

SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

GUITAR WORLD



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A FAREWELL
TO THE KING



Sweet Dreams

TAYLOR AD17 BLACKTOP

By Chris Gill

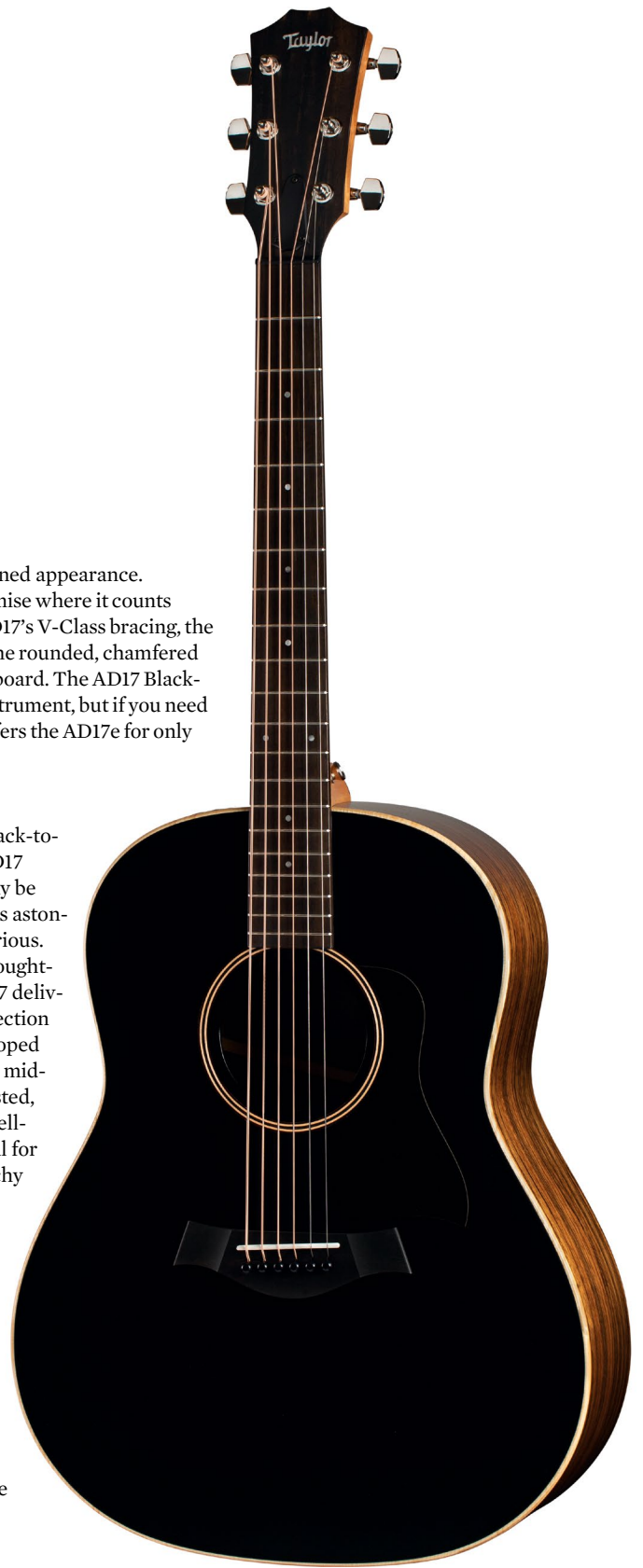
BAD TIMES CAN lead to great instruments. During the Great Depression, companies like Gibson and Martin built acoustic guitars with dedicated commitment to the highest-possible quality that extended to even the lowest-price entry level models, and today that period is considered the Golden Era for flattop acoustics. Taylor's statement that its new American Dream series is designed to "meet the needs of everyday musicians even in historically difficult times" certainly brings to mind that era's mentality, with a similar focus on keeping prices as affordable as possible while still delivering outstanding tone and comfortable playability. With its voluptuous rounded body shape, large soundhole and blacktop finish, the Taylor AD17 Blacktop evokes a certain Golden Era aesthetic that's reminiscent of Gibson's flattop L models from the early Thirties (albeit in a larger format), but it's a genuinely modern acoustic with simple yet highly attractive style.

FEATURES Built entirely in the USA from all-solid materials that include a Sitka spruce top, ovankol back and sides and tropical mahogany neck, the Taylor AD17 features a full-size Grand Pacific round-shoulder dreadnought body shape that measures 16 inches across the lower bout and 4-5/8 inches deep. The neck has a 25-1/2 inch scale, 1-3/4 inch nut width and 20 vintage-style narrow width/medium height frets. What may look like binding is actually the natural spruce of the top, as well as black top purfling, and in lieu of ebony, Taylor employs Eucalyptus (which looks very similar to rosewood) for the fretboard and headstock overlay, and Italian acrylic 4mm dot inlays and peghead logo, all of which keep costs

low while providing a refined appearance.

Taylor did not compromise where it counts most, as evinced by the AD17's V-Class bracing, the thinly applied finish and the rounded, chamfered edges of the body and fretboard. The AD17 Blacktop is a purely acoustic instrument, but if you need a pickup system Taylor offers the AD17e for only \$200 more.

PERFORMANCE The back-to-basics simplicity of the AD17 Blacktop's appearance may be minimalistic, but its tone is astonishingly upscale and luxurious. Befitting its large, dreadnought-style dimensions, the AD17 delivers powerful volume projection but, unlike the typical scooped mids of a dreadnought, its mid-range is impressively boosted, providing a rich, sweet, well-balanced voice that is ideal for fingerstyle as well as punchy rhythm playing. The resonance and sustain is also impressive, with decay that retains body and blends seamlessly with the percussive blast of the initial pick attack. Playability is simply superb, with the neck providing a smooth slinky feel that lives up to the "dream" designation of the series name.



CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE:

\$1,499

MANUFACTURER:

Taylor,
taylorguitars.com

- The Grand Pacific round-shoulder dreadnought body with V-Class bracing provides an ideal balance of volume, projection and well-balanced tone.

- All-solid materials consist of a Sitka spruce top, ovankol back and sides and tropical mahogany neck.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Taylor may have cut the frills but they didn't cut any corners when it comes to delivering outstanding tone and playability with the AD17 Blacktop, thanks to a dedicated commitment to quality.