

American SONOWRITER

TOWNES
VAN ZANDT'S
LOST DEMOS

LINDA
RONSTADT
LOOKS BACK

MAREN
MORRIS

ADIA
VICTORIA

GARY
CLARK
JR.

ALL OR NOTHING

TAYLOR GUITARS

GRAND PACIFIC SERIES

BY CHRISTIAN SEAMAN

Last year, Taylor Guitars made news within the guitar community — yet again — with the introductions of two major innovations to Taylor as a company and the acoustic guitar as an instrument: the Builder's Edition series and V-Class bracing. This year, Taylor's most recent achievements press onward with an entirely new instrument: the Grand Pacific series.

To refresh, the Builder's Edition is the latest brainchild of Taylor Guitars' master builder Andy Powers. This top-tier series from Taylor is a satin-finished, sleekly contoured acoustic guitar with an organic, complex tone despite its understated look. It was the first Taylor line to feature the Powers-designed V-Class bracing system, whereby harmonics are balanced evenly throughout the guitar's dynamic range, solving the age-old design flaw of even balance of volume and sustain in an acoustic guitar plugging standard X-bracing.

The Builder's Edition Grand Pacific series features a round-shoulder dreadnought design. This series will replace their long-running Dreadnought series (models denoted in the last numeral "0") in the USA model line. However, the Academy A10 guitars will continue to be available. The look of the Grand Pacific series is vintage-inspired Taylor, an aesthetic not commonly seen with this popular manufacturer of acoustic guitars. The Grand Pacific series will initially be available in three model codes, ending in the numeral "7": 317, 517, and 717.

For review, Taylor provided *American Songwriter* with a 517 and 717 Grand Pacific guitar. Each guitar features a Torrefied Sitka Spruce top and is differentiated by its choice of back and side wood: Neo-Tropical Mahogany for the 517, and Indian rosewood for the 717. Each GP is factory set up with Elixir Nanoweb Phosphor Bronze

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medium gauge strings, and comes in a ravishing tooled leather Taylor case cut specifically for the Grand Pacific. Both guitars feature Taylor's Silent Satin finish, which was introduced on last year's Builder's Edition K14.

Upon first glance, the Grand Pacifics look amazing. Most players are familiar with a round shoulder dreadnought guitar, but this Taylor offering has an allure of So-Cal meets Nashville, with a stylistic approach fit for any player's musical background, and complementary to any fashion sense. Our 517 features Taylor's new Wild Honey Burst finish, while our 717 came with a satin natural-finished top. Each guitar features Taylor's Arrowhead inlay design, with variation by model. 517s receive grained ivory inlays, while 717s boast mother of pearl. In recognition of Taylor's continued efforts for properly harvesting and replanting ebony in the production line, Grand Pacific series guitars feature genuine ebony bridges and fingerboards, harvested at the Bob Taylor co-owned Crelicam ebony farm.

Each of these new Taylor guitars features a new neck profile, with a slightly thicker C-shape than the conventional Taylor neck. Personally, I can't say enough about how much of a joy this neck is to play. If you've strayed from Taylors out of

preference for a larger neck, this new profile fills that void for those planning to own an already brilliant sounding, reliable Taylor instrument.

Both the 517 and 717 have an amazing feel right out of the case. The neck is smooth and comfortable, with plenty of mass to fill the hand and keep the player from gripping too hard to strike a chord. These two instruments sound unique and professional, and are quickly and easily distinguished between. The mahogany back and side 517 has a warm low-end and compresses more quickly, while the 717 has much more attack and can attain a louder volume. As for electronics, Taylor's flagship ES-2 remains unchanged and is featured across the board on the series. True acoustic options are also available.

This is definitely one of the most exciting instruments Taylor has released to date. Some may consider the ways its design harkens back to a known instrument, but pick one up and you'll discover the Grand Pacific looks, feels, and sounds very much its own. After all, Taylor has already offered its own voice in jumbos and square shoulder dreadnought guitars. Songwriters will love either guitar for its comfortability, and complementary appearance on stage. In the studio, the Grand Pacific boasts big, bold chords and works well for fingerstylists, thanks in part to the balance of V-Class bracing. All in all, Taylor has released guitars for players of all ages and styles with fantastic playability and original vintage vibe in the Grand Pacific series. ★

