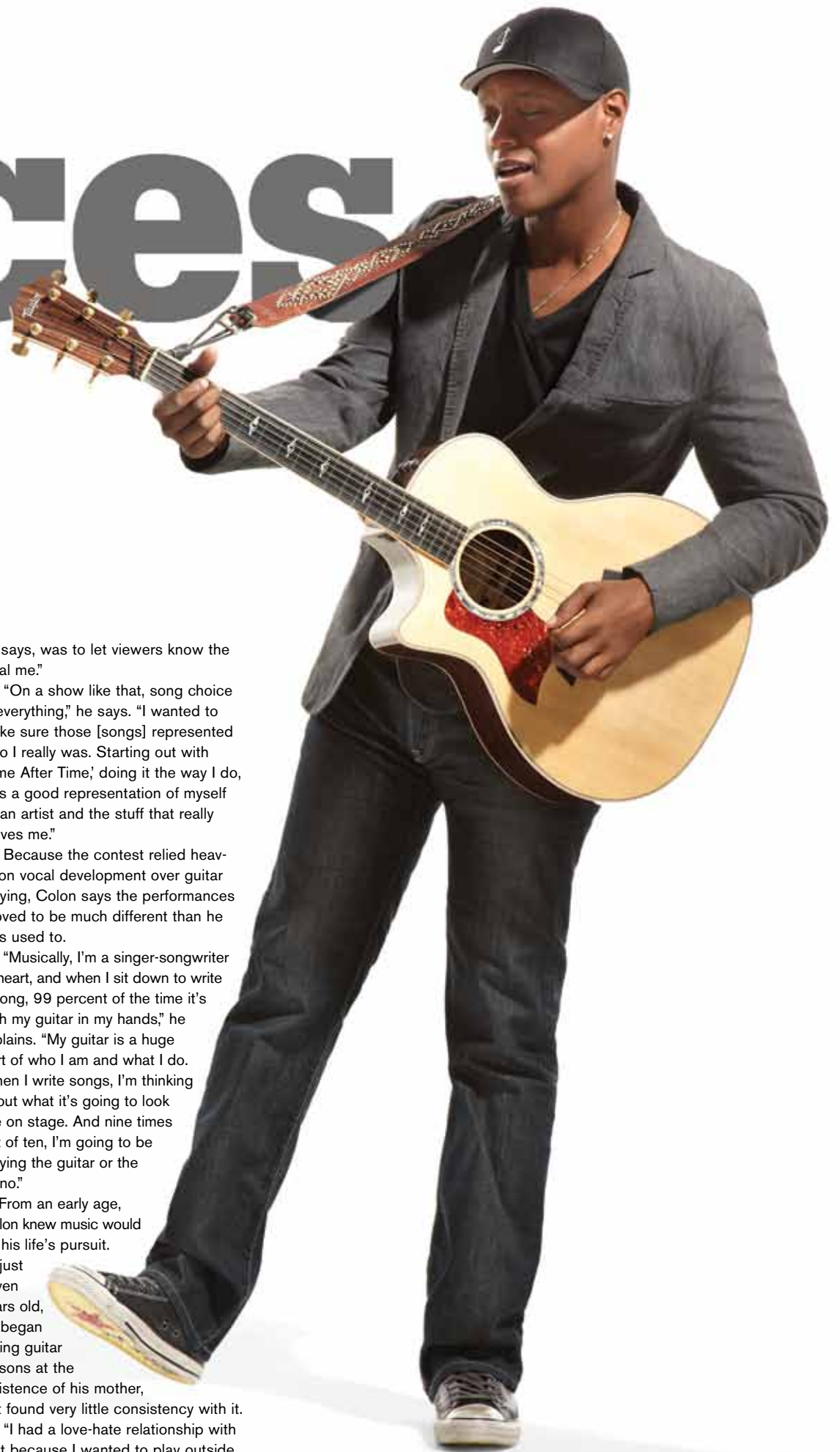
"On a show like that, song choice is everything," he says. "I wanted to make sure those [songs] represented who I really was. Starting out with 'Time After Time,' doing it the way I do, was a good representation of myself as an artist and the stuff that really moves me."

Because the contest relied heavily on vocal development over guitar playing, Colon says the performances proved to be much different than he was used to.

"Musically, I'm a singer-songwriter at heart, and when I sit down to write a song, 99 percent of the time it's with my guitar in my hands," he explains. "My guitar is a huge part of who I am and what I do. When I write songs, I'm thinking about what it's going to look like on stage. And nine times out of ten, I'm going to be playing the guitar or the piano."

From an early age, Colon knew music would be his life's pursuit. At just seven years old, he began taking guitar lessons at the insistence of his mother, but found very little consistency with it.

"I had a love-hate relationship with that because I wanted to play outside and hang out with friends," he says.



"My mom was like, 'I'm not going to pay if you're not going to practice.' So I would take lessons for ten months to a year, and then I would stop, and then start again. I really started getting into it when I got into seventh grade and started writing songs."

Colon's vocal development and songwriting skills blossomed with the encouragement of his seventh grade music teacher, and, not surprisingly, in the quest to win a girl's heart.

"In seventh grade, my music teacher made me sing for the eighth grade girls' choir class, and that was scary," he recalls. "Then I wrote a song, 'Lost Without Your Love,' for a girl [laughs]. It was super cheesy and bad, but fortunately I continued to write and got better at it."

Over the next decade, Colon began to develop his playing style, and along the way joined the band EmcQ, a soul band dedicated to Stevie Wonder. He left when a successful audition landed him a coveted spot as the lead vocalist with the Derek Trucks Band in 2000. He toured with the band for two years before signing with Capitol.

As a guitar player, Colon is primarily a fingerpicker and incorporates lots of Travis-style picking, hammer-ons and pull-offs into his playing, with alternating bass to complement his voice. He remembers his first Taylor, an NS62ce that came from his days at Capitol Records.

"I absolutely love it," he says. "I could never afford a Taylor back when I was younger, and being left-handed, I didn't have the luxury of going into a store and trying out a bunch of guitars. I was so thrilled to get my hands on it; it's still one of my favorites to play. Nylon-string is so different. I just love the sound of it, I love writing on it, and it's just been an amazing, amazing guitar."

Buoyed by his win on *The Voice*, Colon feels as though he's charted an exciting new course for his career.

"It feels like I've stepped into someone else's life, someone who had a much cooler life than I had," he reflects.

As the winner of the show, Colon earned a recording contract and at press time was busy laying down tracks for his yet-to-be titled album, set for release on November 22, followed by a tour. Both the record and the shows, he says, will heavily feature his 814ce.

"I make sure my songs have the instrumentation that I need them to have to pull off a great live show, and since they start from an acoustic place, I like to break it down to where it's me and my Taylor."

www.javiercolon.com

Vicci Martinez: Real or No Deal

Like her *Voice* counterpart, when Vicci Martinez first heard of the show, it wasn't through scouring the Internet or industry publications. It, too, came in a call from a producer encouraging her to try out for the show. Martinez was admittedly hesitant. After a successful appearance on *Star Search* a decade earlier at age 16, and later landing a spot on *American Idol* – which she eventually walked away from after it was suggested that she change her appearance – she was reluctant to go down a path she feared would lead toward manufactured, sugarcoated pop.

The Tacoma, Washington native had been playing the violin since she was five, and with the help of an instructional booklet of Beatles tunes given to her by her father, she taught herself to play the guitar at 15. As a result, Martinez began to build a thriving career in the greater Northwest, gigging three to four nights a week and releasing her first album, *VMB*, at 16, followed by several more, including 2011's *Live from Jazzbones*.

This time around, she was after more than a record deal – she wanted to be the *real* deal. She says *The*

Voice's producers assured her that's what she'd get.

"They called my managers and said, 'We're really trying to make a different show. And we know who she is and what she's done, and those are the kind of people we're looking for. We're not going to disrespect her, we're not going to make her compromise. It's going to be a good experience, and we'd love for her to try out!'"

After much circumspection, Martinez decided that the show gave her an opportunity to be herself, further her vocal talents, and open new avenues in her playing. She showed up with her 510ce, which means a lot to her in part because it was hard-earned.

"I bought it when I was 18, and I still play the same one," she says. "I was so happy because I bought it with my own money."

Martinez discovered Taylor guitars at an early age thanks to Dave Matthews, whom she cites as a big musical influence.

"I would go to his shows and mimic a lot of what he has done," she says. "I love his band, I love his style, I love the experience when you go to a concert. I used to say, 'I want to be the next female Dave Matthews,' and my parents would say, 'Be the next Vicci Mar-

tinez. Let's work on that,'" she laughs.

A tour through Martinez's discography will showcase her stylistic progression.

"My solo projects have gone from pretty little ballads to crazy jam band music, to funk, to folk, to almost gospel R&B stuff," she details. "It's just been whatever I'm into at the moment. Meeting so many different musicians turned me on to so many styles of music. It's an evolution of the things I've put out; I'm all over the map."

Her 510ce can physically attest to her musical journey. "You can see the marks on my Taylor. I play my guitar as a percussion instrument."

Martinez's Taylor playing isn't limited to her 510ce. She picked up a 114ce when she was in a pinch.

"I went somewhere without my guitar and I really needed one, so I bought myself the 114," she says. "I perform with it. It has such a great sound for the price, and it comes across well with the percussive playing that I do."

On *The Voice*, Martinez chose Cee Lo Green as her coach because, after her blind audition, where she performed "Rolling in the Deep" by Adele, Green told her, "You touched my heart." Under his direction, Martinez would go on to perform Pat Benatar's "Love is

a Battlefield," Dolly Parton's "Jolene," and in the finale, a duet with Train's Pat Monahan (GSMC, 414ce, GS Mini) on his band's song, "Drops of Jupiter."

Recognizing that she was quickly becoming a fan favorite, Universal Republic signed Martinez to a record deal, which she says will yield an album later this year. Asked which stylistic vein she's feeling this time around, she hints at the nature of the songs: "Soul, rock/pop-based with a lot of energy, and then a couple that are really pretty and weird," she shares. "I love that: pretty and weird together."

In retrospect, both Colon and Martinez appreciate the kind of platform that *The Voice* gave them to share their talents and musical identities with an audience, and acknowledge that the success they experienced exceeded their wildest expectations. Martinez says it represented so much more to her than just a singing competition.

"It's not just about your singing voice, but your voice as a person and your message," she says. "I felt like I had something to say."

www.viccimartinez.com **W&S**



Following The Script

Guitarist Mark Sheehan from The Script runs through his Taylor acoustics, shares his antidote for writer's block, and explains why he loves recording with his GS Mini.

By Jim Kirlin

Photos by Heiko Prigge



By all accounts the road has risen to meet Irish pop band The Script. Their self-titled debut in 2008 climbed to No. 1 on the UK and Irish charts and has since gone nearly double platinum. They've opened stadium shows for Sir Paul McCartney and fellow Dubliners U2. Their well-received sophomore release, *Science & Faith*, showcases a band confidently coming into its own on a surging wave of heartfelt pop grandeur, so far spawning the hits "For the First Time" and "Nothing." In July, the band celebrated their return to Dublin with a sold-out homecoming show at the city's Aviva Stadium that was filmed for a DVD release due in November. In a gesture that conveyed the band's connection with its audience, at the end of their final encore lead singer Danny O'Donoghue handed his Taylor acoustic to an audience member to keep.

Like many acts that ultimately taste success, there is often a long, bumpy

prelude, and The Script had theirs. O'Donoghue and bandmate Mark Sheehan (guitar, vocals) met as teens in Dublin, bonded through their shared musical aspirations, and showed enough promise as young songwriters to land a publishing deal early on. Their love of American R&B and soul led them to the U.S., where they lived for several years, working as commercial songwriters and learning studio production under the tutelage of some of R&B and hip hop's most respected names. But it wasn't until they struck out on their own, adding drummer Glen Power to the mix and starting to write and perform for themselves, that they found their true voice and began to connect with listeners.

Fueled by O'Donoghue's expressive tenor and the band's soulful melodicism, The Script's music resonates with uplifting emotive power. Lyrically, the band taps into the complex realities of life – often

relationships and the struggles that play into them – and distills them into emotionally honest songs with undertones of resilience, healing and hope that their fans have embraced as a soundtrack to their lives.

Guitarist Mark Sheehan took some time during The Script's U.S. tour in September to talk about his Taylors – he has a 514ce, 816ce, GS Mini and Baby Taylor – and the band's songwriting evolution.

You've had your 514ce for a while. How did you come to choose it?

I was in Sheffield [UK] about 12 years ago working with a producer, and he had a 514 sitting there. I played it and thought it was absolutely beautiful, but what I'm big into is playing a few guitars and finding one that has a special sound. He'd bought it at a music shop down the way, so Danny and I went in there, and when I picked that model up and played it, I loved it

so much that I got it. Since then it's been used in every single session we've ever been in.

What do you like in an acoustic?

It's very personal. I really marry myself to an instrument and try to get really comfortable with it. It's the sound at first that drives me. I start to hear extra tones and extra melodies coming off the guitar. And I really enjoy recording the guitar before I give myself wholly to it. I like mic'ing them up. Take the 816ce at the moment. I believe the one I've got is actually the Harry Potter wand of the 816s – it found me. The sound from that guitar is incredibly magical.

The next thing is playing it. For me, the fretboard is paramount to my absolute love of a guitar, and I love what Taylor does. You keep it the same pretty much all the way up the neck. When I was a beginner guitarist, that was hugely important to my

development, because a lot of guitarists had to deal with the extra strain every time you went up the guitar. Mine, the weight distribution on my hand felt similar all the way up and down the neck. That was really important to me, too. So, I guess I've married those things in my head, where now when I play the Taylor, I generally feel from my right to left hand the comfort zone just fits me perfectly.

Before The Script, you and Danny lived in the States for a few years and worked as songwriters and producers, right?

Yeah. We had a publishing deal and we just wrote an awful lot. We used to have mutual friends in Principal Management, U2's management, and we'd go in there and play [longtime U2 manager] Paul McGuinness music. He thought we were talented kids, so he helped open a lot of doors for us to come to America. He would say,

“Why don’t you go try to work with this producer?” and we started to go in as writers, just to cut our teeth in the music industry, but our main focus was producing music.

We went back and forth between between Florida and California, working with as many producers as we could, from David Foster to Dallas Austin to Teddy Riley, a lot of it heavily in the R&B world. We ended up working in Nashville with Tommy Sims and people like that. We really fell in love with American R&B and wanted to go back to the grassroots level of it, but we also wanted to experience the studio life to the fullest, and that’s literally what we did. That’s what kept the lights on for so many years living here. They started flickering really badly toward the end [laughs].

What happened?

We hit a wall with getting other artists to sing our music, because the emotional content was just lacking. We wanted to focus more on music that we could relate to. Any artist who came in to sing just wasn’t giving us the meat that we felt was needed for the lyrics we were putting on the songs. So we decided to record a bunch of demos for a record label friend of mine, Steve Kipner, who I’d known for many years and written with a bunch of times, and I just said, “Listen to this.” I was more playing him the music than playing him the band, but he said, “Who’s this band?” and I said, “Eh...they’re called The Script.” I just kind of lied at the time and told him that we were a band even though it was just me, Danny and Glen jamming in a small rehearsal room in Venice Beach. Later on I ran home panicked and called the guys and said, “They think we’re a band. They want us to showcase for them.” We’d never really sat down and played this music; we were just writing this music together. So Glen flew back over and we just jammed out in a small room for them, and they offered us a deal on the spot.

How do you guys write? Do you go off and do your own thing and then come together? Our is it all organic, where you’re sitting around in a room together with guitars and hatching ideas at the same time?

Well, it’s really different with us because what Danny and I have learned over the years is that writer’s block is what happens when writers have a system or formula for writing a song and that fails them. What we’ve managed to do over the years was change it up every time – we believe that each song needs you to come

to it like it’s the first song you’ve ever written. So, it’ll come from anywhere, really. Even though Glen plays drums he also plays guitar, piano, bass and sings, and all of us are really pretty much like that. But the idea is generally, like you say, we go away, we come out with a bunch of ideas. Sometimes I’ll sit in a studio on my own just writing songs and ideas, and Danny is pretty much the same. And I take it to a point where I’m just kind of stuck, or Danny sometimes; it just really depends. He’ll come in and go, “I got a great chorus idea for that,” and he’ll jam something out. Sometimes we’ll just pick up a guitar, the three of us together in a room and it happens as organically as that. I guess the point is that our formula is no formula, so we just do it as many different ways as we can.

Does any writing happen when you’re out on tour?

Actually, I’ve just built an on-the-road touring studio system. I have this flight case that basically sits on the table, I open it up, the speakers go left and right, and the laptop sits right in the middle of it. I’m able to hook up my audio interface and record all my guitars directly in. So what I’ve got now is a way to program and write music

“I believe the 816ce I’ve got is actually the Harry Potter wand of the 816s — it found me. The sound from that guitar is incredibly magical.”

on the road, on the bus, in the dressing room. I’ve just implemented that about two weeks ago, and that’s so much fun.

Your most recent album, *Science & Faith*, seems to have a bigger, grander sound than the first record. Did that come out of the fact that you were playing bigger venues, including stadiums, and you wanted a sound that would be able to play to a bigger venue, or were you just naturally progressing in that direction anyway?

I think we were naturally progressing, but I also think it was confidence on our part. I was really getting more confident as a player, and we were all just getting more comfortable in our skin about the type of band we actually are. [At first] you don’t know what your band is; everybody else is telling you what your band is. You just write songs and play music and people pigeonhole you into a genre. After being on the

road for two years, you can’t deny the experiences that you gain from playing every night, like the parts of each song that people react to. That’s something you can’t get out of your head because you’re a songwriter at the end of the day, and that’s what you gauge things by. It’s really weird to think of an idea in your head, to internalize that emotion, to then play an instrument and write a song about it to make somebody else then internalize that sound and emotion and to feel the same as you felt when you first conceptualized it, if you’re with me.

But it’s powerful when it works.

And I think that’s what people chase all the time in music. That’s the drug, I think.

Do you test new songs in front of an audience to have a barometer, or do you know when you’re writing demos that it’s intrinsically good?

We have a very good barometer for knowing what is good for The Script. I can’t tell you what’s good for the commercial market or what will or won’t sell. We know what we like and what we can attach ourselves to, and that’s kind of the meter for us. That’s what we have to live and die by. But we’re



Singer Danny O'Donoghue on stage at the band's homecoming show in Dublin

broken down so much that we don’t really attract the real scene. I think our music is very much universal in the sense that people have absolutely related to us before they come and see us, and when they come it’s really about sharing that moment with us. Audiences definitely feel the same, you know – they go nuts when we’re on stage and they really hold the energy up for the whole show. And at the end of the show we’ll take a TwitPic of them and there isn’t an empty seat in the place.

The band has had enormous success abroad and you’re really building your audience here in the States. Despite that, you guys seem to maintain a relatively normal perspective and stay grounded. What’s the secret to that?

I believe it’s just friendship at the end of the day. We are mates first and that’s how we really got together. We enjoy being on the road together. I think the secret is, as you do with your friends, you can’t let one mate just go to his head. We believe that everybody around us is a reflection of who this band is. What happens is the team around you just sort of builds that perspective and it just happens that everybody keeps you grounded. And if one person does float up there for a minute it’s very easy to pop that balloon and float them back down again.

Have you been playing your GS Mini much?

I’ve played it probably every single day since I got it. It goes absolutely everywhere with me. It’s my new

favorite thing. It’s stuck to my back all the time. I have it everywhere, and I’m not joking – I even walk into restaurants with it now. It’s incredible for a smaller guitar because, when you sit down and mic a guitar like the 816, for example, it has a beautiful sound to it already in the room, but no matter what, just because of where a guitar naturally sits in the blend, you naturally have to EQ off some of the low end of the guitar. When you think about that, the GS Mini already has that low end rolled off, and it’s actually in the perfect position for recording anyway. So, it’s a really super little guitar. And the playability of it feels like a big guitar. I also have the Baby Taylor, which is what I used on our hit “For the First Time” – the opening guitar on that is actually the Baby.

What did playing the homecoming show that was filmed for the DVD mean to you?

It meant a crazy amount of mixed emotions, to be honest. We had taken that show on after we had just sold out three nights at the O2 arena in Dublin. So we weren’t sure if it would sell out or if people would show up at all. There were all these questions and a lot of mixed emotions, but actually it came together like clockwork. Certain shows were just meant to be. All the stars aligned, the weather came out for us, everything we had planned production-wise, on stage, lighting-wise, just went off so well. **W&S**

Look for *The Script’s live DVD* later this fall. For the latest on the band, visit www.thescriptmusic.com.

Soundings

Hungry for the GS Mini

The BBC show *Three Hungry Boys* challenges three men to live off the land for an entire month or go hungry. Shot at various locations in Great Britain, the “boys” and their trusty van, nicknamed “Daisy,” find ways to survive in remote locales with no food, water or money. While they rough it in the elements, one thing Hungry Boy Tim Cresswell can’t live without is music.

“This summer we spent five weeks outside catching and foraging for our own dinner with no money,” Cresswell reports. “I wanted to take a guitar, but my dreadnaught case weighs as much as the guitar inside it, which is still pretty heavy, so I got myself a **GS Mini**.”

Even after returning to the comforts of the civilized world, Cresswell says his other guitars remain in their cases.

“It’s ridiculous how good this guitar is and how much noise it makes. Let me make this clear: This guitar is absolutely no compromise on sound. None. The technical spec is great and the solid top is awesome. It sounded great out of the well-thought-out [gig bag] and hasn’t stopped sounding and playing sweet. If you have to carry a guitar with you anywhere, or even if you don’t, this guitar hits it right on the button.”
www.3HungryBoys.com

Ladies and Dolls

There was no shortage of Taylors in Saratoga Springs, New York on July 31, as the **Goo Goo Dolls** and **Bare-naked Ladies** took to the stage at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center.

Ed Robertson and Kevin Hearn of BNL had their Taylors front and center. Hearn played his **656ce**, while Robertson played his two main Taylors, a **W10** and a **W20**, throughout the show. Marching through a ten-song set list, the Ladies led off with a number of favorites, including “The Old Apartment,” “Brian Wilson,” “It’s All Been Done,” and their theme from the CBS comedy *The Big Bang Theory*. They finished their set with their sellout crowd sing-along “If I Had A Million Dollars,” before launching into a pseudo-rap presentation of Pilot’s “Magic,” with some Cee Lo Green, Justin Bieber, Katy Perry, Black Eyed Peas and Alicia Keys all thrown into the mix.

When the Goo Goo Dolls took the stage, the crowd let out a roar to welcome the band. Ripping into their set

with “Last Hot Night,” they dished out classics such as “Black Balloon,” “Name,” “Broadway,” “Slide” and “Iris,” as well as some selections off their 2010 album, *Something for the Rest of Us*. Frontman John Rzeznik alternated between a seemingly endless supply of guitars, which included a bevy of Taylors, most notably his **914ce** and his sunburst **915ce**.

Musical Comedy

For the San Diego blues-folk act **The Silent Comedy**, the **GS Mini** has found a secure place in their instrument repertoire as a modern-day parlor guitar for their acoustic sets. Josh Zimmerman (vocals, bass, guitar), says it didn’t take much to pick up a Mini.

“My brother (Jeremiah Zimmerman, piano, guitar, vocals) was looking around and saw the video of Jonah [Matranga] playing it and talking about it. We love Jonah’s stuff, so it piqued our interest. We didn’t even play one before we ordered them; we just looked online at reviews and saw other musicians talking about it. The thing that appealed to us the most is how much it really projects for being so small. We ordered two blindly, and when we got them we were blown away by how practical they are.”

The band spent the summer of 2011 touring and performing at a slew of venues on the West Coast and has used the guitar for radio and in-store appearances, and anytime an acoustic show pops up. Josh is also a fan of the ES-Go, the Mini’s easy-to-install pickup.

“It’s super practical,” he says. “I don’t like to work on any of my gear myself, but it was easy as pie. When we do acoustic shows, we mic the guitars or run them through amps. We’ve never had a problem with the pickup. They just seem to be really consistent and work well.”

With a new album due in 2012 and top-secret tour plans in the mix, Josh assures us that the GS Minis will continue to be a part of their rig. The only concern among the brothers is mixing up the two guitars. But Josh has a solution. “I have plans to draw all over mine.” You can watch performance footage of the band on the GS Mini page at taylorguitars.com.

Reframing Doors

A few years back we offered an enthusiastic review of singer-songwriter **James Lee Stanley**’s collaboration with **John Batdorf** on *All Wood and Stones*, an album of Rolling Stones tunes reinterpreted as a collection of soulful acoustic tracks laden with fresh guitar and vocal arrangements. Well, Stanley is back at it, this time with talented musical pal **Cliff Eberhardt**, and giving similar treatment to their favorite Doors tracks on *All Wood and Doors*.



The project couldn’t have had a more authentic catalyst. Doors drummer **John Densmore** told Stanley he loved his treatment of the Stones tunes, and that if he ever wanted to do an album of Doors covers he’d be happy to play percussion. Game on.

Stanley and Eberhardt enlisted some talented guitar friends, including **Paul Barrere** (Little Feat), **Laurence Juber** (Wings), **Scott Breadman** (Lindsey Buckingham), **Peter Tork** (The Monkees), **Rick Ruskin**, and in another ringing endorsement, Doors alum **Robby Kreiger**. **Chad Watson** (Janis Ian) played bass and mandolin, while John Batdorf and **Timothy B. Schmit** added vocal harmonies.

As on the previous project, the songs here are artfully deconstructed and reimagined acoustically. Stanley, Eberhardt and guests slow down the song tempos and bring an earthy funkiness, beautiful harmonies, and gently swinging grooves to them. Eberhardt’s weathered vocals inject a potent, bluesy grit to tracks like “Love Me Two Times,” “Touch Me,” “People Are Strange,” and “Riders on the Storm,” while Stanley’s voice shimmers sweetly on tunes like “Light My Fire” and “Moonlight Drive.” With the inspired phrasing and vocal arrangements, the textures blend well together, yet leave plenty of space for the character of the

acoustic guitars to resonate. It’s often easy to forget that these are Doors songs, especially in the fresh acoustic context, and that’s OK, because the guitar playing is tasty and sensitive, with the kind of economy and note selection you’ll find when you hear seasoned musicians who understand the beauty of restraint. “All my solos were played on my **810ce** with the Expression System,” Stanley says.
www.allwoodanddoors.com

Music Box Answer

For **Tom Kelley**, a retired Green Beret, his “Music Box” had toured the world with him. A **Baby Taylor** he purchased in 1998, dubbed “Music Box,” served two tours in Afghanistan, and had seen most of Europe, Latin America and the United States. As the story goes, Kelley was awaiting a transfer home, and while his Baby was well protected in a hard case, a shipping error left it stuck in a warehouse in Asia for a month, where temperatures can reach 120 degrees, and caused the wood to crack, the glue to separate, and Music Box to suffer irreparable damage.

Fast-forward a few years. Kelley had picked up another guitar, but not his beloved Baby Taylor. Taylor dealer Justin Walters of JW Music heard about his situation at his shop, where Kelley was taking lessons. “I asked him to let me see the guitar,” Walters says. “He told us the story, and that’s when I called Taylor to see if they could help us honor this soldier who served us so willingly and freely.”

During an on-site Taylor workshop, a crowd watched as Kelley was surprised and delighted to receive a **110**. We hear he also loves his recently purchased **cocobolo BTO**.

Love at 30,000 Feet

For the past six years, long-distance couple **Lovine** and **Kat** have taken hundreds of trips between Oakland and Burbank, California to see each other. For this guitar-playing duo, both their airline of choice, Southwest, and their guitar of choice, Taylor, have held a special place in their hearts, as both had figured prominently in their relationship. Lovine explains: “I bought [Kat] the **Baby Taylor** as a Christmas present in 2009, and decided to get the **GS Mini** as soon as I could a year later when I realized what wonderful voices they have. I’m a small guy and prefer the small sizing of the GS Mini, but did not really imagine how useful it would be actually travelling with it and playing onboard the plane!”

When the time came to pop the big question and put the long-distance courtship to rest, Lovine says he knew Southwest and his GS Mini would be part of his surprise proposal. “Music is such a big part of our hearts, and I always knew I wanted to serenade her for the proposal!”

Lovine worked out his plan, and with the help of his GS Mini and Southwest, surprised Kat on her flight from Oakland to Burbank. He came walking down the aisle, serenading her with the Beatles’ “Real Love” on his GS Mini, accompanied by their dog, Nickel, who wore a custom-made hatbox that opened to display an engagement ring. Passengers joined in, too, singing along to the lyrics with a special handout Lovine made to mark the occasion. At 30,000 feet, with GS Mini in hand, Lovine asked Kat to be his wife, and she happily said yes.

Toeing Capacity

During the summer, Taylor’s backyard of San Diego is a beehive of leisure as locals and tourists flock to the beaches and parks. Among the popular destinations is Balboa Park, home to a cluster of museums and a botanical garden, and a repository of San Diego’s rich historical and cultural heritage. It’s common to see artists busking along the park’s picturesque promenade. One local artist who invariably makes an impression is **Mark “Big Toe” Goffeney**, who was born without arms and plays guitar with his feet. Goffeney, whom we’ve written about before, has played a **314ce** for more than a decade, so when the guitar was recently stolen out of the trunk of his car a couple of days before an out-of-town gig, he was understandably crushed. When we learned about his plight, we helped him out with a replacement 314ce, and he was deeply appreciative when he dropped by the factory to pick it up.
www.markgoffeney.com

L.A. Story

A writer, photographer and videographer from the **Los Angeles Times** visited the Taylor complex in the early summer, and with the visit came an extensive piece on the company. As part of the paper’s series, “Made in California,” business writer Ron White spent the day with Bob and Kurt, learning about the company’s history and unique innovations that make Taylor an industry leader. The story, titled “Taylor Guitars has thrived by being different,” ran in

continued next page



Clockwise from top left:
The Goo Goo Dolls' John Rzeznik (photo by Steve Parr); Mark "Big Toe" Goffeney; The Silent Comedy (photo by Rebecca Joelson); "Hungry Boy" Tim Cresswell enjoys the view with his GS Mini; Cresswell makes some noise



early June and highlighted key turning points in the company's history, along with quotes from Taylor players **Jewel** and **Zac Brown**, who said, "I got my first Taylor when I was 14 – an **810** – and that was like the Holy Grail!" As of our press date, the article remained archived on the newspaper's website. www.latimes.com

Black Stallion

In the UK's **Guitar Buyer** magazine, a publication whose credo is "By Guitarists for Guitarists," editor-in-chief Alun Lower was anxious to find out if the T3/B was able to deliver an electrifying performance. Lower starts his review by noting the guitar's impressive construction. Eager to experience

the T3's range of tones, he played through the different pickup positions, observing that they "impress right from the off as we're treated to some really full and pristinely clear sounds with plenty of sparkly treble, but lovely mids coming from the sapele, and it's all backed up by superb bass response." After noodling for a bit, he finds the neck pickup to be "wonderfully warm without being woolly or muddy, and the middle position adds the right amount of brightness." Splitting the coils in the volume knob's pot leads him to assess that "the real star of the show here...is the tone control, which really opens up the sonic possibilities of this guitar."

Lower goes on to note that with the T3, "We never find ourselves struggling to get the sounds we want to achieve..." His bottom-line verdict: The T3/B is one heck of a guitar and for the right guitarist may well be the only electric they'll ever need." The magazine gave the guitar a 4.5 out of 5 rating, citing that the only drawback was that it was "too perfect." www.guitarbuymagazine.com

Balancing Act

Fans of Taylor signature artist **Doyle Dykes** rejoiced when the maple laminate **Doyle Deluxe (DDX)** was released, and the editors at **Acoustic Guitar** magazine were no exception. The magazine reviewed the guitar earlier this year and had plenty of compliments for its "well-balanced tone."

"Between its tight bass, throaty midrange, and crystalline treble, the DDX has an excellent tonal balance," observes Adam Perlmutter. "As it was clearly designed for fingerpicking, I first tried some basic Travis-picking patterns using open chords...when I dug into the strings I was impressed by the instrument's sonic clarity – everything sounded crisp and articulate."

Perlmutter goes on to say that the DDX is an affordable alternative to the Doyle Dykes Signature Model, is "easy to play, and its neck is very inviting. The guitar's well-balanced acoustic sound is suitable for both fingerpicking and strumming in a variety of idioms." www.acousticguitar.com

Taylor Ten-Spot

On August 15, **Acoustic Guitar** magazine announced the winners of its **2011 Player's Choice Awards (PCAs)**, a biennial vote cast by players and enthusiasts about their favorite guitars, gear and instructional products. Taylor Guitars was recognized with a record-breaking 10 awards. Below is the rundown:

Gold Medal

Small-Body Flattop (612ce)
Acoustic-Electric Guitar (714ce)
Travel Guitar (GS Mini)
12-String Guitar (GS6-12)
Nylon-String Guitar (NS72ce)

Silver Medal

Dreadnought (810ce)
Guitar of the Year (GS Mini)
Mid-Size Flattop Guitar (814ce)
Jumbo Guitar (455ce)

Bronze Medal

Electric Guitar (SolidBody Custom)



Choice Cuts with Shanks

It's a singer-songwriter showdown! Guitar Center, Taylor Guitars and other industry players, including Fender, Yamaha, Ernie Ball and Shure, have launched a songwriting contest to offer one artist a career-boosting opportunity: a three-song EP with Grammy-winning Producer of the Year **John Shanks**. The prize package includes studio time at Converse Rubber Tracks Studio in New York City, worldwide distribution through TuneCore, gear from the presenting sponsors, and \$10,000 cash. Taylor's contribution will be a **GS Mini** for 10 semi-finalists, and an **814ce** for the Grand Prize winner. The contest runs from October 1 through November 30, and artists can get the full details and enter the contest via www.guitarcenter.com/songwriter.

It's probably easy for Shanks to relate to what an opportunity like this could mean to an up-and-coming artist. In the late '80s he was a session and touring guitarist for **Melissa Etheridge**, when the opportunity to write, produce and publish came knocking. Now, instead of life on the road, he spends his time in the studio, writing and producing with the likes of **Kelly Clarkson** ("Breakaway"), **Bon Jovi**, **Michelle Branch** ("Everywhere"), **Keith Urban** ("Somebody Like You"), and **Stevie Nicks**, to pluck a few names from a sizeable roster of artist clients, which spans genres and decades.

While the creative juices are always flowing in the studio, Shanks says it's also easy to draw inspiration for a hit in everyday conversation. "Songwriting is the most bizarre thing," he shares. "Someone will say something to me and I'll walk away grinning because, when you really listen, it's amazing how many great titles come out of people."

Shanks says there's no strict method to his songcrafting approach, but that the writer and producer are always looking for three elements to align. "Once in awhile, you hear a hook, and it inspires you to try [to] match it with the music and mood. When all three match, you're on to something."

His results showcase a golden touch as a hitmaker: 60 million albums sold, 43 No. 1 singles, and 67 No. 1 albums. "John's records have become the sound of Top Forty Radio," music industry icon **Clive Davis** told *Rolling Stone*. "He's the father of that guitar-driven kind of pop sound."

Shanks knows his Taylors, too. He has a **914ce**, a **Baritone 8-String**, and an **855ce**, which was his main guitar during his years with Etheridge. A collector of vintage acoustics, Shanks tells us that picking up the Taylor can provide a source of inspiration and often be the perfect fit for a more modern, fresh sound. "It is the guitar you go to," he explains. "There are times when I'm working on a song, and I'll pick up the Taylor and be like, 'Oh, there it is.' It just fits in with the track and speaks a certain way. It's very focused, but not harsh, very comfortable to play, and responsive."

The talented writer and producer says that identifying the next headline act is no easy task, but rather one that's rooted in the intrinsic need to be musically inspired. For the Guitar Center contest,

it'll take a little more than flash and sizzle to impress this seasoned pro. "Every once in a while, there's an artist who gets up on stage, and you feel it in every bone in your body; you feel it in your heart. If I walk away [after] seeing a band thinking, yes, this makes me want to continue doing what I do, then that's what I look for. That's what inspires me; that's what moves me. Can we find it? Let's try." www.johnshanks.com www.guitarcenter.com/songwriter

Taylor Notes

0% Financing on Taylor Purchases Extended Through December 31

QUALITY
Taylor
GUITARS

EASY TO
PLAY

EASY TO
OWN

0% INTEREST
FOR 12 MONTHS
ON SELECT TAYLOR MODELS.

If paid in full within 12 months, minimum payments required. For a limited time only, on approved credit. Ask for details.

We're happy to announce that our GE Money Consumer Financing program has been extended through December 31, 2011. You can get 0% interest on select Taylor purchases (on approved credit) if they're paid in full within 12 months. Monthly payments are required, and some restrictions apply. Eligible Taylor models include:

- All 500 Series/Acoustic 5 Series and up, including Limited Editions
- T5 Standard and T5 Custom
- All T3 Models
- All SolidBody models

New Owner Resource Web Page

We recently finished retooling our Owner Resources page at Taylorguitars.com to showcase the level of support you receive as a Taylor owner. As a full-service company, we're with you every step of the way, whether you need help choosing the right model or keeping your guitar in tip-top condition. The page is a hub of helpful information, where you can register a guitar, learn about Taylor innovation and our commitment to the environment, access tips for changing strings and humidifying your guitar, and get the most out of your acoustic electronics. It's located at: www.taylorguitars.com/owners/resources

Seasonal Tips: Humidity Control

It's that time of the year again, when the change of seasons often leads to shifts in relative humidity (RH) in people's homes. As we regularly remind owners, managing humidity conditions is important for the health of their guitars. In the summer months, many of us run air conditioners; in the autumn and winter, we use heaters. Both scenarios can create dry conditions that can compromise a guitar's performance, and in some cases, lead to serious damage. The good news is that with proper monitoring and some simple-to-use tools, keeping your guitars healthy is not difficult.

First things first: All wooden instruments are affected by relative humidity conditions. The fact that guitars have finish on them may give some folks a false sense of security, but as Bob Taylor pointed out last issue in "Ask Bob," humidity is water in vapor form, and the finish on a guitar is not a vapor barrier. Here are a few tips to help you keep your guitar in optimal condition.

Keep your guitar in your case when you're not playing. It will offer some protection against dry conditions. Because it's such a small, confined space, it's fairly easy to manage the humidity level.

Use a digital hygrometer to monitor the humidity of the space where you keep your guitar. You can pick one up for about \$30. Don't get an analog/needle-style one; they're less accurate. It might even be good to get two – one to keep in the case and one to monitor the room where you play.

Your humidity target zone should be 45-55% RH. Solid-wood instruments are structurally and sonically at their best when they are kept at the same RH as the environment in which they are built. At the Taylor factory, we maintain an environment of 47%.

If you use a guitar humidifier, be sure to close your case when you take your guitar out to play. This will ensure that the humidity level in there is maintained.



Dry conditions can cause the wood on a guitar to shrink and eventually crack

Guitar Humidifier Options

There are several types of humidifiers available to guitar owners. We like the **Planet Waves Humidipak®** because it's effective and easy to use. The beauty is that the gel-filled packets are engineered to maintain 48% RH, meaning they give you two-way humidity control – they will either add or remove moisture from the air on their own. One point to remember: The Humidipak is great for maintaining humidity levels, but if you're starting with a dried-out guitar, you'll want to use a sponge-style humidifier or the gel-style Oasis® humidifier to replenish the guitar more effectively. You can purchase the Humidipak through TaylorWare.

Sponge-style humidifiers such as the **Planet Waves Acoustic Humidifier** or **Dampit** are also effective, although they require slightly more effort to maintain. The most important thing to remember, especially for the Dampit tube-style humidifier, is to make sure the sponge is completely wrung out and any excess water is wiped from the outside. This is a key point. Our Customer Service department received several guitars over the summer that needed repairs because the wood had warped due to sponges dripping inside guitars.

The **Oasis guitar humidifier** incorporates a leak-proof container that allows vapor transmission. Once it's filled with water, it interacts with super absorbent polymer crystals inside that together form a leak-proof gel. The Oasis has a larger capacity for holding water vapor than a sponge-style humidifier.

As vapor is released, the container begins to shrink, making it easier to see when it's empty.

For owners who have multiple guitars and like to display them, a **free-standing room humidifier** is an option worth considering. Depending on the model you choose, these come with an array of features. The better versions have a sensor for the humidity reading, which turns the unit on automatically when the RH level drops, although it's still good to have a hygrometer in the room on an opposing wall as a cross-reference. There are also models that can do the job without the auto feature, but they have to be maintained by the person using the device. You can pick one up at a department store like Sears or Target.

Room size needs to be taken into account when choosing a room humidifier. The capacity of the humidifier must be adequate for the number of cubic feet of air space in the room. A very small humidifier, for example, will not be able to maintain the correct RH level in a large room. You have the best chance of keeping your guitars in good condition if the humidifier's capacity exceeds the size of the room.

One other point on room humidifiers: They should never be placed underneath or too close to the guitars. Doing so can over-humidify the area immediately around the guitars. It's best to place the humidifier in a corner or central spot on the wall, away from where the instruments are hanging.

Owners who have an extensive instrument collection might consider a more sophisticated system. Nortec,

a leading manufacturer of commercial humidification systems, also makes a residential unit that works independently from an in-home heating/air conditioning system. Other options include April Aire, which works in conjunction with the heater.

Over-humidified Guitars

Although over-humidified guitars tend to be a less frequent occurrence than dry guitars, some climates that experience extended periods of high humidity, like Central America and certain areas in Asia and the Pacific, can cause a guitar to swell to a point where glue joints and binding separate, and finish lifts. Our Customer Service department has found bamboo charcoal and silica gel packs to be effective dehumidification tools. In fact, there are some silica gel products available that are compact and plug into the wall to be recharged. Room dehumidifiers can also be effective. Another tip is to periodically blow-dry the interior of your guitar case (after removing the guitar).

If you have any questions about humidity control, feel free to call our Customer Service department in North America at (800) 943-6782, or in Europe at +31 (0) 20 667 6030. Toll free numbers for Europe and contact information for other countries can be found at: www.taylorguitars.com/dealers/international/. You can also download Tech Sheets from the Taylor website (under Service & Support) that detail the symptoms of dry and wet guitars, and offer more instruction on using guitar humidifiers.



WHAT ARE YOU

Working On?

By Chalise Zolezzi

On any given day, the Taylor factory is abuzz with creative activity, as our production team works through the myriad of detailed processes that contribute to our guitar-making operation. With that in mind, we're pleased to launch a recurring feature to give you an inside view of our people and our processes. We'll be dropping in on the action throughout the factory and talking with employees about their work. As visitors see every day on our guided factory tours, our people are our most valued resource, and their dedication, enthusiasm and skill are an integral part of transforming raw materials into beautiful instruments.

Ronnie Loftin

Color Specialist
Finish
Department

What he's working on:
Hand-spraying
a sunburst



For all the precision tools used at Taylor, the application of color to a guitar remains a manual art form. Ronnie Loftin, a six-year Taylor veteran, takes great pride in his work. "Each guitar is a canvas that I feel personally connected

to," he shares. "When I see a Taylor on TV, I know there's a 50-50 chance that I've painted it."

Today's production schedule delivers 35 guitars into his care: 23 acoustic/electrics, 7 T5s, 5 SolidBody Double

Cutaways, and necks to match, all of which will take on a new hue through a process designed to ensure an immaculate finish.

Though Ronnie had no prior artistic training, he discovered a knack for spraying color when he was mentored by Taylor senior painter Martin De La Torre. Martin, Ronnie and Abel Suarez-Krauss comprise the team of finishers responsible for color treatments. Martin developed the refined technique of spraying the Taylor burst to create a "glow," or smooth gradient, and not just a "band" of color. "We want to make it the best-looking sunburst out there," Ronnie says.

After donning a thin jumpsuit, a hair cloth, gloves and a ventilation mask, Ronnie surveys the guitars before him and selects a 912ce whose top is destined to receive a tobacco sunburst. "We'll need about three to six ounces of paint, depending on the wood, and two colors: tobacco first, and then yellow to give it the glow," he explains. "Cherry sunbursts are probably the hardest – they take four colors to really create a burst effect. Dark cherry, regular cherry and a little bit of tobacco and yellow take it from dark to light in the middle."

After mixing paint and attaching the small canister to the paint gun, Ronnie inspects the guitar and spots a small issue: too much tape around the binding on the shoulder of the guitar. "If I were to paint over that," he explains, "there'd be a missing portion, and I'd have to start over tomorrow." With a razor blade and a delicate touch, he begins to remove the excess tape until the thin, black purfling is showing. Satisfied, he wipes the guitar with a soft cloth to remove any remaining dust particles.

With paint gun in hand, he works from the outside in, carefully spraying a fat but well-controlled mist along the outer perimeter on the top, and then passes again, this time gingerly rotating the guitar to inspect his work. He's checking for one of the most challenging details on a guitar: small, naturally occurring variations in the wood. "Grains, for instance, can have a knot, and while it's part of the wood, you don't want it to be that noticeable, so you have to compensate for that," he explains. He takes the guitar into the larger spray room for inspection. Satisfied with his work, he returns to his booth, this time to wipe down the guitar

for paint overspray and then to use an air gun to facilitate the drying process. He'll go over the outer perimeter again, and then into detail along the exterior, the most intensely hued area. Then he begins blending, inching in from the edge, leaving the center open for the golden color that will set off the tobacco burst effect. In total, he'll make a dozen-plus passes at the guitar top in nearly four minutes to make sure it's right. "It gets to the point where you can feel the paint hitting the guitar in your arm," he says.

Once the burst is finished, he'll spray a clear top coat to seal in the color. After about 16 hours the guitar will be dry and ready to be lightly sanded to reduce paint overspray. As a final step in the process, it will receive a final gloss coat of Taylor's proprietary UV-curable finish in the robotic/electrostatic spray booth, a job handled by another team member.

Ultimately, each guitar tells its own story, but for Ronnie, the common thread is a personal passion for perfection. "I'm doing the very best I can to help make a great guitar," he says.

Jorge Tobar

Production Supervisor

Laser Parts Department

What he's working on:
Inlaying the rosette for a cocobolo fall limited edition



Jorge Tobar is usually busy overseeing all aspects of the Laser Parts department, from the 200-watt laser mills that precisely cut Taylor's tops backs and sides, binding, truss rod covers and smaller inlay pieces, to the rosette room, where each Taylor soundhole is adorned with a decorative inlay. Depending on the day's production demands, Jorge may step in to lend a hand, which he's doing today, thanks to a detailed new rosette design that's part of this year's Fall LTDs (see page 12). The rosette incorporates laser-milled cutouts of cocobolo and boxwood. Jorge understands the limited availability of the boxwood, and he's quick to note the exacting standards that are required in the rosette room. "It's important to get it right the first time," he says as he inlays and then

studies the placement of a piece. "I want to make sure everything is perfect because if you go through a whole rosette and at the very end find a little detail that won't work, the top is no good."

For the 12-year veteran, the process of inlaying the rosette begins by selecting a set of component pieces, which are often secured together with the help of blue painter's tape. Jorge starts with a lattice ring of cocobolo, which will serve as a guide to fit each piece. Next, he unwraps the boxwood pieces and counts the 14 cream-colored parts, which he will inlay. He follows a similar process with the cocobolo pieces, fitting the largest pieces first, using his hands to press in the pieces and then the end of his cutters to secure them. "With so many little

pieces and gaps, we have to make sure everything gets filled or else the sanders will have to keep adding glue to keep filling the gaps," he says.

In total, Jorge will inlay 45 different pieces of cocobolo and boxwood to complete the rosette, some as thin as 1/29 inch, sealing the rosette in place using cyanoacrylate glue. After the glue sets, the excess will be removed.

While a typical rosette for a standard model takes on average five minutes to complete, a more detailed design like the Fall LTDs will take up to 15 minutes. Jorge says he enjoys the added challenge. "These are fun and different, and they take longer, which I like."

Nikki DeaMude

Assembler

Final Assembly

What she's working on:
Installing the Expression System®



Nikki DeaMude knows her way around the inside of a Taylor guitar so well she's confident that she can install our Expression System electronics with her eyes shut. The 10-year staffer estimates she's installed thousands of Taylor's acoustic pickups, along with plenty of T5 electronics. We caught up with her during the 10-minute process of adding an ES unit to a 416ce.

Her workstation consists of a foam-padded workbench complete with a mini amp, an assortment of tools, and boxes which house ES kits – organized, complete systems ready for installation. She'll start by inserting the battery box, whose housing cavity was milled earlier, and then running its wires along the bass side and clipping them in place. From there she'll install the motherboard, the interior

pre-amp component which sits below the external control knobs (the knobs are installed once the motherboard is positioned correctly). Reaching in through the soundhole, she'll position the two magnetic sensors. The Dynamic String Sensor™ is affixed beneath the fretboard extension; the Dynamic Body Sensor™ is properly located using a template that will key in on the precise spot in the lower bout. The template also includes a piece of magnetic film that helps her rotate the sensor into proper orientation (the sensor's magnetic field makes a visible pattern in the film) so the north-south polarity is aligned with the grain of the wood. Next, she'll test the Body Sensor by plugging into her desktop amp and tapping the top. As with each Taylor acoustic/electric and electric

guitar, Nikki will install the Fused String Ground, which protects players from being shocked due to improper electrical ground.

After double-checking the body sensor's orientation, Nikki taps on the top once again. "I'm making sure everything levels out with each other and that the pickups are positioned just right – not too high, not too low," she explains. "These are all things you have to make sure are right on the dot."

Once the installation is complete, she'll return the guitar to its slot on the large carrier crates that sit behind her station. "I probably do about 20 per day, but that mostly has to do with production," she says. "If I were doing a lot of the T5s, I'd have less to do as they take more time, but regular acoustics, 20, definitely."

Luis Lopez

Finisher

Finish Department

What he's working on:
Completing the buffing of a T5



For finisher Luis Lopez, six years at Taylor have rolled by seemingly as fast as the buffing wheel that whirls in front of him. Lopez will work on seven T5s today. Before the guitar makes it to his hands, it will have gone through a pair of robots – one that manipulates the guitar in a finish spray booth that uses electrostatic attraction to apply two coats of UV-curable finish, followed by sanding; and later to "Buffy," a precisely programmed robotic buffing arm that uses pressure, motion, and an abrasive buffing compound to polish the surface of the finish to a gloss.

"Buffy removes 99 percent of what needs to come off," Luis explains, "but we inspect them before they get to the wheels." He holds out a black T5. "This one has a few orbitals on it and needs to be buffed out." (Orbitals are tiny

circular scratches left from a previous step of sanding with a random-orbital pneumatic sander.)

Luis proceeds to buff the guitar, starting on the "18" buffing wheel – so named for the type of buffing compound used. After several minutes, he'll move onto the "16" wheel, which incorporates a finer compound to restore the guitar to an orbital-free, pristine sheen. From there, he'll walk the guitar over to the fluff wheel, which will complete the buffing cycle, bringing the finish to a lustrous state.

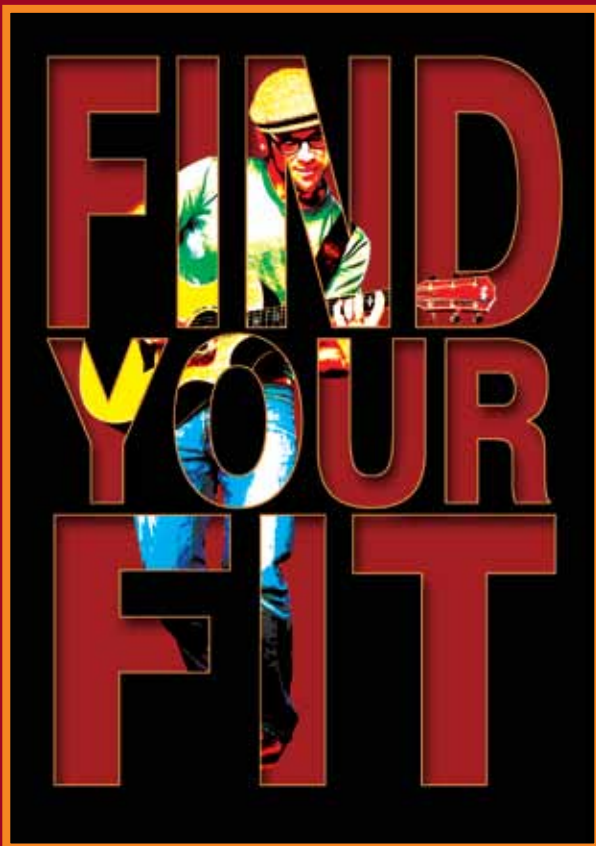
For each of the guitars on his schedule today, Luis will detail any necessary parts, which includes removing the tape that has covered and protected the binding of the guitar during the spraying of color. As he inspects the guitar, he is looking for color finish

flaws, including tiny specks of paint on the white binding of the f-holes. If necessary, he'll clean it with a double-edged razor blade.

With each guitar, Luis will spend approximately 8-10 minutes before each of the wheels, holding the guitar body's lower bout and neck-free top end and moving in an up-and-down motion on his toes to ensure that all angles of the guitar have been brought to glossy perfection. In total, he'll spend anywhere from 24 to 30 minutes manually buffing each guitar. "A lot of detail goes into making a guitar shine," he observes, "but everything will come out right." **W&S**

Fitting Frenzy

ALL ACROSS THE
COUNTRY, THIS SUMMER'S
FIND YOUR FIT EVENTS
GOT PERSONAL



Top right: Taylor sales rep Billy Gill demonstrates an ovangkol 400 Series guitar; **Bottom right (L-R):** Jeff Baumgart, manager of San Diego dealer Guitar Trader, with Becky Campbell and her "fit": a 12-Fret GC-LTD. Photos by Steve Parr

We must confess that when we cooked up our Find Your Fit events, we weren't entirely sure what kind of turnout we'd get. After all, we scheduled most of them in August, a historically slow month for music retailers, when many people are vacationing, or, as it turned out this year, when a hurricane decides to drop in for a surprise visit.

"Honestly, I thought if we sold a couple guitars I'd be happy," admits Rob Mock, owner of Melodee Music in Leesburg and Sterling, Virginia. Little did he know the few e-mail blasts to local customers would pack his store – or that Hurricane Irene would stir things up along the Eastern Seaboard and douse his region in heavy rains. "We were busy all day long. And everyone was worried about the hurricane. It was raining out, so it gave everyone an excuse to come inside, hang out and play guitars."

Mock, his staff, and Taylor sales rep Zach Arntz were on the go all day, working closely with attendees and putting different guitars in their hands to try. Arntz even made light of Irene, turning it into a faux sales pitch: "If you have a power outage at home, you're gonna want a good acoustic guitar," he reminded people. By the end of the day, 12 folks had been fitted with new Taylors.

Taylor's Aaron Dablow, whose sales territory covers the Gulf Coast, played guitar concierge during his week of FYF events, helping scores of customers, including Mike Helton, President of NASCAR, who picked up an NS62ce and a koa Build to Order model. A gentleman who was a devotee of another guitar brand discovered that his fit was a 516ce. Dablow even helped an employee at The Fret Shop in Huntsville, Alabama, who was looking for the right Taylor model.

"I told him that I had watched him play some guitars hours ago, and 'found' that he was probably into metal and would probably like a 614ce or 616ce because he needs all of those lead notes to be pronounced and out front, or the Baritone if he played detuned," Dablow recalls. "He was amazed, because the 614ce is the one he fell in love with." During a lull at another store, Dablow playfully showed off his ear for acoustic tone by successfully identifying a few models that he was handed to play while blindfolded, including a couple of customs.

Part of the beauty of the Find Your Fit events is that they pick up where the popular Taylor Road Shows leave off, allowing more focus on the individual.



After helping people understand the basic ingredients of acoustic guitar tone at Road Shows, the natural next step was to take things to a personal, one-on-one level in a way that was hard to pull off during the group "petting zoo" play time intermission at a Road Show. By talking with people individually and watching how they play, our sales reps were able to give them meaningful feedback that helped them understand their "player profile" and help them find the best tool to connect with their musical aspirations.

For Taylor owner Michael Frazier (710, 355ce, T5, 310ce), attending a Find Your Fit event led to "the find of a lifetime." Frazier was in search of fresh inspiration when he visited Gracewinds Music in Corvallis, Oregon, where he met Taylor sales rep Eric Sakimoto. Sakimoto and store sales associate Mike McLauren learned more about Frazier's personal playing style,

20 years ago when her house was broken into, and as a result, hadn't played much since. She was recently inspired to play again when her granddaughter began playing a Baby Taylor, but admits that at first, she was intimidated by the event.

"I was thinking, I'm certainly no pro," she explains. "I'm just going to see beautiful guitars." At the store, her opening line to Taylor sales rep Billy Gill was, "I'm vertically challenged and look at these fingers." As they talked, Gill gave her a few models to play. Eventually, a 12-Fret GC-LTD wound up in her hands.

"The guitar picked me," she says. "Everything 'fit.' It was comfortable in my lap, the action was right, and after having not played for years I was able to bar right away."

She later reflected on the overall experience.

"I am so grateful for the concept of



and walked him through a diagnostic exercise that led him to a surprise: a Baritone 6-String.

"As I began playing it, I discovered something very enlightening," Frazier shares. "I could sing along without pushing my vocal cords at all. It was so easy, full and clear, almost like my voice had lost 15 years. This guitar will totally change the way I write and sing."

At Guitar Trader in San Diego, it was love at first strum for Becky Campbell, who came with her husband John. Becky had lost her guitars over

'Finding Your Fit.' What a difference it makes to play a guitar that actually fits me, my playing style and my size. What joy!"

While the Find Your Fit events were designed to help players find the right guitar, they've also been a personally rewarding experience for our sales team, as Gill can attest.

"I got such sincere 'thank-yous' from so many players," he says. "The ability to connect different players with the information they need makes events like this really worth it."

Calendar

For the latest Taylor Road Show listings, visit taylorguitars.com/roadshow

A new season of award-winning Taylor Road Shows is officially underway, both in North America and Europe. Admission to the events is free, and each attendee will have a chance to enter to win a custom Taylor guitar. We'll also be presenting more Find Your Fit sales events, featuring personal, one-on-one consultations with one of our friendly factory experts to help you find the Taylor model that's right for you. If we make it to your area, we hope you'll join us!



San Rafael, CA

Mon., October 10, 6:30 p.m.
Bananas at Large
(415) 457-7600

Augusta, GA

Tue., October 11, 7 p.m.
Jay's Music
(706) 736-1250

San Jose, CA

Tue., October 11, 6 p.m.
Guitar Showcase
(408) 377-5864

St. Johns, Newfoundland

Tue., October 11, 7 p.m.
Long & McQuade
(709) 753-1885

Chattanooga, TN

Wed., October 12, 7 p.m.
Guitar Galleria
(800) 304-7111

San Luis Obispo, CA

Wed., October 12, 7 p.m.
Blue Note Guitars
(805) 541-6188

Clarenville, Newfoundland

Wed., October 12, 7 p.m.
A&P Music
(709) 466-3265

Cumming, GA

Thu., October 13, 7 p.m.
Music Authority
(770) 886-9066

Santa Barbara, CA

Thu., October 13, 7 p.m.
Instrumental Music
(805) 569-5055

Corner Brook, Newfoundland

Fri., October 14, 7 p.m.
Gary Bennett Music
(709) 639-9879

Conyers, GA

Fri., October 14, 7 p.m.
Firehouse Guitars Atlanta
(770) 483-9508

Stillwater, OK

Tue., October 25, 7 p.m.
Daddy O's Music
(405) 624-0333

Jacksonville, FL

Tue., October 25, 7 p.m.
Guitar Center
(904) 721-2307

Cedar Falls, Iowa

Wed., October 26, 7 p.m.
Bob's Guitars
(319) 277-8863

Littleton, NH

Wed., October 26, 7 p.m.
Northern Lights Music
(603) 444-7776

Flagstaff, AZ

Wed., October 26, 6 p.m.
Arizona Music Pro
(928) 556-9054

Fort Smith, AR

Wed., October 26, 7 p.m.
Sigler Music
(479) 783-1131

Winter Park, FL

Wed., October 26, 7 p.m.
Guitar Center
(407) 975-9119

Littleton, MA

Thu., October 27, 7 p.m.
The Minor Chord
(978) 486-0112

Tulsa, OK

Thu., October 27, 7 p.m.
Guitar House of Tulsa
(918) 835-6959

Clearwater, FL

Thu., October 27, 7 p.m.
Guitar Center
(727) 791-7464

San Pedro, CA

Tue., November 1, 7 p.m.
Alvas Music
(800) 403-3447

Toms River Twp., NJ

Tue., November 1, 7 p.m.
Toms River Music Store
(732) 240-5454

Brea, CA

Wed., November 2, 7 p.m.
Rockit Music
(714) 674-0640

Wheaton, MD

Wed., November 2, 6 p.m.
Washington Music Center
(301) 946-8808

San Diego, CA

Thu., November 3, 7 p.m.
Rick's Guitar Shop
(619) 276-4478

Frederick, MD

Thu., November 3, 7 p.m.
Make N Music
(301) 662-8822

Catonsville, MD

Fri., November 4, 7 p.m.
Appalachian Bluegrass Shoppe
(410) 744-1144

Corvallis, OR

Mon., November 7, 7 p.m.
Gracewinds Music
(541) 754-6098

Burlington, VT

Tue., November 8, 6:30 p.m.
Advance Music
(802) 863-8652

Sammamish, WA

Tue., November 8, 6:30 p.m.
Moore Brothers Music
(425) 836-2263

Clifton Park, NY

Wed., November 9, 7 p.m.
Parkway Music
(518) 383-0300

Seattle, WA

Wed., November 9, 7 p.m.
Dusty Strings
(206) 634-1662

Lexington, MA

Thu., November 10, 7 p.m.
The Music Emporium
(781) 860-0049

Portland, Oregon

Thu., November 10, 7 p.m.
Portland Music Company
(503) 228-8437

Buford, GA

Mon., November 14, 7 p.m.
Jackson's Music
(770) 904-2535

Nashville, TN

Mon., November 14, 7 p.m.
World Music Nashville
(615) 425-0256

Horseheads, NY

Mon., November 14, 7 p.m.
Robert M. Sides Family Music Ctr.
(607) 739-1559

Rockaway, NJ

Tue., November 15, 7 p.m.
Ritchie's Music Center
(973) 625-2500

Columbus, IN

Tue., November 15, 7 p.m.
Tom Pickett's Music Center
(812) 372-6700

Knoxville, TN

Tue., November 15, 6 p.m.
Pick N Grin
(865) 588-5361

Augusta, GA

Tue., November 15, 7 p.m.
Center Stage Music
(706) 860-8600

Corpus Christi, TX

Tue., November 15, 6 p.m.
Sound Vibrations
(361) 884-8981

Manalapan, NJ

Wed., November 16, 7 p.m.
Musicians Workshop
(732) 972-1118

Greenwood, IN

Wed., November 16, 7 p.m.
Guitarworks
800-233-9907

Asheville, NC

Wed., November 16, 7 p.m.
Musician's Workshop
(828) 252-1249

Atlanta, GA

Wed., November 16, 7 p.m.
Maple Street Guitars, Inc.
(401) 231-5214

San Antonio, TX

Wed., November 16, 7 p.m.
Alamo Music
(210) 525-1010

Lewes, DE

Thu., November 17, 7 p.m.
B&B Music & Sound
(302) 645-0601

Birmingham, MI

Thu., November 17, 7 p.m.
Detroit Guitar
(734) 276-4532

Rock Hill, SC

Thu., November 17, 7 p.m.
Woody's Music
(803) 324-9663

Alpharetta, GA

Thu., November 17, 7 p.m.
Ken Stanton Music
(770) 670-4424

Austin, TX

Thu., November 17, 7 p.m.
Strait Music
(512) 476-6927

Rochester, NY

Thu., November 17, 6:30 p.m.
The House of Guitars
(585) 544-3500

Traverse City, MI

Fri., November 18, 7 p.m.
Marshall Music Co.
(231) 922-9503

Houston, TX

Sat., November 19, 2 p.m.
Fuller's Vintage Guitar
(713) 880-2188

INTERNATIONAL



Saint Laurent Du Var, France

Tue., October 11, 6 p.m.
Music 3000
334 93 07 64 31

La Garde, France

Wed., October 12, 7 p.m.
Steel Music
334 94 21 18 46

Castelnau le Lez, France

Thu., October 13, 7 p.m.
Azema Musique
334 67 02 03 00

Nîmes, France

Fri., October 14, 7 p.m.
Broc N Roll
334 66 21 67 31

Berlin, Germany

Mon., November 7, 7 p.m.
Just Music
030 88775500

Hannover, Germany

Tue., November 8, 7 p.m.
PPC Music
0511 67998161

Wuppertal, Germany

Wed., November 9, 7 p.m.
Hardline Music
0202 4468800

Cologne, Germany

Thu., November 10, 7 p.m.
Music Store
0221 88841210

Nürnberg, Germany

Mon., November 14, 7 p.m.
BTM Guitars
0911 317741

München, Germany

Tue., November 15, 7 p.m.
Hieber Lindberg
089 55146184

Freilassing, Germany

Wed., November 16, 7 p.m.
Musikhaus Öllerer
08654 462831

Biberach, Germany

Thu., November 17, 7 p.m.
Musikhaus Hermann
07351 9789

Lyon, France

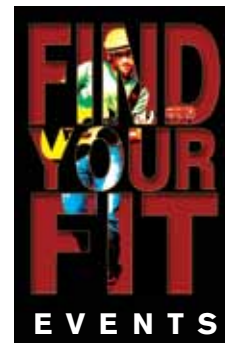
Tue., November 22, 8 p.m.
Ralph Musique
334 78 72 05 63

Morges, Switzerland

Wed., November 23, 7:30 p.m.
Boullard Musique
41 21 811 28 28

Annemasse, France

Thu., November 24, 6 p.m.
Decibel
334 50 95 00 36



Bogart, GA

Sat., October 15, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Musician's Warehouse
(706) 548-7233

Springfield, MO

Sat., October 22, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Springfield Music
(417) 881-1373

Sand Springs, OK

Sat., October 29, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Firey Music Co.
(918) 245-7730

Catonsville, Maryland

Sat., November 5, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Appalachian Bluegrass Shoppe
(410) 744-1144

Saratoga Springs, NY

Fri., November 11, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Saratoga Guitar
(518) 581-1604

Virginia Beach, VA

Sat., November 19, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Alpha Music
(757) 486-2001

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CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS

fall 2011

*Pat, our production manager,
keeps things running efficiently
throughout the factory.
He's wearing our new Half-Zip
Pullover by Tommy Bahama.*

shirts for every Taylor fan

New

Pictured left:

Taylor Half-Zip Pullover

100% yarn-dyed French rib cotton with embroidered Taylor logo, imported by Tommy Bahama. Warm and soft, with relaxed style. (Brown #2800; M-XL, \$96.00; XXL, \$98.00)

New A

A) Men's Logo T

100% pre-shrunk cotton. (Prairie Dust #1700; S-XL, \$20.00; XXL-XXXL, \$22.00)

B) Men's Long-Sleeve Logo T

100% pre-shrunk cotton, ribbed cuffs. (Black #2060; S-XL, \$25.00; XXL-XXXL, \$27.00)

C) Men's Long-Sleeve Zodiac T

100% combed cotton, ribbed cuffs. Zodiac rosette design. (Navy #2000; M-XL, \$28.00; XXL, \$30.00)

New B

D) Ladies' Long-Sleeve

Vintage Peghead T

Form-fitting 100% preshrunk cotton. Subtle stretch, delicate texture. Screen-printed Taylor peghead in pink. (Black #4600; S-XL, \$25.00)

E) Men's Vintage Peghead T

100% combed cotton. (Black #1480; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL-XXXL, \$26.00)

F) Taylor Sketch T

100% combed cotton. (Navy #1419; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL, \$26.00)

New C

G) Taylor Logo Stamp T

100% combed cotton. Logo stamp design with reverse silhouette guitar neck. (Silver #1200; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL, \$26.00)

H) Case Label T

100% cotton, fashion fit. Small guitar on front, large case label design on back. (Black #1000; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL, \$26.00)

New D



great gift ideas for the holidays



1) Men's Wallet. Genuine leather with embossed Taylor logo. Card slots, I.D. window and bill compartment. By Fossil. (Brown #71302, \$40.00) **2) Money Clip/Pickholders.** Two motifs: one with a built-in pick holder, the other with a teardrop-shaped tonewood embellishment. Titanium or "raindrop"-patterned mokume. For full details and pricing, see taylorguitars.com/taylorware **3) Suede Guitar Strap.** (Black #62001, Honey #62000, Chocolate #62003, \$35.00) **4) Web Guitar Strap.** (Black #65000, Brown #65010, Camouflage #65030, \$24.00) **5) iPhone Case (iPhone 4).** 100% silicone, shock absorbent, secure grip, no sliding. Full access without removing your phone. Screen-printed Taylor peghead outline on

back. (Case color/Peghead color: Black/White #72000, White/Black #72001, Blue/White #72002, Gray/Black #72003, Pink/Black #72004, Green/Black #72005, Red/Black #72006, \$12.00) **6) Digital Headstock Tuner.** Clip-on chromatic tuner, back-lit LCD display. (#80920, \$29.00) **7) Taylor Silver Dial Watch.** By Fossil. Stainless steel, Taylor-branded tin gift box included. (#71025, \$99.00) **8) Leather Guitar Strap.** (Burgundy #64000, Black #64010, Red #64020, Brown #64030, \$70.00) **9-10) Taylor Roadhouse Mug Set (2).** Diner style. 14 oz. natural glossy ceramic. Dishwasher/microwave safe. Front: "Guitars and Grub"; Back: Taylor logo. (Crème #70012; \$22.00)

11) Polishing Cloth. Ultra-soft microfiber with Taylor logo. (#80905, \$6.00) **12) Taylor Picks.** Marble or solid color. Ten picks per pack by gauge. Thin, medium or heavy. (\$5.00) **13) Elixir Strings.** Acoustic or electric sets. All Elixir sets available through TaylorWare feature Elixir's ultra-thin NANOWEB™ coating. Visit our website for complete offerings and pricing. **14) Taylor Coffee Mug.** Black with white logo, 13 oz. (#70009, \$10.00) **On desk, L-R: Taylor Pub Glasses.** 20-oz glass, set of four. (#70011, \$25.00); **TaylorWare Gift Card.** Visit our website for more information; **Guitar Lessons by Bob Taylor.** (Wiley Publishing, 2011, 230 pages; #75060, \$20.00)

new for Fall

New A



New B



A) Men's Appliqué T

100% cotton, fashion fit. Distressed-edge TG appliqué on front, Taylor Guitars label on side, small round logo on back. (Smoke #1250; M-XL, \$28.00; XXL, \$30.00)

B) Full Zip Hooded Sweatshirt, Cross Guitars

Unisex, regular fit eco-fleece with kangaroo front pocket. Enzyme-washed for a super soft feel. Taylor screen-print with crossed guitars and label on side. (Black #2812, Olive #2813; M-XL, \$48.00; XXL, \$50.00)

C) Tattered Patch Cap

Flex fit, two sizes. (Brown, S/M #00150, L/XL #00151, \$25.00)

D) Military Cap

Enzyme-washed 100% cotton chino twill, Velcro closure, one size. (Black #00400, Olive #00401, \$22.00)

E) Driver Cap

Classic style, wool blend, sweat band for added comfort. Taylor label on back. One size fits most. (Black #00125; \$25.00)

F) Taylor Guitar Beanie

Featuring Taylor name with a guitar emblazoned along the side. 100% acrylic. (Black #00116, \$16.00)

G) Trucker Cap

Organic cotton twill front with Taylor patch; mesh sides/back. Structured, mid-profile, six panel, precurved visor. Plastic tab adjust. (Black/Crème #00387, one size, \$25.00)

H) ES-Go™ Pickup

Exclusively for the GS Mini. (#84022, \$98.00)

I) Loaded Pickguards

Swappable pickup/pickguard unit for your SolidBody. For a complete list of ordering options, go to taylorguitars.com/taylorware. \$195.00 (Single HG Humbucker: \$148.00)

J) Travel Guitar Stand

Sapele, lightweight (less than 16 ounces) and ultra-portable. Small enough to fit in the pocket of a Baby Taylor gig bag. Accommodates all Taylor models. (#70198, \$59.00)

hats



C



D



New E



TAYLOR GUITARS
established 1974



F



G

accessories



H



I



J

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CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS

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Wood&Steel

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Volume 69 / Fall 2011

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Kind of Blue

Striking blue purfling and ebony binding highlight the svelte contours of this custom Grand Concert, which features a sinker redwood top, Macassar ebony back and sides, and an outlined mini wedge. Visually, the purfling calls out the vibrant blues of the paua rosette and the Gothic Vine fretboard inlay. Tonally, the guitar will have a darker voice, drawing from a wide palette of Macassar overtones, while the redwood top will yield the warmth of cedar, only with more headroom on the attack. The small GC body will keep the low end in check, balancing the rich overtones with crisp articulation.

