

Wood & Steel

The **EBONY** *Project*

A bold plan to preserve ebony's future takes root in Cameroon

NEW V-CLASS GUITARS
500 – 800 DLX Series

**V-CLASS REVIEWS
& TEST-DRIVING TIPS**

Jade Bird

Cary Morin



Letters

Drop us a line.

Email us: pr@taylorguitars.com



Taylor guitars, but one of my favorites is the Holden Village GS Mini. Just to own such a gorgeous, great-sounding instrument with another unique story is well worth the investment. Thank you all for your continued work not only in the creation of new instruments, but in actually caring and sharing ways that help us to understand how we can help make these limited resources last for future generations.

David G

Guitar Therapy

About seven years ago, I got to the point in my career whereby I could buy my “dream guitar,” a Taylor custom koa K24. It was love at first sight and love at first sound. I’m not good, but I loved to play it. Later on, I had to make my way through recovery from a skydiving accident that resulted in my arm being torn apart and torn off. Twenty-six surgeries later, I kinda have an arm.

I look back at my recovery (the past four years) and now understand how important that guitar was/is in my recovery...not just physically, but emotionally too. I wasn’t ever really good (now I have an excuse), but I am here – I made it to the helicopter, in which I died but was brought back – I have an arm, and I can play, and for that I’ll be eternally grateful.

My love for that Taylor koa sound and the beautiful guitars you guys make played a role in my recovery. There’s sometimes more to what you guys make than meets the ear.

Tom Honn
Chicago

Ebony for the Future

I want to say how impressed I am with the Ebony Project [taylorguitars.com/ebonyproject] and all that Taylor Guitars is doing. I work for a California utility that has won awards for forest management and have seen how difficult it is to manage a forest and programs related to forestry. I have only watched a few Ebony Project videos, but I am already touched by the efforts all those at Taylor are doing to provide an impeccable instrument with sustainability in mind. I look forward to reading the details and watching all the videos and learning more about just one of the important hardwoods that are used for musical instruments. Your efforts make me a proud owner of several

coil to humbucker sounds, and augmented by the depth of the sound, I was hooked. I started playing it more regularly than my other guitars. I noticed that the T3 is available with a Bigsby vibrato tailpiece, and consulted the crew at The Repair Zone (also in San Diego). Fred, the owner, said that the Bigsby unit could be installed with some internal bracing. Now I have a T5z with a Bigsby that provides me with endless hours of enjoyable playing!

Ken Westbrook

The “It” Factor

I’ve been playing guitar for close to 40 years, primarily electric, and because of that I have settled for budget-level acoustics for my unplugged needs. Lately I’ve been getting more interested in acoustic playing (it must go along with getting older) and listed several guitars for sale to make room for one good acoustic guitar.

I didn’t even go into Alto Music in Middletown, New York, that day to buy a guitar, but I found myself wandering into the acoustic room, where Garth showed me several nice guitars in my intended price range. All of them were fine guitars, but they didn’t have “it,” so he suggested I try a couple Taylors.

Now, most Taylors are not even remotely in my price range, but I was curious, as I had never played one before. Garth gave me a 326ce and a 414ce to try. Both were spectacular instruments but still did not move me to consider breaking my budget. Then he handed me a Spring 2017 Limited Edition 314ce, the one with the spruce top and blackwood sides and back. I strummed a simple E chord to check the tuning, and suddenly it happened... lights were shining, angels were singing, and lions lay down with lambs.

It is not often that a guitar will speak to someone like that, and I had never experienced it myself until that moment. I knew it was way beyond my budget, but I also knew there was no way I was going to walk out without it, and, thanks to 12 months of interest-free financing, I didn’t have to.

Since then, not a day goes by that I don’t take that guitar out of its case and experience that same glorious feeling of being 100 percent connected to an instrument. I don’t know if Andy Powers was aware that he created an instrument that could have that effect on a player, but he did, and I thank him

and the people that built it for doing so. Thanks also to Bob and Kurt for providing them an atmosphere in which they could be that creative.

David Jellema
Montgomery, NY

That Rosewood Sparkle

I am so impressed with my new 414ce-R. Spruce/rosewood has always been my favorite wood combination, and this guitar embodies everything I love about the pairing of these two woods. To describe the sound I hear and feel, I would have to say the notes just sparkle when I am fingerpicking. The overtones are truly unbelievable. I feel so lucky and fortunate to have found this guitar.

Arnold Vasquez

Heirloom in the Making

In over 50 years of playing the guitar, I have never bought one without trying it first. However, when I read the philosophy behind the new Academy [Series], I was struck by how well it fit with my ideas on fitness for purpose. Back then (July 2017), only the steel-string models were available in the UK. I tested one for style, but the model I really wanted was the 12e-N to allow amplification without my having to strike the strings any harder.

Based on the reviews, I placed an order for one – untested. In October the 12e-N arrived, and I love it. You can play music on almost any guitar, but on this guitar I can *make* music. As I forget the tunes of my youth, I can extemporize and invent new sound patterns on this guitar, to be forgotten almost immediately, but re-invented the next time I pick it up. The sound balance across the strings and through the length of the fingerboard is superb, allowing me to waltz up and down the strings wherever my fingers take me. Even the “wrong notes” sound good as links between passages of invention. Paired with a simple amplifier, the sound is amazing and still true to the original guitar. My guitar-playing son has long said that the only guitar he wants to inherit is my old Kimbara classical (1969), but I think that he will be after this one now.

Chris Willoughby
Eye, Suffolk, UK

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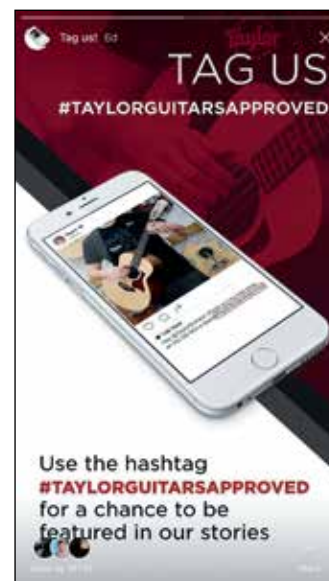
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Contents

WOOD & STEEL | VOLUME 91 | SUMMER 2018



On the Cover **20**

Investing in Ebony's Future

More than six years into our efforts to improve the ebony trade in Cameroon, we've transformed an ebony mill, we're learning about ebony ecology, and we're planting trees. Plus: A preview of our new Crelicam ebony guitar slides.

COVER PHOTO: CHRIS SORENSON

Features

6 From Skeptic to Believer

Shawn Persinger already loves his Taylors, so he doubted our V-Class bracing would move the needle. Here's what he discovered.

8 How to Hit the Road

Well-traveled Canadian troubadour Melanie Dekker shares tips on planning a tour as an independent artist.

12 A Class of Their Own

Our V-Class guitars have made a fantastic first impression. We bring you a roundup of reactions from dealers, customers, the media and more, along with test-driving tips.

16 New V-Class Guitars

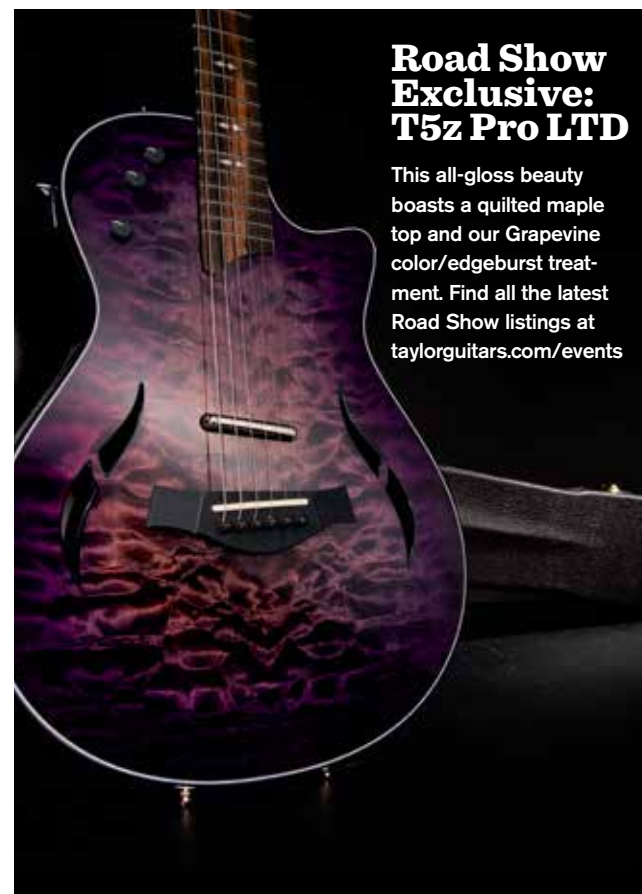
Our breakthrough bracing system spreads to Grand Auditorium models from the 800 Deluxe through 500 Series.

26 Emerging Artist: Jade Bird

Passionate, poised and polished, the young British songstress has a knack for lyrical narratives and defying expectations.

28 Backstage Pass: Cary Morin

The self-styled fingerpicker explains his folk and blues-infused Native Americana sound, and why his T5 and Open D tuning are staples of his craft.



Road Show Exclusive: T5z Pro LTD

This all-gloss beauty boasts a quilted maple top and our Grapevine color/edgeburst treatment. Find all the latest Road Show listings at taylorguitars.com/events

Columns

4 Kurt's Corner

Marching to the beat of our own drum – or strum – is key to our ongoing evolution as a guitar company.

5 BobSpeak

If your truck breaks down in Cameroon, Taylor's ace fabricator, Wayne Brinkley, is definitely the guy to call, as Bob details in a photo essay.

32 The Craft

The more we appreciate the unique musical nuances of guitars, the harder it is to pick a single favorite.

Departments

10 Ask Bob

V-Class variations, ears vs. electronics, and ebony accessories.

18 Sustainability

Scott Paul explains why forest restoration and reforestation are becoming major themes within international forest policy circles, and how Taylor fits into the conversation.

30 Soundings

Mimi Fox, Snuffy Walden, Builder's Edition wins a MIPA, BMI's "First No. 1" guitar, Taylor's From the Factory podcast, and NAMM Show performance highlights.

33 TaylorWare

New Taylor apparel, plus guitar accessories and more.

34 The Taylor Line By Series

A quick guide to our tonewoods and model offerings.



Kurt’s Corner

Forging Our Own Path

What I love about our company is that we’re unique in what we do. We design our own guitars; we don’t make copies or versions of other people’s designs. We design and fabricate our own tooling in order to efficiently make high-quality guitars. Much of our manufacturing technology, including the finish we use, has been internally developed. And we’ve now created a proprietary bracing design, which further differentiates our guitars from other brands.

When faced with selling a guitar no one had heard of, we created our own brand, and developed our own unique culture and methodology of selling them. Starting as young men with little money, and wanting to remain an independent company, we developed a financial model that enabled us to self-finance our growth rather than need outside investment. We’ve always been unique in what we do, and marched to the beat of our own drum.

We enjoy all aspects of our work. We’re not seeking to subcontract parts of the job we don’t like doing. We want to become professional at doing every aspect of the business. As you’ve read, that now extends to forestry, international distribution, cross-border manufacturing, retail merchandising and inventory management, tooling design and fabrication, online training, event planning, as well as human resource management across diverse cultures.

We don’t view the company as a brand, although it has a brand. That would be much too limiting of a view.

We’re a company that designs and makes musical instruments, and we embrace everything that falls under our zone of responsibility, which continually broadens as the company expands. We don’t view the company as a brand, although it has a brand. That would be much too limiting of a view.

We’re committed to designing and building our own guitars. That’s our founding purpose. Occasionally there are opportunities to acquire other guitar companies, or guitar brands and designs, but this holds little interest for us. If our purpose were mainly to grow, make and sell more guitars, and make more money, it would be a different story. But our main purpose is to design and build our own guitars, and inspire more people to make music.

I’m particularly proud of the work Andy Powers is doing to advance the design of our guitars, and the guitar in general. The introduction of his V-Class bracing is a huge step into our guitar-making future, and a major advancement for guitar design overall. It’s been three months since we introduced our patented V-Class bracing to the world,

and the reviews have been uniformly spectacular: “...a genuine innovation in the history of acoustic guitars”; “...it may be one of the best sounding guitars you’ve ever played”; “...a bold step in the evolution of the acoustic guitar”; “...the impact of V-Class bracing on an acoustic guitar’s tone is astonishing.”

One of the strengths of V-Class bracing is that, as a new “sonic engine,” it will provide the foundation for many different types and styles of guitar to come, and voicings for many different genres of music. It’s a new beginning, a new starting point for guitar design. It will lead to a new generation of instruments, and hopefully inspire new music and impact the world in a positive way.

We’re having a very productive and rewarding year, and enjoying our work more than ever. If your travels bring you to San Diego this summer, we hope you consider including a factory visit in your plans.

– Kurt Listug, CEO

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BobSpeak

2018 Taylor Factory Tours & Vacation Dates

A free, guided tour of the factory is given every Monday through Friday at 1 p.m. (excluding holidays). No advance reservations are necessary. Simply check in at the reception desk in our Visitor Center, located in the lobby of our main building, before 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 its 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.

We look forward to seeing you!

Factory Closures

Monday, July 2 - Friday, July 6
(Independence Day/Company Vacation)

November 22-23
(Thanksgiving Holiday)

Monday, September 3
(Labor Day)

Monday, December 24 through Friday, January 4
(Company Vacation)

Monday, October 15
(Taylor Guitars Anniversary)

Wayne's World

We talk about craftsmanship in *Wood&Steel* with every issue, and of course that's almost always related to guitars. But this issue I'd like to show you craftsmanship from another angle. As you know, I've been telling stories of Cameroon for six years, and we have an incredible eight-chapter multimedia story on our website now, giving you a good look at this project, which we work so hard at each day, alongside our partners at Madinter.

Over the years we've systematically improved the factory there, and part of that process is to move resources there to be able to do everything ourselves, from constructing our own buildings to fixing our cars, trucks and machines. We've recently set up a very nice fabrication shop with most of the metalworking tools we need to get ourselves out of a difficult spot. This is the story of a Unimog truck returning from the forest with a crushed exhaust system, our own Wayne Brinkley, and his weekend project to get the truck repaired while in Cameroon in April. He used the tools at hand and his incredible skills to make a repair that most people would never attempt. Remember, we cannot buy these parts in Cameroon – they're often weeks away, so we repair things as a daily routine.

Enjoy this photo essay of a great craftsman doing surgery far from the luxuries of home.



1. The Unimog arrives with the muffler and exhaust pipe completely crushed. How it ran in order to make it back to the factory is a mystery!

2. Exhaust pipe ruined.

3. Muffler cut apart with our portable plasma cutter and then hand tools used to bend and straighten parts.

4. Muffler straightened and stitched back together. Exhaust components are very hard to weld, but Wayne makes a skillful job of it.

5. A new sheet metal cover is rolled and welded to complete the muffler, all in our shop there at Crelicam, from tools and materials we now have.

6. Wayne tackles the pipe repair by splitting, hammering and forming the pieces to shape.

7. Pipe repair completed.

8. Exhaust system reinstalled. The truck runs perfectly and is ready for another tour to the forest to collect ebony.

FROM SKEPTIC TO BELIEVER

Already happy with his other Taylor guitars, Shawn Persinger wondered whether our V-Class bracing could raise the bar in a compelling way. Here's what he discovered.

By Shawn Persinger

If you've read my other articles in *Wood&Steel* over the years, I know what that title has you thinking: "You were skeptical of Taylor Guitars? Don't you own several Taylor guitars? Aren't they the only acoustic guitars you play?" And the answer is "yes" to all of the above. But I'd like to think one of the reasons Taylor has kept me on for so many years is the fact that I'm not a "yes-man." In fact, the first thing I thought when I heard that Taylor had created a new internal guitar architecture that would add more sustain and volume to an acoustic guitar, as well as intonate the fretboard better, was, "So?" The Taylor guitars I own are plenty loud. Limited sustain is something all acoustic guitarists have had to deal with, and I've figured out ways to compensate – both technically and musically. And though none of my guitars is perfectly intonated up and down the neck, it's never been such an issue that I couldn't still play in tune. So what's the big deal about these V-braced guitars?

And then I played one. And I played it a lot. I had to, because initially my skepticism continued. My first issue was that something highly unusual happened when I first played the instrument – it fed back! I'm not exaggerating. Between the claim of more volume and increased sustain, another odd thing happens with this new bracing: the notes sustain and swell – "blossom" is perhaps a better word.





how to hit the ROAD

Ed. Note: *We have great respect for the touring troubadours of the world. We know that behind the romanticized notions of life on the road – immortalized in countless songs over the years – are the logistics of planning it all, especially if you're an independent artist or band taking a DIY approach. Canadian touring and recording artist Melanie Dekker (910ce) knows what it takes, and frequently finds herself demystifying the experience for aspiring musicians looking to venture beyond their local musical stomping grounds. She took time before leaving for a spring/summer tour across Germany, Austria and Denmark to share some tips on organizing a successful tour.*

A TOURING MUSICIAN'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

By Melanie Dekker

I'm a performing singer-songwriter from the town of Deep Cove in North Vancouver, British Columbia. I am on tour 100 dates per year, I've logged tens of thousands of miles around the world, and have made a living doing that for the past 15 years. To keep that engine going I've had to become tour-smart. I've worked as an agent, a manager, a promoter, a tour manager, a blogger, a sound engineer, a distributor, a logistics specialist, a travel agent, a saleswoman, a tour bus driver, a quasi web designer, a producer, a singer, a multi-instrumentalist, a street team leader, and a bandleader. I've played in front of three people and 30,000 people. And it all started, seriously, around the time I got my Taylor 910ce. Here are some questions I'm often asked.

I'm a performing musician with 25 good songs and I want to tour. Where do I start?

I started playing anywhere and everywhere. I found great audiences and opportunities at charity events and other special events. Performing for people doesn't come together if you stay indoors, write songs, and just stare at the rain. Be social and nail your craft. Look at tours by bands that are similar to you and yours. Make a list of places and cities where you'd like to play. Start by asking friends and Facebook friends who like you and live in places where you could do a show. Connect with musicians in parts of the world where you want to travel. If your music is suitable for house concerts, start to offer them. Keep lists and Excel spreadsheets. Get good at Google Maps, because five-hour drives can become seven-hour drives when cities and traffic are involved. If you have a band, find out how long everyone can be away from home. Decide how long your show is going to be. (If you're doing concerts for fewer than 100 people who paid to get in, two 45-minute sets seems to be standard with acoustic music.)

How far ahead do I/we need to plan?

At least one year. Most venues book their plans and calendar ahead by 6-12 months. Don't be discouraged by this. Get excited; it comes up fast!

What do I look for in a suitable venue, and where do I find them?

I like my fans to be able to have the option to sit, and I like them as close to the stage as possible. Which scene and scenarios are best for your fans? Ask yourself what you would like if you were the fan, and which environments are ideal. The best way to find your "close-to-ideal" space to perform will be to refer to the touring hotspots of other bands that are similar to what you do. Look up reviews and photos of the venues online. It's easier to sell yourself to a venue if you can think and even say, "We are perfect for each other."

How do I sell the music/idea/project/band to the venue?

For me, sending an email with links to live, well-lit, good-sounding YouTube clips is the best. Also, include a short bio and introduction that shares your influences, any accolades, and the vibe of the show. Promoters and venues get hundreds of requests a week, so be sure the subject line of your email is clear and enticing. Follow up with a phone call, as you're more likely to get a booking that way.

Will I make money touring? What are the expenses to consider?

You can make money without sleeping in vans and looking for late night fast food every night, but it doesn't hurt to do that once in a while. Your biggest expenses will be travel costs and accommodation. If you have bandmates, can they share the expenses? Also, how many in your band give you the sound you want? Days off on the road are less relaxing when you have four bandmates costing the bandleader four hotel rooms (been there, done that, and still do, as days off are essential for mental sanity and voice care, but keep them to a minimum, and don't let the cost be a surprise or a downer). There are great websites like Google Maps, gas calculators, Airbnb and Travelocity that will help you get closer than an educated guess to what's coming out of your pocket before you even hit the road.

Solo or with a band?

My style of music focuses on the songwriter, so I can tour in various formats. One of my deciding factors when it comes to the number of bandmates:

I can't drive 8,000 kilometers (nearly 5,000 miles) in six weeks alone, so I usually have at least one fan/friend or bandmate to help share that load. Some venues won't hire a solo act, and some don't want drums. You have to do what you do, and then hunt for the venues that suit that. Ask yourself how each band member can *add* to the experience. Yes, the math of adding one more body can look painful, but weigh the pros and cons. Once you tour more, you will adjust your Who, What, Where, When and Why. Try to do as much of that as you can – Who, What, Where, When, Why...and How?! Since I'm Canadian, I look into touring grants here: Factor, Canada Council, Canada Council for the Arts, Music BC, Creative BC, Ontario Arts Council, etc.

How do I travel and map it out?

These sites are awesome: Rome2rio.com, Closestairport.com, gas calculator sites, Travelocity, Autoeurope, Google Maps.

What does a contract look like?

The level of organization you handle beforehand will dictate the quality of the tour. Venues feel at ease with organized situations, especially with "risky" newcomers! I arrange contracts so that all the details are on one page. It simplifies the "you said, I said," and provides a compact review of any back-and-forth you've had. If you're playing overseas, this is more like a gentleman's handshake than an "I'm gonna sue you if this doesn't go as planned" arrangement. Many of my contracts for longer tours are not signed or returned, but I do ask for confirmation that they have been received and ask if all is OK or request information on missing details. Some venues have contracts of their own. Appreciate them. They save you time, and you can learn from them. My contracts generally include: date, venue, contact name, address of venue, name of band, start time, length of set time, arrival time/soundcheck time, meal arrangements (if made), hotel arrangements (where, if made), parking suggestions (if discussed), number and size of posters and when they will arrive, tech rider reminder, websites of both venue and artist, contact numbers and email addresses for both (try to have more than one on both sides), and my own business address and signature. So, can you do a tour without contracts? I don't know, I have never tried, as once on tour I kind of leave my head behind.

How do I protect my guitar?

I love my 910ce and I travel with a hard case whenever possible. I have seen

friends of mine stunned to discover crushed guitars and broken necks. If you are flying, kindness with all those you encounter is the best approach. Good news! Airlines are more understanding of your precious cargo than they used to be. Know the rules – you should be able to carry on your guitar if it will fit in a compartment and there is space available on the plane when you board. Otherwise, ask if you can gate-check it, and if so, be sure to remember it after you get dozy and disoriented from a long trip! Also, bring more strings and batteries than you think you'll need.

How do I get fans and people to my show?

Call them, email them, ask them how many friends they can bring. If it's your first tour, try to do it personally. After a little pre-buzz about your show, it's good to start touring with banners for local, day-of-show PR (make them big and light and remember to pack them up at the end of the night). A few PR tips: Get posters made and send them out two months before the show. Consider Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Bandsintown, etc. Ask yourself, where do your fans hang out and what do they do? This will help you fine-tune the approach and promotional tools you choose.

What about merchandise?

Know your audience, and learn from those who are already your fans (e.g., Do they buy CDs?). Shipping is expensive, and if you're touring internationally, products can be on hold in customs for weeks. You can have your merchandise spread in your bandmates' luggage or have it made in the country you start in. I have toured with CDs, LPs, T-shirts, guitar picks, stickers, sweatbands, download cards, posters, toques and hacky sacks. Not all of them on each tour have been a success. At the end of some tours you may feel like throwing your merchandise out the door because it all takes time, space and TLC every step of the way. By the way, keep it all well lit and close to the exit at the venue!

How do I start working overseas, and do I need work permits or visas?

I wanted to "get out of town" and liked the goal of hitting the road. Ski resorts were my go-to, and people dancing in ski boots kept asking me when I was coming to visit *them*! I was signing butts in Banff (true story) and sleeping above the bar, and I wondered if I could see more of the world that way (LOL). I started playing in Irish pubs, as most welcome a variety of live music and the owners could speak English. Plus, they are everywhere in the world. As for



visas and borders, some places require permits. Yes, the border control can say, "Sorry, we are denying you access to _____ today," and you will go home with your tail between your legs. These types of laws change, so find the information online. Google. If you're a member of the musicians' union, they can also help. Once you hit the road, be open and upfront with authorities wherever you go: "This is what I do, this is where I am going, this is how long I'll be doing it"

Any safety tips for women artists?

Pay attention, know where you are, know where you're going, don't drink (it gets too hard to stay sharp), and never reveal to the public where you are staying.

Do I need a soundman, and what kind of gear do we bring along?

It's best to play in places that have a PA in place. Send your booked shows a tech rider that lays out how many

mic stands, cables, etc. you need (that said, bring your own essential cables). You will end up sending that rider more than once (they get lost). Create a link in cyberspace that all the venues can access (include your tech rider, three high-quality photos, music, music links, etc.). As for other essentials, books, clothes and shoes should be kept to a minimum. Drink a lot of water while you are traveling; in my opinion a must-have is your own water bottle. Other must-haves for me are: a gear list (your serial numbers and gear all in one document), running shoes, Fisherman's Friend lozenges, ginger (general health benefits and voice clarity), and adequate sleep, including 20-minute power naps (NASA-approved). **W&S**

Ask Bob

V-Class variations, ears vs. electronics, and ebony accessories

I have a left-handed 614ce and a 214. I have some questions about the new V-Class bracing system. It looks neutrally braced and doesn't need to be changed from right to left like X bracing. Is this correct, and is this bracing system going to be offered in your entire product line in the future? Will the new bracing system be strong enough for 12-string, 9-string, and 8-string acoustics? Will there be too much vibration for woods like cedar? My thought there is you'd be out-driving your headlights, so to speak, with the softer wood. I'm sure in the future I will be purchasing a V-Class guitar, but I'm wondering if this style of bracing will be better suited to stiffer woods. There are many other questions [along those lines], such as if stiffer, thinner woods are better with the V-Class bracing, and will we see other wood types for acoustic guitar tops with the new bracing, like maple or walnut? I love the fact you continually push the envelope with new technology.

Byron G
Alberta, Canada

Wow, that's a lot of questions, Byron! But I know you're not alone in your curiosity. The V-Class is a concept in bracing, just like the X is a concept. It can be altered, stiffened, softened and customized. It can work on soft wood or stiff wood, on mahogany, koa, spruce or cedar. Just like an X-braced guitar has many variations depending on the result you're going for, V-Class is equally adaptable. The concept behind V-Class bracing is that it causes the top to rock side-to-side to create volume, while limiting the rocking end-to-end to produce sustain. This is more like the way a violin, mandolin or archtop guitar functions, and it works very well. Basically, it is symmetrical, so a left-handed guitar would not have to be braced left-handed. But again, it's a concept, and I know that Andy has the skill to alter it for his own pleasure, or yours, in order to coax sound from a certain guitar. There's great opportunity for the tone of guitars in the future with this concept, and we're in good hands with Andy's skills. By the way, we've never heard a maple-topped acoustic guitar with a sound we like, but we have made



walnut-topped guitars that we like. We think those wood characteristics carry across to V-Class bracing. The bracing won't make a good wood sound bad, or a bad wood sound good, as far as we know.

Greetings from a very satisfied Taylor customer (814ce, 812ce 12-Fret, K12e), and congratulations on your new V-Class bracing rollout. Why don't you go to the lab and do a side-by-side bench test (volume, sustain, frequency response, etc.) of V-Class vs. X bracing? Subjective accolades in print and on YouTube are wonderful ... but lab data are irrefutable.

Frank Zatzko
Cleveland, OH

That's a fine collection, Frank! I tend to disagree that the lab data is irrefutable, which is why we don't race there. Also, one has to know what they're looking for in the lab. What would a normal guitar player see in lab data to allow them to make a decision? Your ears are, in the end, what we're trying to please. Food is a good analogy. Think about lab data vs. taste buds when you eat food. That said, we do have a front-row seat for some incredible lab work being done on the sound of certain woods on our guitars. This work is being spearheaded by a top ear surgeon who also has a degree in the study of spruce. No kidding. Here's what I have learned from him: The brain masks sounds, and also adds sounds that measuring devices do not mask or add. This is important because the lab

I play a 2010 814ce unplugged but am looking for a Taylor with bigger sound for strumming and fingerpicking. To what degree would any of the following [produce] more volume without sacrificing quality:

- 1. Going to a slightly wider Grand Symphony?**
- 2. Going from a Sitka spruce top to Lutz?**
- 3. Going to a 12-fret?**
- 4. Other?**

George Gortz

George, bigger is louder, so I'd recommend a larger guitar over any of your other choices. Maybe it's time to stop in at a dealer with GS and GO in stock and give them a strum to see if they meet your needs.

instruments only show what the guitar does, but the brain perceives it much differently. Therefore, only an expert can decipher the data. In the end, we live in a world that is perceived with our human ears, eyes and other senses telling us what we like, so we try to keep our guitars geared to please human ears rather than a device, or a dog, or a bee. Now that I've defended the human ear, we did see what a V-Class-braced guitar looks like on lab instruments compared to an "identical" X-braced guitar, and you could see some very positive differences. But again, we knew that before we looked. We just don't feel like we have to prove how it sounds by any other method than hearing it. It sounds the way it sounds. No tricks, nothing to hide; it's apparent in the playing.

I am a player of a certain "vintage" who mostly fingerpicks, and being vintage, the picking fingers are fairly sensitive to increased string tension. As a result, these days I tend to prefer lighter-gauge strings. Yet I have observed that volume, sustain and relative quantity of bass all increase with string tension (or gauge), so there is a desire to use heavier-gauge strings to get those qualities from the guitar. After hearing the description of the new V-Class guitars, I'm thinking that playing lighter-gauge strings on these would result in less tonal compromise in volume, sustain and bass, making them ideal for fingerpickers like me. Is my thinking correct?

Jerry Abrams

You're correct, Jerry, but maybe in a different way that you think. More is more, and less is less, always. A heavier string has more mass and therefore has the ability to excite a top more than a light string, and I'll say always. But the V-Class guitar also has more ability to rock side to side and create volume, always. So strung with lights it can give you a lot of what you want.

I went to your [Taylor event] to see what the V-Class bracing was like. While you've had a lot of good guitars in the past, nothing has really beaten out my 1978 dreadnought (which the office tells me you made).

The V-bracing models really blew me [away], and now I am trying to figure out how I can talk my wife into it. You have really made it hard on a loyal Taylor owner. I don't know how I am going to handle this. As a long-time mathematician and computer programmer, I am curious how Andy designed the bracing here. Did he use any kind of electronic gizmos to analyze vibration patterns? Did he use math tools to simulate different bracing patterns? Or, did he sit down with some wood and do it all himself?

Tools like this are not necessary, of course. Stradivari managed just fine without them.

Ivan Mann

Ed. Note: Andy was happy to respond.

Ivan, I'm thrilled that you like the new guitars, and that you have a seasoned guitar you love playing. When a guitar is a good match for a player, it's really a wonderful thing. With the new V-braced guitars, as much as I would like to say I designed them entirely with numbers and analysis since I have an interest in those tools, the reality is I designed and refined them based more from a concept. In other words, I took my observations and thought initially in broad strokes of rigidity and flexibility, then uniformity of resonance patterns, and built early versions before I delved into the more granular testing with Fourier analysis tools, tuners and such. I've found those tools most use-

ful when I want to test a very specific thing. For example, a fairly common top resonance test might involve muting the strings and the back of the guitar, and bonking the bridge with a rubber mallet. That might tell you some things, but it's obviously not a complete picture of what is going on when we play the whole guitar with strings ringing and decaying. So, I tend to build, listen, play, listen, and then build until I have an understanding of how to control a design. At that point, it's fun to bring in a few of these modern tools to see what they tell you.

Stradivari's work has endlessly fascinated me. To your point, in the absence of distractions like harnessed electricity or mechanically recorded and reproduced music, I think a person with a rare ability like Antonio might be able to make more careful and detailed observations and turn those into meaningful actions. In the same way, a person living in the jungle is capable of distinguishing between more shades of the color green than I am.

At any rate, a happy relationship with your wife is far more valuable than any guitar, so don't rock that boat. And, there's no hurry. You'll find even more choices and flavors as we continue to add V-Class models to the lineup.

I've really enjoyed the insights and knowledge you've imparted regarding the qualities of different guitar tonewoods and their influence on overall sound quality. I recently purchased a very unique guitar, which features cherry wood on the back and sides (with a Sitka spruce top), and have noticed that there are very few guitars that seem to feature cherry. Do you know why this might be? The guitar has wonderful mid-range and high-end clarity, along with great sustain, but not a great deal of low-end power, so perhaps this could account for the scarcity.

Bart DeCoster
Encinitas, CA

Bart, cherry makes a fine guitar, and could probably be compared to mahogany more than any other wood we know on guitars. The "why not" questions,

as you'll hear me say often, are among the most difficult to answer. But here's my best answer for why makers don't use cherry often. Like guitar brands, or guitar shapes, all wood species are in competition with all the other available woods. The triggers are not just sound, but also size of the tree, availability of the lumber, visual impact, workability, and also tradition. Mahogany, being the king of all woods, is a placeholder for the guitar that would be cherry. In other words, if a factory like Taylor were to produce a cherry model, it wouldn't be instead of rosewood, maple or koa, but rather in place of mahogany because cherry is most like mahogany. So that means cherry would be in competition with mahogany, specifically in the world of guitar models, and it loses the competition for a couple of reasons. One is the look, with mahogany being prettier. Another is that cherry is full of flecks and flaws, which produces huge waste when used for guitars. Another is that there are no large cherry trees left that would allow us to make wide, clear panels for backs. Let's say that all tropical woods just became unavailable on the menu, then cherry would be an alternative, but would also be a huge struggle to make customers happy across all their senses. So, hopefully this offers a little insight as to what goes into the decisions regarding which woods to use or not use.

I purchased a Taylor 310 in 2004. I have always kept it cased when not playing it. And I've always keep it humidified during winter months. As you always say, an all [solid] wood guitar sounds better as it ages, and mine certainly has. It sounds much warmer and fuller now than when I first got it. The Sitka top has also become much darker and looks much richer, though it didn't change colors evenly. Right in the center of the guitar is about a six-inch strip that is now much darker than the rest of the top. The color was very even when it was new. I know color change is due to aging of the wood, but is there anything I can do to help the rest of the top to even out? I still love it no matter what colors

blossom, but I sure would like to see it even out if possible. Right now it looks like a racing stripe right down the middle. Anything I can do?

Angelo Calcagno
Rochester, NY

Angelo, I'm afraid there's nothing you can do about this; it's just the luck of the draw. The wood in the middle, although light and even when the tree was cut, is just turning darker than the surrounding wood. I don't know why, because I haven't studied that deeply, but I have come to embrace it. You have 14 years with your guitar now, and I've written many times how at about 15 years a guitar makes a wonderful change for the better, tone-wise. That age and tonal quality, my friend, trump almost anything, including cosmetic flaws. (I keep telling myself that as I look in the mirror at 63 years of age!)

I read with interest your response to a question in the Fall 2017 issue concerning extending the usage of materials left over from instrument production, particularly ebony from Cameroon. I believe there would be an enthusiastic market for bridge and end pins, and tuner buttons crafted from this outstanding wood. We Taylor aficionados would not only be receiving great accessories for our instruments, but would take pride in contributing to maximum usage of materials, and also in creating additional projects for the workforce there in Cameroon. Just a thought.

Joe Mitchell
Gilmer, TX

Joe, I love you, man! This is the kind of thinking that I've been living for every day for the past several years. So let me tell you what we're up to. First, we've designed and will deliver very soon to dealers an ebony slide for your guitar playing. This thing embodies all you suggest, and it's a pleasure to own, hold, feel and see. And above all, it sounds wonderfully warm compared to metal or glass slides. At NAMM, we showed them to dealers, who signed up in droves to carry them, for all the reasons you cited. Meanwhile, we're developing a kitchen woodcraft business that will appear soon, at its own website and with its own brand, although easily traced back to Taylor Guitars, and with Taylor easily sending people over to this site. There will be some beautiful, amazing products made from ebony that will enhance your kitchen: cutting boards, serving boards, pepper mills, salt and pepper shakers, salt and spice cellars, chopsticks, backsplash wall tiles, etc. I'm also designing a nice wall hanger for your guitars, with a cool ebony back plate that can even have inlays that match your guitar, or the guitar you're hoping to buy. All of this is a great way to employ our Cameroonian colleagues and get maximum return to them on the wood we already have, while at the same time allowing folks like you to enjoy this amazing wood. This can all be accomplished without cutting another tree, and probably allowing us to actually reduce the amount of trees cut because the business model can work more profitably on fewer trees by turning more of the tree into something valuable.

Got a question for Bob Taylor?

Shoot him an email: 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.



MAKING WAVES

Builder's Edition K14ce

Our V-Class guitars live up to the hype

By Jim Kirlin

The claim was bold. And the guitars rang true.

The scene was the Winter NAMM Show in Anaheim in late January, specifically Taylor's showcase rooms, which proved to be a humming hive of activity as our new V-Class™ guitars made their debut. There was already a buzz leading into the show, thanks to a video teaser we'd posted via social media hinting that our coming innovation might be our most important ever. Taylor fans were understandably lathered up with anticipation, while skeptics sniffed marketing hype. By the time we lifted the curtain, as word spread that we were introducing a new style of bracing that claimed to improve the intonation of an acoustic guitar, there was an understandable mix of intrigue and "we'll see about that."

And by the close of the show, a groundswell of excitement had formed among Taylor dealers, supported by critical nods from the music media and discerning players. In the end, our V-Class guitars earned "Best in Show" honors from a NAMM panel of music retail experts in conjunction with trade publications *Music Inc.* and *UpBeat Daily*. (Taylor earned a second "Best in Show" nod as a "Company to Watch.") The guitars also scored a "Best of NAMM" accolade in the "Best Acoustic Gear" category from the editorial team

of MusicRadar.com, the online platform of Future Publishing UK, which produces *Guitarist*, *Total Guitar*, and *Acoustic Magazine*. It was a gratifying way to kick off the year.

The clear star of our dealer meeting room was our new Builder's Edition K14ce, a guitar that blended all the musical goodness promised by V-Class with player-friendly body contouring – inspired by the curves of electric guitars – and felt to many like a reinvention of the acoustic guitar. Paul Riario from *Guitar World* magazine predicted "it will be considered a milestone in the evolution of instruments that push the boundaries of musical expression."

Perhaps the biggest challenge at NAMM was simply providing a suitable listening environment for the guitars surrounded by the constant din of activity in our rooms. Not to worry – Taylor's trade show crew built a small sound-treated room within our dealer meeting room. There, Taylor product specialist Marc Seal presented two 20-minute demos each hour for dealers and other industry guests. Taylor product marketing manager Cameron Walt coordinated the demo sessions and saw the parade of lightbulb-moment reactions from dealers.

"It was fun to watch people enter the room with a bit of skepticism and leave 20 minutes later with genuine

excitement and an eagerness to share the experience with their customers," he says.

Heck, Marc Seal himself admits he was skeptical when he first heard about V-Class last year. It wasn't long before he had to own one. Now his Builder's Edition K14ce is his go-to acoustic.

"The intonation of this guitar is amazing," he says. "It's so nice to have a guitar sound so in-tune. It's the only guitar I play for any project where I need an acoustic guitar."

As Seal shared during his demo, there were certain chords he had sworn off playing on acoustic guitars due to intonation issues, especially first-position F and D chords, that he now enjoys playing. He has since shared his experience with students during the private lessons he gives and watched their natural reactions as they strum a V-Class guitar.

"It seems really simple, but when they hit a big, perfectly intonated G chord and hear what it should sound like, they get excited," he says. "They hear the potential in their own playing."

A V-Class Recap

In case you missed the previous edition of *Wood&Steel*, our V-Class bracing is a new type of internal architecture for an acoustic guitar, or, as

we like to call it, a new sonic engine. Developed by master guitar designer Andy Powers, the patented V-style pattern differs from traditional X bracing in the way it changes how a soundboard responds to string vibration, improving an acoustic guitar's tonal characteristics in fundamental ways, producing more volume, longer sustain, and better in-tuneness among the notes.

The strength of the design is in the way it enables more independent control over two important but opposing traits: stiffness, which produces sustain, and flexibility, which produces volume. Traditional criss-crossed X-bracing patterns force the top into a compromise between volume and sustain. With the V-bracing pattern, a pair of longitudinal braces arranged in a V pattern makes the top stiffer in the direction of the strings to improve the sustain, while two pairs of fan braces control the flexibility across both sides of the lower bout.

The twist is the way the more orderly response from the top creates a more harmonious relationship between notes within chords, making the instrument sound more in tune. Notes no longer "rub" against each other sonically. There's no sourness or warbling. Across the entire fretboard, the notes are clearer, fuller and more consistent in their sound.

What made this improved in-tuneness perplexing for many folks (including some of us here at Taylor when Andy first explained it) was that a guitar's intonation is traditionally thought to be controlled only by string compensation, which Andy didn't change at all with the V-Class design. The revelation for him was discovering the contributing role that an acoustic guitar body (especially the top) also plays in the harmonic relationship of the notes. Andy says it was his experience with solid body electric guitars and archtops that helped him realize why acoustic guitars are different.

"Intonation has always been a problem to fix since it can't ever be perfect," he explains. "You can only make it better or worse. For years, when I would make or set up a solid body electric guitar, I could set up all the factors that I knew affected string compensation, like neck flexibility and magnetic pull from the pickup height. I'd go through my pickup adjustments, the neck, frets, nut, and finally compensate the saddles, and it would play gloriously in tune."

He could build an archtop guitar and do the same thing.

"I'd build a bridge and carve it to fit that setup, that guitar, that player's style," he says. "I'd compensate the strings, and the guitar would play

equally in tune everywhere. But when I'd make or repair a flat top guitar, I could set the string compensation with the same degree of accuracy, and yet it wouldn't sound quite as in tune. It took a lot of observation and thought before I really understood that the resonances of a vibrating guitar body are also important to the accuracy of the played notes. It wasn't until I started exploring ways to get more sustain from a flat-top design that I realized achieving this would allow more consistent control of the guitar's resonance, just like a solid body electric guitar."

Now that our V-Class guitars are in stores and finding new owners, we thought we'd share some initial feedback from dealers, customers, artists, the media and more. We also compiled some test-driving tips to help you assess the guitars for yourself (see page 14).

In-Store Demo Events

Starting in mid-February, our sales team set out to introduce the V-Class guitars at a series of "New for 2018" in-store events. Attendees were eager

heads in disbelief. David McBee, who was sitting in the front row, called the design "revolutionary," and purchased the store's Builder's Edition K14ce, his first Taylor guitar. We followed up with McBee a few weeks later to get his impressions after he'd had more time with the guitar.

"This K14ce is just more amazing every day," he said via email. "The warmth and sustain are unlike anything I have heard before...here's to a revolution of harmony."

It turns out that McBee is an avid science enthusiast involved in rocketry and astronomy, so he also understood the physics behind Andy's design. He related to the story of Andy's design inspiration for the V-pattern coming from watching the way the ocean surf divided at a jetty.

"I saw in my mind what he saw," McBee shares. "From a past hobby of crewing racing yachts, we experienced similar wave effects when surfing a bow wave of a freight liner while riding a 7,000-pound sailboat. That wave may only appear to be a foot tall but carries immense force on a calm sea for thou-

Honestly, we didn't think it was possible for Taylor to build better guitars. The Builder's Edition proved us wrong. There are very noticeable improvements in volume and sustain, and it's very comfortable to play. Tonally outstanding and visually stunning."

The store's K14ce went home with Rick Zimmer, who says he hasn't been able to put the guitar down.

"I've never played a guitar with such beautiful articulation and tonal balance," he shared. "Everything Andy has said about this guitar is spot on. And holy cow, the beauty of the wood and craftsmanship, like always, is second to none. This guitar has deepened my passion for music."

For some listeners, the sonic improvements were especially noticeable in the guitar's upper register, where volume and sustain are sometimes lacking. Others could immediately relate to the improved in-tuneness of first position chords. That was the case for Taylor's Michael Lille, who gave a demonstration at Tom Lee Music in Langely, British Columbia.

"The audience really connected with the tuning to major chords down in the

This was familiar territory for the average player."

One gentleman came up to Sakimoto after the event and told him that what Taylor is doing reminded him of a famous quote from hockey legend Wayne Gretzky: "A good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be."

"I think it rings true," Sakimoto adds. "It suggests that Andy has created a guitar to show us that there is more to discover with this instrument"

Taylor key accounts manager Zach Arntz made the rounds to Sam Ash stores throughout California to show the sales staff the K14ce.

"Many of the top salespeople have been in the business for a long time, have heard everything, and some were understandably skeptical," Zach says. "It was great to see the look on their faces after a short demo, or even better, when they played the guitar. 'Go ahead,' I'd say, 'play those King Crimson chords higher up the neck.' The look on their faces was amazing. The reaction was always, 'Wait a minute, I

More Volume Isn't Just Louder

Another common takeaway from players has been a deeper appreciation for what the idea of enhanced volume actually can mean for the playing experience. The truth is that a loud guitar isn't that rare. People also have different perceptions of volume. For some it just means a more thunderous bass response. What the demos conveyed was not only the more powerful sound of the notes on a V-Class guitar, but the evenness of that power across the entire frequency spectrum. It also came through in the responsiveness of the instruments – the guitars produce a louder response to a light touch. Players don't have to work hard for a robust tonal output.

In some stores, the configuration of the room where the demo was delivered – narrower dimensions with seating extending farther back – underscored the improved projection of the guitars. In comparing X bracing with V-Class, Andy Powers has used the analogy of the difference in radiation patterns between a traditional incandescent lightbulb and a laser.

"Because the frequencies of a V-Class guitar have more coherence, the wavelengths line up in a more orderly way and support each other," he says. "They have a clearer identity and are able to travel farther."

Structural Benefits

Gryphon Stringed Instruments in Palo Alto, California, has long been a respected store for its depth of knowledge about stringed instrument history and construction techniques. In a V-Class review on the shop's website, Gryphon co-founder and guitar authority Richard Johnston, who has written numerous articles and books on guitar designs throughout history, applauded Andy's improvements, calling them "an intriguing step forward in guitar evolution."

"These guitars produce some impressive sound at the lightest touch and yet they can be played aggressively without breaking up," Johnston writes. "Another notable feature is the balance of tone up and down the neck. No matter where you play on the neck, the notes ring out clearly without any variation of timbre or volume."

Because Gryphon does a lot of repair work, Johnston also hailed the V-Class design from the point of view of structural stability. As he points out, a set of light-gauge strings on a steel-string guitar exerts more than 150 pounds of pull on a pin bridge, which can cause problems if the soundboard

continued



Andy Powers explains his V-Class design during an interview at NAMM



Product Specialist Marc Seal during a V-Class demo at NAMM

to hear a demo and experience the guitars for themselves. What was interesting was the extra attentiveness in the rooms, underscored by the almost Zen-like fashion in which the demos began – with a single plucked note.

Our sales crew enjoyed experiencing firsthand the different *a-ha* moments among listeners. During a demo with Taylor's Billy Gill at Rainbow Guitars in Tucson, Arizona, there were several audible gasps and people shaking their

sands of yards. Such is the translation of the V brace to the guitar top."

Taylor dealer Paul Tobias hosted an event at his family's store, Tobias Music, in Downers Grove, Illinois, and afterward suggested the Builder's Edition K14ce might be "the most advanced acoustic guitar in the history of guitar making."

"I wish I had a camera to catch 70 people's jaws dropping when our rep demoed the K14ce," he says. "This will end up being our bestseller in 2018.

first three frets, and how some always need a slight tweak, even if the previous one was in tune," he says.

Taylor sales rep Eric Sakimoto had a similar experience at the Denver Folklore Center.

"It was great to see how everyone reacted to how the top translated the notes and chords I was playing," he says. "People know how sometimes an open D chord sounds a little off or how they don't play the B notes in a G chord.

need to spend some time with this in a quieter environment."

The final verdict after a test-drive, Zach says, was virtually the same each time: "When are we getting ours for stock, and how much is it, because I want one for myself."

For another account from a converted skeptic, see Shawn Persinger's article ("From Skeptic to Believer") in this issue.

isn't built to withstand that stress. With the V-Class pattern, the legs of the “V” offer more bracing support that's in line with the pull of the strings on the bridge.

“If you look at the design, you can see these V-braced Taylor soundboards are a lot stronger, but only where they really need to be,” Johnston explains. “To increase the guitar top's stability while at the same time improving the volume and sustain is quite an achievement.”

The takeaway for players, Johnston concludes, is that they will benefit from a guitar that not only sounds and plays great, but is far less likely to need adjustment or repair in order to be optimally playable.

Podcast Demos

If you consume much guitar content online, you might recognize the name Tony Polecastro from his hundreds of online guitar reviews, interviews, video lessons and other online programs, including his regular *Acoustic Tuesday*

show. After hearing about the claims of V-Class, he playfully called out Andy Powers online, challenging the notion that bracing could in fact improve intonation, so we invited him out to the factory (his third visit) for some hang time with the man himself to pick his brain, along with some guitars. In fact, we talked with Polecastro about that experience on Taylor's “From the Factory” podcast (for more on that, see Soundings this issue). Consider him a happily converted former skeptic.

On the podcast, Polecastro recalls listening to Andy play a single-note progression up the neck and hearing the notes in all their fullness and clarity.

“I used the parallel...it's like driving down the road and you have dirt all over your windshield, and all of a sudden the wipers go *whoop*, and it's like, oh, that's all there,” he says.

Polecastro offers some thoughts on how to test-drive a V-Class guitar in a store (for starters, he says, these instruments are deserving of some quality time), and shared a few impressions

from his playing experience with the guitars.

“We're so used to things decaying at a rapid rate, especially up the neck,” he says. “Anywhere near the twelfth fret and beyond, forget it. You'll get the note, but it'll be like, *boop* [staccato sound]. This is not the case with this guitar. I was doing something on the high E string last night [on a Builder's Edition K14ce], just playing a single scale on a single string going up, and realizing at no point on the string did it ever diminish in terms of its initial response, the decay tail, and the volume. I [thought], wow, up on the fifteenth fret there's actually sound coming out of the guitar.”

He arpeggiates a chord high up the neck.

“I love that each note speaks so clearly,” he says. Normally playing up the neck means he has to dig in more. “I have to hit the chord really hard to just wring out as much possible sound,” he explains. “Not the case [here]. I'm not even playing that hard. It has this bell-like ring to it.”

On another recent Taylor podcast episode, Taylor's Michael Lille, who's an ace player, sat in to demo our all-koa V-Class K24ce and talk about his experiences recording with V-Class guitars.

What immediately comes across to the listener when he plays is the sustain of the notes. He plays a few chord inversions up the neck and points out that they almost sound like open, non-fretted notes the way they ring and harmonize with each other.

“One of the challenging things when you're demonstrating it is to not speak before it stops,” he says.

Lille also talks about using a Builder's Edition K14ce and a V-Class 914ce on a recent recording project with Taylor colleague and musical collaborator Andy Lund. They actually re-recorded a few parts with the guitars just as an alternate approach.

“The sustain made me edit one part a little,” he says, fingerpicking the part for reference. “I was kind of filling up all the space, just keeping the finger pattern going.” He fingerpicks the

part again, this time letting the notes ring out more instead of just picking through. “You wanted it to ring through a little more, and it created more space in the track. Before you felt like you kind of had to fill it up because the notes were going away a little quick, so it actually [made] us edit the part a little bit and play less.”

As for the improved intonation, he plays a few chords from a David Crosby-penned tune, “Triad,” that he enjoys.

“That's one of those songs I love playing live, but...I [might] have to bend this B string a little bit north to get that chord to feel nice to me,” he says. “But on this, all the notes play so nicely together. It's like a bunch of little children out in the schoolyard. Nobody's stealing anybody's lunch.” **W&S**



We each have our own personal guitar test-driving rituals. By all means, when you pick up a V-Class guitar, do your thing. Play those go-to chord progressions or licks you love – after all, the guitar is there to serve you. But because these V-Class guitars expand the normal parameters of acoustic tone, they're also deserving of a different type of “tasting” approach in order to fully experience their expressive range. Here are some test-driving tips to help you enjoy the improvements.

Find a quiet time and place at the store.

Music stores can be noisy environments, which is unfortunate when you're trying to hear the tonal nuances of an acoustic guitar, especially as those notes bloom and decay. Many stores have an acoustic room or lesson rooms. If you find a private place, you'll be better equipped to hear things in a new way.

Tune – or retune – the guitar.

The guitar may already be in tune in the store. But try detuning a string and then re-tuning it using a tuner or tuning app on your phone. Why? Because the more orderly response of the

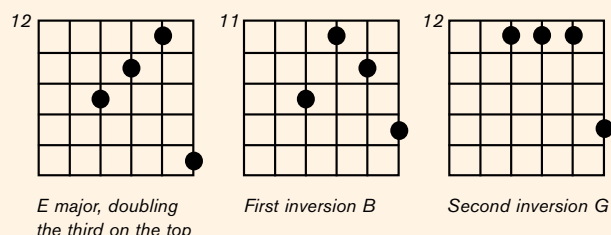
notes will be displayed visually. You should find that the “needle” or graphic display isn't as jittery as it tries to locate the pitch because the note isn't warbling or fluttering. With a V-Class guitar, these notes are more likely to lock into a pitch and not drift.

Start with a single note.

There are a couple of reasons to do this. First, it puts you into a listening frame of mind. It also helps focus your attention on the progression of a note – the journey it takes from attack to bloom to decay. It's the sonic equivalent of a wine tasting experience. Also, pick a note that would traditionally sound slightly weaker or decay more quickly, higher up the neck. In the guitar demos our product specialists have done, they play the E natural on the G string at the ninth fret. Normally this is a weaker note on a guitar, in terms of both volume and sustain. Here, pay attention to the extra body and volume of the note, along with the extended sustain. One of the V-Class design's strengths is the way it eliminates the traditional weaknesses of an acoustic guitar.

Play chord inversions higher up the neck.

In his demos, Andy Powers often arpeggiates several chord inversions that are especially vulnerable to warbling or beating on notes that aren't completely in tune with each other. Try slowly arpeggiating these chords and let them ring out.



Play first position chords.

The benefits of V-Class aren't just up the neck; they're right there in those chords we all know and love. Have you ever had the experience where you tune a guitar, then strum a chord and retune until it's just right, only to move to another chord and hear a slightly sour note? On a V-Class guitar, slowly strum or arpeggiate those open chords – work your way through your G, D, E, C and first position F chords and listen to the in-tuneness of them all. Now go ahead and play your favorite chord progression.

Hit those harmonics.

Of course you'll nail the big three, at the twelfth, seventh and fifth frets, but on a V-Class guitar you'll find that you can hear them at other points along the fretboard as well – a reflection of the accurate intonation. On one of our recent “From the Factory” podcast episodes, guitar reviewer Tony Polecastro works his way all along the low E string, getting a harmonic response not only on the frets, but even between them.

Bring a guitar-playing friend.

In last issue's V-Class story, our artist relations rep in Nashville, Jason Herndon, testified to the impressive projection of the V-Class guitars. During a demo from Andy Powers, Andy had him walk about 25 feet across the room and listen to him play. He swore that the guitar sounded even louder than when he was standing close to him. Bring a friend and try it for yourself, switching places so each of you can have a chance to listen from across the room. What you're hearing is the sonic result of overtones aligning better rather than fighting each other, so the sound travels in a stronger, more efficient way without the typical drop-off.

V-CLASS

REVIEWS

Here's a sampling of what guitar reviewers are saying about our V-Class and Builder's Edition designs.



“... for all of these good things you want in a guitar... the chief benefits of Taylor’s new V-Class-braced guitars are the things that you don’t get: choked notes, dead spots, muddy chords, and imprecise intonation. We guitarists have learned to live with these eccentricities of our instrument, but the new V-Class bracing is showing me that I don’t have to.”

— **Greg Olwell, *Acoustic Guitar* magazine**

“When a guitar is unbalanced — even in the slightest — the player may feel the need to over-play or play harder due to the construction of the instrument. In playing the K14ce, I noticed that when I was playing and singing, I hadn’t been distracted from my vocal delivery because my guitar was clearly defined and cut through the mix, thereby gave me a better performance.”

— **Christian Seaman, *American Songwriter* magazine**

“Every guitarist who tried this K14[ce] noticed right away how consistently in-tune it sounded when chording in different positions, and this harmonic cohesion is a big part of what makes this guitar so enjoyable to play... The K14ce represents possibly the most significant evolution of steel-string design since the change from ladder-style to X bracing.”

— **Art Thompson, *Guitar Player* magazine**

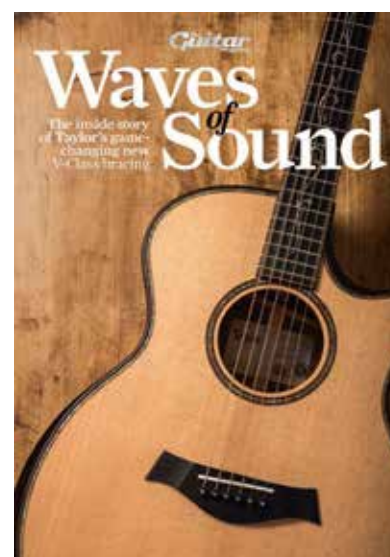


“It’s not often an influential innovation comes along that is eye-opening, but here, I can genuinely say V-Class bracing...is indeed an astonishing and unprecedented game changer in acoustic design, performance and sound.”

— **Paul Riario, *Guitar World* magazine**

“An original and imaginative redesign of the core structure of an acoustic guitar that has resulted in the finest six-string Taylor we’ve ever played.... This will be a godsend for recording, where microphones cruelly expose tuning discrepancies.”

— **Huw Price (Builder’s Edition K14ce review), *The Guitar* magazine (UK)**



“Like other great guitars, the K14ce somehow disappears in your hands as the direct connection between the player and the music they are making invites voyages into uncharted territory. Note combinations that ordinarily leave a sour taste are suddenly so much sweeter, and there’s simply more creative headroom to explore.”

— **Chris Vinnicombe, *The Guitar* magazine (UK)**

FLIGHT ARRIVAL

Our latest batch of V-Class models is here to inspire

By Jim Kirlin



Pegheads with new inlays for the V-Class 814ce DLX (front) and 714ce

Let's keep this V-Class party going.

This summer we're excited to roll out a fresh array of Grand Auditorium models equipped with our award-winning new sonic engine. Our newborn V-Class siblings span from our 800 Deluxe Series through our 500 Series, showcasing five different tonewood pairings, which means that players now have a chance to rediscover the sonic characteristics of these woods in a whole new way. As V-Class architect Andy Powers points out, the tonal improvements of V-Class – greater in-tuneness, volume, sustain and projection, to name a few – provide a purer platform of sound that magnifies the tonal character of each wood pairing.

“This design makes the tonewood pairings extra vibrant,” Andy says. “You hear a more distinct version of each wood's sonic flavor.”

Visually, in addition to the two distinguishing details of our V-Class guitars – a black graphite nut and a new guitar label featuring Andy's signature – these models showcase another noticeable aesthetic upgrade: All have a peghead inlay that reflects the fretboard inlay motif of the series.

Here's a rundown of each of the new V-Class models, with some thoughts from Andy on what players can expect when they pick them up.

814ce DLX / 814ce

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood

Top: Sitka Spruce

Fans of rosewood have already had a chance to experience a rosewood V-Class guitar with the release in January of our 914ce. Rosewood's full-range voice is loved for its rich overtones, giving it a wonderful complexity both in the low and high ends of the tonal spectrum. With the V-Class treatment, rosewood's tone profile reaches a new realm of high-definition sound. As Andy pointed out with the 914ce, the improved in-tuneness makes those overtones more “well-behaved,” bringing more clarity and flavor to the richness. (For more on overtones, see our sidebar on acoustic bloom.)

Between the 914ce, 814ce DLX, and 814ce, the V-bracing architecture and sound are similar. Subtle differences come from slight structural variations internally to accommodate the radius armrest on the 800 Deluxe design and the beveled armrest with the 900 Series (which also slightly changes the amount of soundboard real estate). Ultimately, Andy says, the biggest performance distinctions between the three models will be in the player comfort from the armrests. Of course, as Andy has pointed out, a more relaxed playing experience can translate into better sound by enabling a smoother attack from the player.

One point worth noting about the V-Class design is that because of the significant improvements it brought to acoustic sound, some of the tone-enhancing material refinements that Andy had first introduced with the redesign of the 800 Series in 2014 and then applied to other series – including ultra-thin finish and the use of protein glue – are now no longer as important.

“Many of those refinements were part of our efforts to wring the last drops out of our X-brace designs,” Andy says. “With these V-Class guitars, we've found that some of these elements were not necessarily a benefit to the way the guitar was performing. These new designs have forced us to re-evaluate each element that goes into our guitars and choose what works best for each model.

In that vein, for the 814ce DLX, Andy decided to shift from Adirondack spruce bracing back to Sitka spruce after experimenting with both using the V-Class design. It turns out that with the V-Class architecture, Sitka performed better – it provided the right amount of damping in order to produce the most musically pleasing response.

714ce

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Lutz Spruce

Thanks to its pairing with a Lutz spruce top, the 714ce offers players another enticing rosewood V-Class option.

“It’s not just a subtle difference,” Andy says. “Someone who goes into a store and plays a V-Class 714ce and 814ce will hear two different guitars.”

Andy has always been fond of Lutz for the extra tonal power it generates, which he often compares to old-growth Adirondack spruce.

“In many respects, it’s become my favorite spruce,” Andy says. “It has power and headroom, but without sounding brash. It’s doesn’t sound brittle; it’s not overly aggressive. It has a ton of warmth.”

He relates the differences between Lutz and Sitka to different types of electric amplifiers.

“A lot of times Sitka will sound like a [Fender] Twin Reverb – a superb high-wattage amp, with super clear headroom, and very powerful, but it can be a little stark.” He says. “The Lutz spruce has headroom and that power, but the whole sound is broad and warm. It sounds more like a [Fender] Vibroverb or something, where there’s plenty of horsepower, with a rich flavor. It tends to give you a little more color, which I like for the 700 Series because it fits the guitar’s identity. It fits the strummer a little better in many cases.”

The guitar is offered with two finish options for the top: natural or Western Sunburst.

614ce

Back/Sides: Big Leaf Maple
Top: Torrefied Sitka Spruce

As a versatile player, Andy is especially excited to introduce a V-Class edition of our maple/torrefied Sitka spruce 614ce. With the V-Class architecture, maple’s sonic transparency brings the idea of a player-reflective guitar to an entirely new level of musical expression.

“It’s capable of so much sonic color,” he says. “More than most any other

What is acoustic bloom?

The sonic improvements of the V-Class bracing design – especially the increased in-tuneness, longer-sustaining notes, and stronger projection – invite a whole new listening experience. In fact, some players have marveled at the way a note or chord played on a V-Class guitar sounds like it regenerates over time rather than decaying in a traditional way, creating a wonderful complexity. Others have observed increased sympathetic resonance of the strings due to the improved pitch accuracy. What exactly is happening?

One important factor is bloom. Basically it’s the idea that the sound of a note is not static through its duration. Its sonic flavor changes over time – think of it as having a beginning, a middle, and an end. It’s like a sip of wine, only for your ears. We asked Andy for his take on what we perceive as bloom.

“As the note is formed, the overtone series – the harmonic content that’s present in that note – decays, but not at a uniform rate,” he explains. “What you hear is a changing mix of overtones as time progresses. So you get the initial note response, and some of it will die away faster than other parts, which alone is enough to shift the sound.”

A second part of what causes this is that the vibrating strings excite the guitar body, which in turn re-excites the strings.

“You get something like a feedback loop going between the strings and the body, which compounds when combined with the overtone content that’s slowly morphing as the note decays,” he says.

How does the V-Class design impact bloom?

This is where, as a listener, you come to appreciate the lack of sonic sourness between notes as they change over time, Andy says.

“In the case of V-Class, the body is moving more closely with the strings and associated overtones, which means there’s less distortion, less cancellation,” Andy says. “Less cancellation means we get to hear more of it.”

guitar we make, this will sound like the player – it can sound bright, it can sound warm, or anything in between. It’s possibly the most touch-sensitive guitar we’ve built. You barely rest your finger on the string and it’ll start responding.”

Andy says the guitar’s responsiveness to the player makes it hard to ascribe a sonic personality to the guitar. He’d rather have people just go play it.

“Players who strum chords on it are likely to think, that’s a cool guitar – it’s clear, vibrant, brilliant, whatever words they use to describe sounds,” he says. “For musicians who play fingerstyle arrangements or jazz on it, or somebody playing in alternate tunings, the expressive range of this instrument will be a real eye-opener. The idea is for the guitar to get out of the musician’s way to better reflect what the person is doing. For a player who approaches music with intention and expressive sensibility, trying to build dynamics into it, these guitars will deliver. They’ll pay dividends on whatever you put into it. It isn’t simply a clear-sounding stage guitar, even though it does that well.”

514ce

Back/Sides: Neo-Tropical Mahogany
Top: Western Red Cedar

524ce

Back/Sides: Neo-Tropical Mahogany
Top: Neo-Tropical Mahogany

These offerings from our 500 Series introduce two more wood pairings to the V-Class sound platform: the mahogany/cedar 514ce and the all-mahogany 524ce. Once again, the unique characteristics of each wood pairing become more vivid with the V-Class design.

With the 514ce, the V-Class architecture magnifies what people love about cedar while also transcending its limitations to broaden its musical range. Typically cedar’s warmth and responsiveness complement fingerstyle playing, while its lower headroom tends to yield a more distorted sound in the hands of a stronger attack.

“Cedar often feels to me like a low-wattage tube amp, where it’s always got a little bit of breakup on it,” Andy explains. “There is a pleasant touch of overdriven, rich harmonic content.”

But with the V-Class architecture, Andy says, strummers may now find themselves more drawn to this guitar.

“I’m finding I get full and complex harmonic content, which makes the notes sound thick and broad, yet they remain clear when the guitar is strummed,” he elaborates. “It’s as if there’s indescribable warmth surrounding the attack of each note. Right from

the first chord, it’s so warm without being muddled or masked by a woof or puff of air at all. Add into the recipe mahogany’s fundamental-strong response and the pairing makes an incredibly friendly-sounding instrument. It’s certainly one of the most played-in-sounding guitars we’re building right now.”

The mahogany-top 524ce shares much of that warmth and clarity, enhanced by the harmonic agreement of the notes courtesy of the V-Class design. While the hardwood top has more of a leveling effect on the sound, Andy says V-Class bolsters the dynamic range.

“The dynamic range is especially notable in the upper register, where the compression effect of a hardwood top is usually most pronounced,” he says. “In this case, I can easily see an all-mahogany guitar becoming a more versatile go-to instrument.”

V-Class and the Expression System 2

One question from players in the wake of the V-Class introduction is whether it improves the amplified sound in tandem with our Expression System® 2 acoustic electronics. Given the more orderly response of the top and the improved intonation, it’s probably no surprise that the V-Class guitars do have a more pickup-friendly voice.

“I’d even say dramatically more pickup-friendly,” Andy adds. “The ES2 was already good, but in this context, with the more controlled motion of the top, it really got good. You hear the differences between the woods easily; you hear the nuances of the player’s touch dramatically. Even the way the EQ controls respond is more musical, more dynamic now. In fact, it seems like no matter how you shape the tone, it sounds good. Even things I wouldn’t ordinarily do, like turn the treble knob all the way up and the bass knob all the way down, making a really snappy treble sound, still has a musically useful character. Overall it feels like the guitar and the pickup are working together as a unit better than ever.” **W&S**

To sample our V-Class models, visit your local Taylor dealer. For complete specifications on all V-Class models, visit taylorguitars.com.



[Sustainability]

Reforestation:

from POLITICS *to* PLANTING

With Taylor embarking on reforestation efforts in Cameroon and Hawaii, Scott Paul explains the politics of forest restoration and why Taylor's timing might be ideal.



L-R: Maxime Ndjankoum and Suel Suel Roger Materne, with young ebony trees at their community nursery in Somalomo, Cameroon

I arrived in Washington, D.C. in 1993 and began my professional career working in environmental politics. Anyone involved with international forest policy in the 1990s was likely working on certification, an emerging concept that sought to set third party management standards for active forestry operations. The idea was (and still is) that a consumer would choose a product that had an ecolabel over one that did not, if it assured you that the product originated from a well-managed forest. Think Gifford Pinchot meets the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. The Forest Stewardship Council was born at this time, and for a decade certification overshadowed much of the global forest policy dialogue.

In the early 2000s the concept of illegal logging eclipsed certification and became the pressing discussion of the day. Its emergence was sudden, as for years the topic had been taboo in international policy circles. Simply put, the subject was not suitable to formal diplomatic niceties because in many parts of the world, the practice was too closely associated with official government corruption. That all changed literally overnight on June 22, 1997, when at a G8 Summit in Denver, Colorado, the participating governments declared they would “eliminate” illegal logging. It’s a long story, but suffice it to say that for much of the next decade, conferences, seminars and workshops met to define and address illegal logging. In 2008, the U.S. amended the Lacey Act, making it a crime in the U.S. to import wood that was illegally sourced in another country. A few years later, in 2012, the European Union followed suit, passing its own legislation. Australia and Japan have since done the same.

More recently, the concept of “zero deforestation” corporate policies has captured the political zeitgeist. According to a highly cited Climate and Land Use Alliance report from 2014, commercial agriculture now drives 71 percent of tropical deforestation, and it has become imperative that corporations that source large volumes of traditional deforestation drivers such as palm oil, soy or beef purchase these commodities from suppliers who are not converting primary forests to farmland. Corporate zero deforestation commitments have been around for

well over a decade, but in 2014 the concept took a twist when governments, private companies, and civil society groups signed the New York Declaration of Forests at the United Nations Secretary-General’s Climate Summit. The Declaration is a voluntary, non-legally binding pledge to halve the rate of deforestation by 2020, to end it by 2030, and to restore hundreds of millions of acres of degraded land. A year later, in 2015, largely due to pressure from activist organizations, literally hundreds of companies involved in the Southeast Asian palm oil trade announced some sort of new policy. Looking back at these two events, it’s fair to say that while lofty words do not always become universal action, the first step of any good 12-step program is recognizing you have a problem.

At each of these moments, when the international forest policy community began to grapple with new or evolving concepts, conferences, seminars and workshops were convened. Budgets were reallocated, new definitions created, reports drafted, and arguments ensued. It’s really complicated stuff — it takes time to figure out how to balance social, environmental and economic needs across cultures, traditions and markets.

Taylor Reforestation Projects

Currently there is a growing sense that forest restoration and reforestation are becoming major themes within international forest policy circles. It’s a long-overdue conversation that has been historically sidelined due in part to the simple fact that there has traditionally been little financial incentive. This is particularly true in the tropics, where conventional wisdom says that it can take hardwood trees like mahogany, rosewood, sapele and ebony more than a human lifetime to reach maturity.

But recently things have started to change, and an increasingly sophisticated conversation has begun. Once again, budgets are being reallocated, conferences are being held, and reports written. Why now? Perhaps because crisis is indeed the mother of invention. We have 7.6 billion people on the planet, all in need of food, fiber and fuel. Additionally, the politics of climate change, along with the simple fact that growing trees sequester car-



Bob Taylor surveys the pastureland he purchased on the Big Island

“

The politics of climate change, along with the simple fact that growing trees sequester carbon, have combined to shove the subject of reforestation onto the main stage.

”



CBI scientist Dr. Vincent Deblauwe uses a GPS device to geo-track an ebony tree

bon (standing forests preserve carbon), have combined to shove the subject of reforestation out onto the main stage. And by a strange confluence of events, Taylor Guitars finds itself, in our own small way, in the middle of this emerging conversation.

Why us? For one, Taylor likes to make guitars from wood, and we're looking to the future. Compared to other industries, guitar makers don't use a lot of wood, but we do tend to source from the four corners of the globe. We also have Bob Taylor, who, quite simply, dreams of leaving more than he takes. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, the company is fortunate enough to be in a position to act. For example, we use West African ebony for our fingerboards and bridges, and we use Acacia koa for backs, sides and tops. So, a few years ago we

of Africa. It has a preliminary goal of planting 15,000 trees at the community level. The project is only a year old, but CBI scientist Dr. Vincent Deblauwe is already making important discoveries, and the first village-level plant nurseries have now been established. Over 1,400 ebony trees were planted in the 2018 April rainy season, and more will be planted in the fall when the rains come again. In the near future, fruit and medicinal trees multiplied by the community members themselves will be planted with the help of the project.

In the grand scheme of things, the Ebony Project's capacity is small, but we believe the concept can scale up. It's an innovative and relatively simple approach that we'd love to see grow. You might recall my report in the last issue that in November 2017 Taylor Guitars signed a Public-Private

trees that were stunted from cattle grazing, or were simply in decline, to make guitars. The harvest of these low-grade trees has long been seen as a commercial non-starter in Hawaii. However, Paniolo Tonewoods was able to find the guitar wood in these trees. The wood from these trees has become thousands of guitars. Our reforestation and restoration efforts are in their infancy, but Paniolo has made progress in developing elite lines of koa, or cultivars (short for cultivated varieties, and in this case the product of selective koa breeding) that will be especially suitable for instruments.

Paniolo's reforestation efforts recently got a jump start when Bob Taylor purchased a 565-acre tract of rolling pastureland on the Big Island, which will be leased to Paniolo. Before the introduction of cattle in the 1800s,

What Is Sustainable Development?

Although the term “sustainability” is commonplace these days, it might surprise you to learn that the concept of sustainable development wasn't formally defined until 1987. In 1983 the United Nations General Assembly authorized the creation of an independent organization to research the world's environmental and developmental challenges and explore possible solutions. First known as the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) and later the Brundtland Commission, the group published a document in 1987 titled “Our Common Future,” also known as the Brundtland Report, in which sustainable development was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” As commonly understood, the three main pillars of sustainable development include economic growth, environmental protection, and social equality.

started the Ebony Project in Cameroon, and partnered in Paniolo Tonewoods in Hawaii. The two projects are different in almost every way imaginable, yet their core commonality is the simple act of reforestation.

Will it work perfectly? I don't know. But we're going to try, and we aim to be an example for others. I teased Bob Taylor once that we'll never know if we succeed, since we'll both be long dead, and he said: “Today Taylor Guitars buys mahogany from Fiji that some long-dead British guy planted 80 years ago. Someday I want to be a long-dead American guy who planted trees that someone will make guitars from in the future.”

The Ebony Project

The Taylor-funded Ebony Project is run out of the Congo Basin Institute (CBI) in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The project seeks to better understand the basic ecology of West African ebony (*Diospyros crassiflora* Hiern) in its native habitat, the tropical rainforest

Partnership with the Cameroonian Ministry of Environment, which pledges to study the feasibility of scaling-up the Ebony Project. If deemed feasible, the Cameroonian government will do so. In the meantime, we'll just keep doing what we're doing.

Acacia Koa in Hawaii

Since 2015, Taylor Guitars has been sourcing koa via Paniolo Tonewoods, a partnership set up with our friends at Pacific Rim Tonewoods of Washington State. Paniolo works with innovative landowners in Hawaii, including Kamehameha Schools and Haleakala Ranch, both of whom are historical landowners, whose holdings include large areas of pastureland as well as residual stands of trees. Kamehameha Schools (since the 1970s) and Haleakala Ranch (since the 1980s) have been spearheading koa reforestation in Hawaii. To increase the pace of reforestation, both landowners began to work with Paniolo Tonewoods to harvest dead, dying and malformed

this property, which Bob has named Siglo Forest (which means “century” in Spanish) was a thriving koa and ohia native forest. Paniolo intends to reforest this land with koa and other native species, but with a special emphasis on growing wood for guitars. We estimate that, beginning 30 years from now, this land will be able to sustain an annual production of wood (120,000 board feet) that would exceed Taylor's annual needs by three times.

These efforts are just a start. They demonstrate both commitment and action – which we can build from and perhaps enlist other companies too. Meeting global restoration or reforestation targets requires many actions taken by many organizations, but Taylor and our partners are now helping to show what can be done, in our small but important way. We'll keep you posted.

Scott Paul is Taylor's Director of Natural Resource Sustainability.

An EBONY PLAN

Takes Root



Residents of the village of Ekombite plant a young ebony tree

Our new multimedia storytelling experience, *The Ebony Project*, chronicles our journey toward a more sustainable future for ebony in Cameroon

By Jim Kirlin

Photos by Chris Sorenson

Bob Taylor is reflecting on more than six years of work in Cameroon during Taylor's "From the Factory" podcast, teeing up what proves to be an illuminating conversation about Taylor's efforts to create a more environmentally friendly and socially responsible future for ebony.

"That project has been a real schooling," he says, alluding to what has been a life-changing journey for him personally and as a co-owner of the Crelicam ebony sawmill together with Vidal de Teresa, owner of the Spanish wood supplier Madinter. Since taking the reins in late 2011, Taylor and Madinter have overcome myriad obstacles in pursuit of their ambitious plan to transform nearly every aspect of an under-resourced business in a developing country, and vowing to do it all legally and ethically, with a commitment to greater sustainability.

In the podcast, Bob is happy to report major progress. Crelicam's 75 employees now work in a completely renovated factory environment that he says he himself would be proud to work in. The environment is much safer, with vastly improved saws and machines that have increased efficiency and reduced waste. In fact, many of the saws now used at Crelicam were built or refurbished by Taylor's tooling team in El Cajon and shipped to Cameroon

(see our sidebar on the mill's transformation). Better tools and skills training, along with more defined roles, have given employees an increased sense of pride in their work, while improved wages and other medical and education benefits have helped lift the quality of life of their families. It's a far cry from the conditions Bob and Vidal encountered when they first arrived.

"There were no toilets, no running water, live electricity everywhere, that you tried to avoid," Bob recalls. "You'd be there for an hour and – *bam!* – bandsaw blades exploding and shooting through the air."

When the two new owners learned that employees didn't eat lunch because they couldn't afford to, they decided to build a kitchen to provide free lunch each day. The only problem was that it was nearly impossible to get the basic tools or materials to do the work, even though the mill was located in Cameroon's capital city of Yaoundé, with a population of 2.5 million.

The whole experience has given Bob a new context for the idea of building something from scratch.

"People hear the story of Taylor Guitars and they'll say, 'Wow, you and Kurt started from nothing,'" Bob says. "Well, starting with what we had in Cameroon was a new definition of nothing."

Remy Eba'a,
a sawyer at the
Crelicam mill



continued

Over the past six years, we've shared periodic reports on Taylor's progress in Cameroon. Our *Wood&Steel* cover story from the summer 2012 issue announced the purchase of the Crelicam mill and laid out Bob and Vidal's plans to become more directly involved in the supply chain in order to ensure legality and greater transparency. The article also relayed the revelation of years of ebony waste in the forest — previously unknown to the guitar industry — in which ebony trees that had been felled and found to have color variegation instead of an all-black complexion were left to rot on the forest floor because of their substantially lower market value. That discovery prompted Taylor and Madinter to spread awareness of this across the industry and led Taylor to feature fretboards with marbling more prominently across our guitar line (including our 800 Series) in an effort to promote greater acceptance in the market. Bob also shared a "state of ebony" address in a video that we posted on YouTube in 2012, and the message of committing to better stewardship of the woods we rely on resonated with guitar owners.

In the same spirit of becoming more directly engaged in the sourcing and supply chain involving the woods we use, we want to connect Taylor dealers, guitar owners, and others to this experience as well, for a few reasons: transparency, for one, because we know that people have a lot of purchasing options when it comes to guitars. While we're committed to producing the highest quality instruments, customers also deserve to know where the ingredients used for them come from. They also deserve to know what it takes to procure them. Both Taylor and Madinter's experiences in Cameroon over the past six years have deepened our sensitivities to the people and work involved along the way. Bob especially remembers those early interactions he had with employees at the mill.

"We're trying to let them share in what we get from this industry," he says. "And when you go there and see the lives they live, and when you see what they've actually contributed to the guitars that we play, but what they weren't getting out of it, you can't unknow that."

Introducing the Ebony Project

We wish that we could take every Taylor owner to Cameroon to experience firsthand what goes into sourcing the ebony used for the fretboard and bridge of every Taylor guitar made. If someone were to walk in the footsteps



Clockwise from top left:

(L-R) Scott Winder from Taylor's machine maintenance and repair team, Emmanuel Mendo, Crelicam workshop chief, and Madinter's Cosmin Spinoae; Crelicam employees with a new lathe used to make ebony guitar slide blanks; employees on break at the mill; improvements at the mill included drilling a well for fresh water — which is also piped outside the Crelicam walls to provide the surrounding community with a free, clean supply

Transforming the Mill

When it came to improving the Crelicam mill, the Taylor-Madinter team had their work cut out for them. The infrastructure and most of the equipment inherited by Bob and Vidal were in a state of disrepair. Beyond that, it was impossible to get the necessary replacement parts, tools and materials in Cameroon. Bob knew he would need to leverage Taylor's advanced tooling and machining capability back in California. Fortunately, he knew how to design a factory and who to enlist to drive the transformation: Wayne Brinkley, the lead engineer on our product development team and a highly skilled fabricator (see Bob's column in this issue). Wayne has been involved in virtually every improvement project at Crelicam – he's traveled there at least 20 times over the past six years. He remembers the condition of the old bandsaws the first time he visited.

"They were constantly eating bearings and breaking main shafts due to the heavy use and previous poor maintenance procedures," he says. "And the quality of the saw blade resharpening was terrible."

Taylor purchased seven used Stenner bandsaws – workhorse machines built in the 1960s and '70s that were

tools for them. This marked the first time a table saw had been used in the mill. They improved cut quality, efficiency, and yield, allowing us to get more from less. Other modern machinery and equipment brought to the mill include new generators, air compressors, pneumatic devices, laser guides, kilns and dust collectors.

The electrical wiring for the mill was also completely redone, and when a new building was constructed on site, Taylor shipped every bit of wiring, including circuit breaker panels. Wayne coordinated the entire installation, which took a solid two weeks.

Vehicle Repair

Another ongoing area of need in Cameroon has been the ability to handle vehicle repair, including 20-year-old Land Cruisers that were reconditioned in El Cajon and shipped over, along with two Mercedes Unimogs that Taylor purchased to transport ebony from the forest to a road, where it can be loaded onto a large truck for transport to the mill. The Unimogs are built on a tractor frame, which allows them to keep all four wheels on the ground in

that any machines that are shipped arrive without damage.

Logan says one of the most fulfilling parts of the Crelicam project has been working with his Cameroonian colleagues at the mill to show them how to use new tools and machines and how to make problem-solving improvements on their own.

"I'm really proud of how much they've learned from working with us when we are there," Logan says. "Every time I go back I see the ownership and initiative they've taken to make improvements while we were gone. I'll see something new and learn that Ekouma, the head fabricator, made it with the welders using the tools we brought over. We didn't ask them to do that, but they took it upon themselves and did a great job of getting it done."

Producing Other Ebony Products

One of the goals of bringing better tools, training and infrastructure to the mill is to enable Crelicam's employees to have more value-added processing capability in Cameroon. The ability to perform more sophisticated processing of parts will in turn create more jobs, and equip



Laser guides help the sawyers make more accurate cuts

resilient and could stand up to the rigorous demands of cutting a dense wood like ebony – and shipped them to the Taylor factory in El Cajon, where Wayne and his team fully refurbished them, and then shipped them to Cameroon for installation. New saw guides were made for the existing saws, allowing better cutting decisions and straighter cuts. Wayne and his team also designed what they call a "blockworks" tool to be used on a large industrial bandsaw. This allowed an ebony cant to be clamped at the ends so pieces could be sliced off at any thickness needed in order to get the best use of the material and increase yield.

They also built a "head rig" setup in El Cajon for one of the bandsaws and shipped it over. It consists of a set of rails and a powered carriage to clamp a large block of ebony then roll it past the saw blade.

"This has given us the ability to use the largest material that comes to us and get better use of it," Wayne says. "It also enables us to cut wood for guitar backs and sides. We also built an overhead crane to help load the head rig carriage, since some of these larger blocks of ebony weigh 700 to 800 pounds."

Taylor also purchased and rebuilt four large Northfield industrial table saws and made robust fences and push



Wayne Brinkley

uneven terrain. But Wayne says keeping them operational initially proved to be challenging.

"The terrain is not very forgiving, and the usage these trucks see is pretty severe," he says. "To get in front of potential issues we established a cleaning and inspection procedure that occurs after every trip into the forest. We've had to replace a windshield, brakes, axle seals, front axle universal joints, steering joints, a steering gear box, air compressors and valves, a fuel injection pump, water pumps, a transmission, at least a dozen tires that have been destroyed, and upgrade to heavy-duty rear gear sets and bearings."

One of the most important additions to the mill has been the construction of an on-site machine shop to handle a variety of repair and fabrication work.

Logan Shively is a mechanical engineer from Wayne's team who also regularly travels to Cameroon. These days about 90 percent of his work at Taylor relates to Crelicam projects. He has worked on the Stenner bandsaws, designed and helped build the head rig and crane, worked on the dust collection system for all the saws and laser guides for cutting, helped set up the machine shop, and more. He also plays an important role in all the container shipments out of El Cajon to Cameroon, including ensuring



One of the Unimogs in action

employees to produce semi-finished or finished goods. Ultimately this will generate more economic prosperity for employees and their families. It's been part of Bob's vision for what Crelicam can become, and the mill is getting closer to that capability. The other benefit is that finding uses for smaller pieces of ebony or those that aren't suitable for musical instrument parts reduces ebony waste and translates into more economic value generated by a tree. This is important because there is a strict limit to how much wood we are permitted to bring out of the forest each year.

One example of this is our plan to introduce ebony guitar slides made from Crelicam ebony. Our tooling team recently shipped a Hempel lathe to Cameroon, which is now being used to produce the slide blanks. These blanks are currently the most profitable piece that Crelicam makes, due to the additional work done to transform the material. The finishing touches are handled in El Cajon. Bob hopes that Crelicam will one day have the expertise to complete the work right there at the mill. (For more on the guitar slides, see p. 25.) Bob has also been exploring the development of other product offerings with Crelicam ebony, including a line of kitchenware products.



of a prospector who trudges into a community forest in Cameroon to locate an ebony tree; or to try to lift even one end of a slab of the ebony (one of the densest and heaviest woods in the world) that will be hand-carried to a Unimog, which will then take it down a path to a truck at the nearest road that will drive it to the mill; or to meet the communities that rely on the forest for their livelihoods; and to see the lives that are impacted by the economy the ebony trade creates, that person would likely have a much deeper appreciation for what it takes to procure materials for their instrument.

Since we can't take people to Cameroon, Taylor recently developed an immersive storytelling experience on our website called The Ebony Project. Launched on Earth Day (April 22), the eight-part multimedia feature blends aerial video of the Congo Basin rainforest with written content, video interviews, and photos. Together, they provide the framework of a multifaceted story that continues to unfold. The story's eight chapters are divided into different themes. You'll learn why ebony is a traditionally used wood for stringed instruments and why Taylor decided to become a co-owner of the Crelicam mill; get a taste of Yaoundé, Cameroon's vibrant and sometimes chaotic capital city, where Crelicam is based; get a feel

for the realities of working in Cameroon and the challenges of improving the conditions and operation at the mill; see how the lives of Crelicam employees are changing for the better; discover how we got involved with groundbreaking research into ebony ecology; and learn about an innovative ebony planting program that is on the way to putting thousands of ebony trees in the ground over the next few years.

The Ebony Project content was developed by our marketing team, with videos and photos shot by outside contributor Chris Sorenson (whose photos accompany this piece), and with sound provided by his brother Scott. A more conventional documentary-style film is in the works, but knowing that we want to chronicle more of the community planting part of the initiative, which is still in the early stages of implementation, our team will be traveling to Cameroon to capture more footage and interviews. In the meantime, the chapter-based online experience provides an informative introduction to what has been accomplished so far.

Essentially, the story content can be divided into two main areas of focus: the transformation of the Crelicam mill itself – the improved working conditions, the technology transfer, increased in-country value-added processing and the investment in the

employees; and our efforts to learn more about the ecology of ebony and develop a scalable model for restoration and reforestation. (The "Ebony Project" title originally referred to an ebony research project funded by Bob to better understand ebony's ecology, but it later came to represent our entire story, including Crelicam.)

The last several chapters of The Ebony Project introduce several key partners in the research and replanting work. One is Dr. Tom Smith, a professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UCLA and the founding director of UCLA's Center for Tropical Research (CTR) and Institute of the Environment and Sustainability (IoES). Tom has spent more than 35 years in Cameroon researching tropical rainforests. He helped to create the Congo Basin Institute (CBI), a multi-institution forest and agroforestry research center located in Yaoundé. It turns out that relatively little research has been done on ebony ecology, so the ebony research funded by Bob that's been conducted over the last two years at CBI has revealed a great deal about everything from how ebony seeds are naturally disseminated in the forest and how trees are pollinated to effective methods of propagating ebony using leaf cuttings from parent plants as well as via tissue culture.



Another central figure in our efforts is Dr. Zac Tchoundjeu, a leading expert on agroforestry who has been working with forest-dependent communities in the Congo Basin for decades. Dr. Zac's work has provided a detailed blueprint for a scalable, community-based agroforestry program that will enable people to provide food for their families and participate in the planting of ebony to benefit their descendants.

By consulting with hundreds of communities, Zac identified the types of trees and plants that have value to them. These include fruit trees, such as bush mango, along with plants with medicinal value. The challenge has been for communities to see the value in planting a high-value timber tree like ebony, given its 80-to-100-year timeline to maturity. The model that Zac created provides an ideal planting program. Communities are provided fruit and medicine trees that will begin to produce fruit within two to three years. Meanwhile, the communities will also be taught how to cultivate ebony trees and be paid during the first five years of a tree's life to ensure that it becomes established (after five years an ebony tree becomes self-sufficient). The trees are also geo-tagged, and the information, including the name of the family that plants the trees, is recorded in an official registry. This will ensure that ownership rights to the trees are

passed down to future generations so the family's descendants legally can sell the tree – perhaps to Crelicam – at an appropriate time.

A Planting Program Takes Root

As Scott Paul mentions in his Sustainability column in this issue, the community-centered planting program is underway. Thanks to the work of Dr. Vincent Deblauwe and the rest of the team at CBI, the first ebony plant nurseries are starting to be established within communities, and more than 1,400 ebony trees were planted in April. We set a goal of planting 15,000 trees over the next few years, after which we'll evaluate and continue from there, perhaps with additional support from partners who can help scale up the program. We'll be sure to keep you updated.

In the meantime, we invite you to explore The Ebony Project, which you can access from our home page at taylorguitars.com. (You'll also find it at taylorguitars.com/ebonyproject.) To listen to our podcast conversation with Bob about Crelicam and our efforts toward sustainability, go to our home page, under Owners, and you'll see a link to our From the Factory Podcast on the right. Look for Episode 15: Bob Taylor: The Ebony Project Takes Root. **W&S**



Opposite page, from top: Research technicians in CBI's tissue culture lab; ebony leaf cuttings planted in non-mist propagators can produce large numbers of trees. CBI is teaching this technique to local communities; Dr. Zac; CBI scientist Dr. Vincent Deblauwe inspects an ebony tree for flowers. Data on pollinators, seed dispersers and predators has led to new insights on forest regeneration. **Above:** Dr. Vincent Deblauwe (right) talks with Maxime Ndjankoum and Suel Suel Roger Materne at their community nursery in the village of Somalomo

Wood and Steel

Our new Crelicam ebony guitar slides bring a unique feel and sound to those open-tuned riffs

There's something undeniably soulful about the sound of slide guitar, especially in the hands of an expressive player. And as slide players know, the slide's material – usually metal, glass or ceramic – plays a role in both the feel (which impacts your ability to control of the pitch and vibrato) and sound. Metal slides are known for a rougher feel and brighter tone. Glass slides are often smoother in both feel and sound. Ceramic slides tend to live somewhere in between, depending on the actual ceramic composition.

We're pleased to announce that we're adding another material to the mix: ebony, from our Crelicam mill in Cameroon. Ebony's hardness and density help produce a clear sound, while its lighter weight compared to other slides translates into a comfortable playing experience. After introducing these to Taylor dealers at the Winter NAMM Show, followed by some

the slide allow him to get a more expressive sound.

"You need to use a little more gain to get the ebony to sing the same as metal or glass, but the light weight gives me a better feel for the note and for controlling the pitch and vibrato," he says. "It's not as slippery either, which also helps my control. I'm just an OK slide player, so it helps me sound better because of those characteristics. It's also a bit warmer sounding if someone doesn't want as much of that top-end tonal character."

Taylor product specialist Michael Lille is a big fan of Lowell George's slide playing with Little Feat. He compared glass, brass and ebony slides on his Strat played through his SlideRIG pedal by Origin Effects, which was designed to emulate George's heavily compressed tone.

"I found the Crelicam slide to be my favorite for this application," he says. "The light weight of the



fun playing sessions around the Taylor campus over the last few months, the verdict is that these slides offer a uniquely sweet sound with a pleasing mix of warmth and control.

"The part I like is the natural damping factor," says Andy Powers. "With most metal or glass slides, there tends to be a sharp, brittle sound on each note that requires me to carefully damp the length of string between the nut and the back side of the slide to prevent a brash sound. These ebony slides have a slight softening effect on the attack, making them warm and forgiving. It reminds me of rolling back the tone control of a Telecaster just a touch to smooth off the harsh edge."

Terry Myers, a 30-year Taylor veteran who works on our product development team and predominantly plays electric guitar, says the lighter weight and the feel of

ebony slide gave me more control and comfort. It had a little less sustain, but with electric volume and some compression I couldn't put it down."

Our slides will be produced in four sizes. As of our press deadline we were finalizing the details, including the inside diameter for each size, along with the packaging. Because of the mix of black and variegated coloring, each slide will exhibit its own unique visual character.

If you're a slide enthusiast, consider this a must-have for your collection; if you're a beginner, this will help you develop your slide skills with greater ease and a pleasing tone along the way.

Look for our ebony slides at select Taylor dealers and through TaylorWare on our website starting later this summer.

[Emerging **Artists**]

Bringing the **RAIN**

**Plucky British singer-songwriter
Jade Bird talks about the
emotional appeal of story-songs
and the power of perseverance**

By Colin Griffith



accessible – its hooks do most of work for the listener. Her spirit reveals itself openly throughout the record, each song a glimpse at different sectors of her arsenal of influences.

"I really liked blues when I was younger...that's why there's a cover of [Son House's] 'Grinnin' in Your Face' on my first EP," she explains.

There's a deep appreciation of American folk on display here, including blues and country, updated with a contemporary alternative feel and Jade's already-polished songwriting. She's adopted these traditionally American forms with a seamless grace that speaks to her immersion in the work of music's greatest songwriters.

Like the work of many artists whose work resonates with their audience, there's a universality embedded in Bird's lyrical stylings, hidden in details of crumbling relationships and stories of individuals growing apart. She rejects genre labels, and instead considers herself more of a stylistic explorer, focusing her attention on the narratives that bring emotional punch to her varied musical sound.

"I've always written stories in my songs," she says. "I think that's why people are attracted to those types of music."

Bird's creative process is one of observation and extrapolation – she is an avid notekeeper, collecting snippets of thought from everywhere she goes.

"I had landed at an airport," she says, "and someone said to me, 'Ah, you brought the rain.' I put that in a song."

It's an extension of how she's translated her life experience into startlingly mature lyrical themes, something she's done since childhood.

"My parents broke up, my grandparents broke up, so I've always had a closer eye for describing a relationship breakdown," she says. "I was part of it in my younger years."

Her sensitivity permeates her songs, mixing with an exuberance that is sometimes lacking in the singer-songwriter pantheon.

As for her experience as a guitar player, her journey feels charmingly traditional.

"A family friend got me into artists like Howlin' Wolf, Neil Young, Dylan," she shares. "I picked up chords from that, started writing in my little black lyric book."

Bird draws from more contemporary players too, referencing Mazzy Star's "Into Dust" as a major inspiration: "I liked how you could just move the D chord up the neck – there's not much required to make such a beautiful tune." She claims she's not a great technical player, but the melodies in her music make such a distinction moot.

Once she got past the second-hand guitar stage, Bird says it's been all Taylor for the rest of the way.

"My mom decided it was a serious hobby as opposed to an overnight thing."

She started with a used 614e, and says its tone was the number one factor in her decision.

"[The Taylors] had such a warm sound, and I thought, this really suits the female vocal more than a lot of other acoustic guitar brands," she says. Her acoustic arsenal also includes a GS Mini, which she prizes for its portability and compact size.

However, her ultimate weapon is that sheer white guitar that helped her stand out on the Fallon stage. A custom-made, non-cutaway maple/spruce Grand Concert (14-fret) featuring a 24-7/8-inch scale length, it's the perfect guitar to complement Bird's musical, aesthetic, and ergonomic sensibilities. She says people are quick to point out the guitar's size.

"A lot of people have told me it looks like a kid's guitar! But it works out quite well for me."

as an artist, specifically as a woman in a male-dominated industry. True to her confident self, Bird seems less daunted by the industry's perhaps biased expectations than emboldened by them.

"I'm a tiny human, a tiny girl, and people tend to assume I'm going to have a pretty, soft voice," she elaborates. "But I've always thrived on that, because it just means I can show them that I do have a set of lungs on me."

Anyone watching her performance on *The Tonight Show* would have no choice but to agree – the raw energy of her voice might impress Janis Joplin. Asked what she would tell other young girls harboring dreams of musical success, she simply says, "Keep persevering." She describes facing stereotypes in her days playing pubs in London, where she performed alongside veteran blues players every weekend.

"Eventually I became an artist that people actually came in to see there," she says.

Bird is also an avid fan of female contemporaries, naming artists like the indie trio HAIM as examples of women

During an April taping of *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*, a spotlight fades up on a petite woman holding a gleaming white Taylor guitar before a backdrop of shadowed musicians. The woman is young – she's just entered her twenties, and her small physical stature, for a moment, seems to mirror her upstart status in the music world. Fallon has just introduced her, and the audience roars in response. All eyes – both live and soon, in millions of homes across America – turn to her. So why doesn't Jade Bird look more nervous?

Though this may be her most-watched performance to date, it's hardly her first. Born in Northumberland, England, before a nomadic childhood took her to a handful of locales, Bird seems to thrive under the spotlight. She picked up a second-hand acoustic guitar at 13, and within a year she was already on her way.

"When I was 14, I started gigging in pubs and clubs in South Wales," she says matter-of-factly. She's talking from the seat of a van driving from the site of her *Tonight Show* performance in New York City to a venue in Washington, D.C. Bird is playing a run of shows this spring in anticipation of her upcoming debut LP, in the wake of a flurry of showcases in March at the South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas.

"I think this is the best stuff I've done so far," Jade's voice crackles excitedly through the phone line. She has reason to be thrilled – her recent single, "Lottery," has been making the rounds online, and she's been working with a handful of industry vets who clearly have her back.

"We had some incredible musicians," she says. "Like [drummer] Zack Alford – he was on the Fallon show with me – he played with David Bowie for 15 years."

Behind the controls in the studio was longtime producer Simone Felice, whose most recent production credits include indie favorites the Avett Brothers, Bat For Lashes, and the Lumineers.

"We've got a good family vibe now, and everything seems to be well-oiled," she adds.

The new album, which Jade says will be out sooner rather than later, follows her 2017 EP, *Something American*. A five-track offering, the EP offers an entry point for Bird's specific flavor of Americana-tinged alt-rock, though her music is quite

I'm a tiny girl, and people assume I'm going to have a pretty, soft voice. I've always thrived on that, because it just means I can show them I have a set of lungs on me.

As for the white paint job, that was a deliberate choice, she says, to add a bit of eye-catching flair. The all-white look, which includes a white peghead overlay, is accented with contrasting black binding along with sparkling abalone for the rosette and top edge trim.

"I wanted it to be quite striking," she says. "The only two people I know who have had white guitars are Dolly and Elvis, and maybe Chris Isaac at one point."

She insists, though, that the attraction to Taylor has always been about tone, reiterating her affinity for how the acoustic voice complements that of women.

"It's not twangy, just more of a supportive sound," she says.

That kind of functional assertion has been core to Bird's development

whose musicianship and songwriting talents have put them in control of their musical careers. With her own career on an upward arc, she aims to maintain artistic control of her music.

"I know I'm always going to write my albums 100 percent by myself," she says. "I'm proud of that, and I can't wait to release new music."

Based on her recent emergence, it's hard to imagine anything else. With extensive tours on the horizon and the release of her new album approaching fast, Bird seems to relish that spirit of self-reliance.

"When you're in the studio, you're all on an equal level," she says. "I know what I want, and I speak it often."

Whatever she's preparing to say, the world is ready to listen. **W&S**

[Backstage **Pass**]

RIGHT HAND MAN

Soulful fingerpicker Cary Morin talks about his Native Americana musical style, his love of Open D tuning, and why his T5 is an essential tool

By Dan Forte



“Cary Morin is a unique and brilliant guitar player, songwriter and singer,” says renowned folk musician David Bromberg, extolling the virtues of one of his favorite players. “It’s hard to pick out what he does best. As a guitar player, I have huge respect for Cary’s style and technique on the guitar. If you haven’t heard him yet, you should. Try to remember that it’s only one guitar.”

Hearing the ease with which he fingerpicks on his latest album, *Cradle to the Grave*, it’s hard to believe that he’s only been playing solo for about seven years – and, as Bromberg says, that it’s all just one person. In fact, all the songs were cut live in a studio in Fort Collins, Colorado, where Morin makes his home.

The 55-year-old Crow tribal member calls his style “Native Americana,” though he admits that might seem vague.

“It’s a combination of folk and blues and country, with pretty simple chord structures – kind of rolled into one and twisted,” he explains.

The son of an Air Force officer, Morin grew up about 10 miles outside Great Falls, Montana, a mile from the Missouri River – “completely surrounded by antelope and wheat fields,” he recalls. “So I spent a lot of time playing guitar.”

After seven years of piano lessons as a kid, Morin felt the urge to branch out. He picked up an old \$40 nylon-string guitar that had been lying around the house and started teaching himself to play at age 11.

“I had basic theory from piano, and the guitar ended up being real easy,” he says. “I feel like I invented everything along the way.”

In high school, Morin played in a country-rock band and in a duo with friend and multi-instrumentalist Matt Lion.

“He was handy with a banjo and played fine guitar, fiddle, and hammered dulcimer,” Morin says. “Now he’s a crazy-good ukulele player, too.”

By this point Morin was testing his chops on the electric guitar and exploring acoustic fingerstyle in the vein of Chet Atkins and Leo Kottke.

“The folk albums we had around the house helped me learn – figuring out Cat Stevens and Neil Young songs,” he says. “I learned a bunch of Kottke songs, but I didn’t realize he was playing in open tunings, so I learned everything in standard, which was painful.”

These days he mainly plays in Open D.

“I just discovered this eight years ago,” he says. “A friend dropped off a guitar at my house, tuned to Open D, and he told me to just leave it like that. It made no sense to me, and I’d put it down in frustration. About a year later, I made some advances, and then

I couldn’t put it down. I’ve been obsessed with all the chord possibilities in that tuning ever since; I’m constantly learning, to this day.”

Cradle, along with many of Morin’s other recordings (*Together*, *Streamline*, and *Tiny Town*, all solo or with minimal backing) are recorded entirely in Open D.

“Depending on the guitar I’m using, I’ll just tune to wherever the tension feels right, since I’m not accompanied by other musicians,” he says. “It’s more important to me that my right hand feels right in that tension than where the guitar ends up relative to E.”

Although much of his fingerpicking is reminiscent of the Piedmont school of blues – heard in the playing of artists like Blind Boy Fuller, Blind Blake, and Reverend Gary Davis – Morin admits he had little exposure to those players when he was developing.

I like. But the T5 has been my go-to guitar for stage work, and I use it in the studio as much as any of those other guitars.”

Morin actually has two T5s, each set up with different string gauges.

“I use lighter strings on one,” he says. “On the main one, I use .012 Elixir electric strings – I think they ship with .010s, but I find that the .012s sound richer. They feel better to my right hand for fingerstyle stuff.”

The T5’s thinline body design enables him to take both on tour.

“Flying, it would be really hard to get two guitars other than the T5s into an overhead,” he explains.

Of the T5’s pickup settings, Morin sticks with the second position (neck humbucker only).

“I eventually taped off the f-holes to allow me to reach louder volumes on

On his wish list is a T5 12-string.

For years, Morin has been involved with the Music Maker Relief Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to preserving the musical traditions of the South – blues, gospel, country – by providing artists with instruments, bookings and monthly stipends for food, shelter and medical care. Founder Tim Duffy recalls meeting Morin through another artist, Pura Fé Crescioni, founder of the group Ulali.

“Music Maker sent Cary to Europe to back Pura Fé, and I produced a live recording,” he shares. “I was so struck by Cary and his playing I invited him to make a record for Music Maker.

Through my time with Pura Fé and Cary, I began to truly realize the huge influence Native Americans have contributed to the religious, culinary, and musical cultures of the United States. As for

“Mississippi Blues” by Willie Brown.

“The first time I heard ‘Mississippi Blues’ was David Bromberg’s version, he says. “I thought his take was so slow and emotional, and his fingerstyle work was astounding.”

When Prince passed away, like many other musicians, Morin was inspired to play one of his songs as a tribute. His was a fingerpicked rendition of “Nothing Compares 2 U.”

“I made a little video on my couch, and people really liked it, so I went ahead and put it on *Cradle to the Grave*,” he says. “I try to purposely take the songs that I cover somewhere new.”

Reflecting on his musical approach as a whole, he says he loves the idea of taking the listener somewhere new.

“I think that’s the goal of a lot of art – to create an alternate reality,” he

“I learned a bunch of Kottke songs, but I didn’t realize he was playing in open tunings, so I learned everything in standard, which was painful.”

“I have a hard time calling myself a blues player,” he says, “because there are guys out there who are really fantastic, knowledgeable blues performers, and I think that’s really important. I ended up kind of obsessed with Kelly Joe Phelps; that was all I listened to for a lot of years. I didn’t really pursue his style so much, but I became so familiar with the songs that I could hear them without even playing them. I’ve always learned things by ear. And that was all Open D.”

Morin used a Taylor T5 as his main guitar on *Cradle to the Grave*.

“The engineer Richard Werdes and I have been making records together for years in Fort Collins,” he says. “We started the setup with left and right stereo pair, a guitar mic, a vocal mic, and a DI. I would use a variety of different guitars, like a mid-’70s Gurian, and my wife Celeste has a ’65 Gibson J-50

bigger stages,” he says. “In the studio, I take the tape off and we mic the guitar. But that setting is the closest sound to an acoustic guitar, although it still has its own sound – nothing else sounds like a T5. It’s not electric, and it’s not acoustic. It’s just its own thing.”

The rest of his signal chain is pretty simple.

“I’ve used a variety of DIs,” he says.

“The Fishman has been good to me over the years, because it’s got a tuner and a little bit of EQ onboard. The T5 pretty much sounds good when I just set everything flat. On the DI, I might bump up the bass a little bit, but it really sounds good from the get-go through pretty much any rig. I used to haul around an acoustic amp with me, but I do that less and less and just rely on what the house has. A lot of times I’ll walk in with the T5, get a hard cable, and that’s it. Life simplified.”



Cary, who else fingerpicks like that – Leo Kottke? I think he may be the most important folk performer alive today.”

Morin’s originals run the emotional gamut from thought-provoking to laid back, but his guitar playing never fails to impress.

“I pick with my thumb and three fingers, but I don’t anchor my pinky,” he explains. “People watch me and think I’m picking with all my fingers, but I guess the pinky just kind of flops around and doesn’t do anything. I tried to use fingerpicks, but I couldn’t keep them on my fingers, and I found thumbpicks too uncomfortable. So I use my fingernails, and I’ve got pretty stout calluses built up on my right hand and depend on them more than the fingernails.”

Morin has also put his own unique imprint on the songs of others, including covers of the Bee Gees’ “To Love Somebody,” Phish’s “Wolfman’s Brother,” and

explains. “When I sit down and listen to a recording, everything goes away. You get immersed in the beauty of whatever’s happening in the music. It’s always been a huge honor of mine to be able to create that space for people. It’s been my experience over the years that no matter what I’m thinking about when I’m penning a song, it means something totally different to anybody else. People can just take it like a piece of clay and mold it into whatever they want it to be. It’s great that we can have that experience together, and I’m really glad to be a part of it.” **W&S**

Soundings



Jazz Hands

Renowned guitar virtuoso **Mimi Fox** dropped by the Taylor campus in late February to hang with Tim Godwin from Artist Relations and audition some acoustic models, including our new V-Class guitars. Fox has been revisiting her acoustic roots and was on the hunt for a new guitar for an acoustic recording project. She left with a new **Builder's Edition K14ce**, and we checked in with her a couple of weeks later to see how it was working for her.

"I love it!" she raved via email. "The delightful meshing of koa and spruce creates a beautiful, warm tone that sounds gorgeous. The abalone inlay and beveled body make for an aesthetically gorgeous guitar."

As a jazz guitarist, Fox frequently plays up the neck, and she likes that with the V-Class bracing, the upper register isn't "pingy," which she often finds to be the case with acoustics. She also loved the feel of the Builder's Edition's beveled, contoured cutaway.

"It enables me to effortlessly play in the upper register without even thinking about it," she shared. "The body is lightweight and very easy to handle. In short, the look, feel, sound and sheer ease of playability make this an exceptional instrument for me."

Fox also has a Taylor baritone guitar and loves its tonal palette. "It has an amazingly rich, funky sound and feel," she said.

A winner in six consecutive *Downbeat Magazine* international critics' polls, Fox is an eloquent improviser, inventive arranger, award-winning educator, and electrifying performer. She'll be touring this summer and fall, and hopes to release her album toward the end of this year. We can't wait to hear it.

Builder's Edition K14ce Wins a MIPA

In April our Builder's Edition K14ce received the prestigious **Musikmesse International Press Award (MIPA)** for Best Acoustic Guitar at this year's Musikmesse trade fair in Frankfurt, Germany. Voted on by 100 music



industry media platforms and music industry editors globally, this award is an international acknowledgement of Taylor's commitment and passion for innovation in the acoustic guitar category. The MIPA is often described as the equivalent of a Grammy in the musical instrument industry.

Nate Shivers, our Director of Sales for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa accepted the award on behalf of Taylor at the official presentation ceremony.

Taylor historically has fared well among MIPA's voting journalists. In 2017 Taylor won Best Acoustic Guitar for our Academy Series and Best Acoustic Bass for the GS Mini-e Bass. In fact, over the last 17 years of MIPA, Taylor has received a total of 13 awards.

Taylor's Pod Squad

If you follow Taylor on social media, you know we've taken the plunge and joined the podcast ranks. We launched the Taylor Guitars From the Factory podcast in August of 2017 to give Taylor enthusiasts another portal into our world and the people associated with it. Hosted by Cameron Walt and Jay Parkin from our marketing team, the podcast is usually recorded in "The Shed," a small room turned makeshift studio directly across from Bob Taylor's office in our product development building. It's a pretty organic affair – Cameron and Jay talk with guests who have some connection with Taylor, including staff, artists and others in the music world. The podcasts often feature guitar demos as well.

V-Class: Up to Snuff

Another acclaimed player who found himself smitten by our V-Class guitars is award-winning composer **W.G. "Snuffy" Walden**, whose acoustic scoring work on popular TV shows like *thirtysomething* and *The Wonder Years* helped spark a renewed interest in the acoustic guitar after an extended lull in the music world during much of the '80s. Walden went on to win an Emmy award for composing the theme to Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing*, and scored a slew of other TV shows, from *Roseanne* to *Friday Night Lights*.



After an initial V-Class test-drive at the Winter NAMM Show piqued Walden's interest, we sent him a **Builder's Edition K14ce** and **914ce** to play and compare in his studio. Although he normally plays our Grand Concert body style, he said the ergonomic feel of the beveled armrest and cutaway made the Grand Auditorium feel more accessible.

"It looks and feels just as comfortable as the smaller body," he said via email. "And such grace and ease of playing on the cutaway! Both [are] lovely and practical applications!"

He shared a few other impressions from his time with the guitars.

"The intonation and almost piano-like sound were a real surprise. I'm a stickler for tuning, and I found it true and consistent. In the studio I had a great experience recording and A/B-ing the two new V-Class guitars I had against other instruments and two of my Taylors (a little frustrating when they both beat my primary touring instrument, a **K22ce**, as well as an **812ce** that was made for me two or three years ago). The sound was clear and balanced, with more low mids than my koa! Some of this could be that the [Grand Auditorium] body size was slightly bigger than my 812ce and K22ce."

We were excited to learn of a new documentary about Walden's career, *Up to Snuff*, that stretches back to his indulgent rock & roll days in the early '70s with his band Stray Dog and covers his work as a stage and session player for other top acts before later becoming an acclaimed composer for TV. The film was making the rounds at film festivals this spring. You can watch the trailer at snuffywalden.com.

So far, the Taylor staffers you'll meet in the episodes include Tim Godwin, who heads up our Artist Relations



team; repair guru Rob Magargal, who talks about the basics of guitar care; 30-year Taylor veteran Terry Myers,

who has worn many hats here; and of course, co-founders Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug, who share stories from Taylor's early days. In one episode, Andy Powers talks about developing our new V-Class bracing; in another, our Director of Natural Resource Sustainability, Scott Paul, shares how his path as an environmentalist led him to Taylor. Bob also joins Cameron and Jay for another chat about Taylor's work to improve the ebony trade in Cameroon.

You can find the podcast page from the Taylor website, under Owners, or wherever you get your podcasts.



Their No. 1 Guitar

Nashville's country music community is unique in the way it appreciates its fans and honors its songwriters. On the songwriting side, it's the only genre in which the performing rights organizations (PROs) celebrate songwriters and their No.1 songs. There are three major PROs in the music industry: BMI, ASCAP and SESAC. Their job is to make sure songwriters get paid. They license, collect and distribute public performance royalties for songwriters and publishers when songs are played on the radio (terrestrial and satellite), in movies and TV, performed or streamed live (like in bars, restaurants and venues), and streamed over digital services like Spotify and Pandora.

BMI has a tradition of celebrating a songwriter's first No. 1 song on the Billboard charts with a special event that includes the music industry and media. Typically BMI will host as many as 25 events per year.

"Often this is the only chance for the songwriters to stand in the spotlight and be recognized by their peers," says Lauren Branson, BMI's Director of Public Relations. "Nashville is the only music community in the world that celebrates the writers behind each song in such a public way."

Part of BMI's tradition is to present the songwriters with a special guitar. For 2018 BMI partnered with Taylor to provide its official "First No.1" guitar to the year's honorees. Taylor Director of Artist Relations Tim Godwin worked closely with Taylor's production team and BMI to create something appropriate for the genre that would be valued not just as a trophy but also as a musical tool.

"We wanted it to be a guitar that artists would play, take to writing sessions, and not just put in the closet," Godwin says.

The end result was a Dreadnought 210e DLX (layered rosewood topped with solid spruce) customized with a vintage sunburst top and the BMI logo laser-etched into the pickguard. Godwin was on-hand in Nashville in May for a BMI event to celebrate the first No. 1 single from artist/co-writer Russell Dickerson, for the song "Yours," the title track from his debut EP. Dickerson and his fellow co-writers, Parker Welling with BMI and Casey Brown with SESAC, were all honored, and Dickerson and Welling both received Taylor/BMI guitars.

NAMM Jam

Earlier this year at the Winter NAMM Show in Anaheim, California (Jan. 25-28), our Director of Artist Relations, Tim Godwin, assembled an eclectic lineup of artist performances in our main showcase room. Leading off on Thursday of the show, Nashville-based blue-grassers **The Barefoot Movement** brought tight vocal harmonies and rich acoustic interplay (acoustic guitar, fiddle, mandolin, upright bass) to a melodic set infused with originals and deliciously inventive covers, including a crowd-pleasing rendition of Jimi Hendrix's "Fire" and a mash-up of the Beach Boys' "I Get Around" and Ozzy Osbourne's "Crazy Train." Next up was a showcase of young Japanese singer-songwriters **Ai Fujimori**, **CJ Li**, and **Natsumi Miki**, all backed by a Japanese house band, with the set emceed by Taylor's product specialist and artist liaison in Japan, Masaki Toraiwa. The showcase was dubbed the Izu Sessions, a reference to a series of live Taylor sessions recorded by the artists at Kitty Izu Studios last summer.

Friday brought a taste of California alt-country from Los Angeles-based **Sour Blossom**, followed by innovative singer-songwriter **Elise Trouw**, who has carved out a niche via social media with solo performances that blend her sultry vocals with multi-instrumental looping. Her appearance on the Taylor stage marked her first time layering her loops live, featuring bass, guitar (**T5z**), keys and drums. She also treated the crowd to a couple of mash-up covers, including Radiohead ("Weird Fishes/Arpeggi") with The Police ("The Bed's Too Big Without You") and Bobby Caldwell ("What You Won't Do For Love") with the Foo Fighters ("Everlong"). The day's final slot belonged to soulful singer-songwriter **Will Champlin** (Western Sunburst **712e 12-Fret**), a former contestant on *The Voice*, who delivered an impassioned set of new material flavored by great musical chemistry with his band. Champlin was joined along the way by friends Kurt Hugo Schneider and Macy Kate.

Saturday coincidentally featured two more alumni from *The Voice*: singer-songwriters **Brenneley Brown** and **Nolan Neal**. Brown, a precocious talent who had just turned 16, is inspired by classic country and counts the likes of Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Dolly Parton as influences (she even named her Taylor guitar Dolly). She brought her buoyant vocals to a mix of originals and covers, including Waylon Jennings' "Good Heated Woman" and Carrie Underwood's "Dirty Laundry." Nolan Neal uncorked his powerhouse voice, matched by his custom rosewood Grand Orchestra guitar, in a set peppered with funny banter. Neal was joined by several friends, including actor/singer-songwriter Dalton Cyr and Nashville duo Dixie Jade, and closed with a spirited cover of Elton John's "Tiny Dancer," which had won over all four judges on *The Voice* during his blind audition. Wrapping up the day was a return performance from dynamic Japanese artist **Miyavi**. Between songs, Miyavi spoke of his recent work as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR.org), which has enabled him to raise awareness for the plight of refugee children around the world. His travels have taken him to Lebanon and to Thailand to spend time displaced children from Myanmar. He has been a strong advocate for the support of refugee children, who make up more than half the refugee population, and shared stories of sharing music with them in refugee camps.



Brenneley Brown



Elise Trouw



Will Champlin



Ai Fujimori



Nolan Neal



The Barefoot Movement



Miyavi



The Craft

Playing Favorites

The more we appreciate musical nuances, the harder it is to pick a single favorite

There's a running conversation turned joke between my wife Maaren and me. She has playfully made me aware that I'm guilty of overusing the phrase, "This is the best song ever...recorded/written/performed/arranged." I'll admit I have used these words to describe no less than hundreds of songs. She says that "best" should indicate a level of exclusivity — that a solitary piece should claim that distinction.

She has a point. No more than one thing can be the best. But there is no possible way I could choose a favorite, especially when the field is so varied. I can think of songs from Wes Montgomery, Stevie Wonder, Led Zeppelin, Tony Rice, Joseph Maurice Ravel, and Bob Dylan, just to name a few. My inability to choose a favorite has puzzled me, as it seems to spill over into most other avenues of interest. For example, I'm often asked which guitar is my personal favorite. It feels like the only honest answer I could give is to say all of them.

I wonder if this comes partly from being immersed within a field. I've

heard that people raised in a jungle can distinguish between far more shades of green than people who live in a large city, or in a region often covered in snow. This makes sense — that anyone who spends a good deal of time interacting with something would presumably be able to make finer distinctions between a material's character or nature.

Taking the idea a step further, I suspect an environment that's free of distractions also would heighten one's ability to perceive their differences. I often wonder what the great instrument makers of long ago heard when they listened to one of their recently finished creations. Without a doubt, makers like the great Stradivari and Guarneri del Gesù were two of the most talented craftsmen to have lived. When I think of the environment in which they worked, it's obvious it would have been much quieter than now. Without harnessed electricity or recorded sounds, the only way to listen to music was to experience those sounds and songs in person. I can't help but think this would radically alter how intensely different the sounds emanating from their instru-

ments must have seemed. Even now, when I can disappear into the quieter confines of my workshop to build and listen, in this backdrop of stillness, each sound becomes more distinct,

Focusing on subtle flavors in a set genre is like choosing a favorite song from a Top 10 list of saxophone-led bebop jazz tunes as performed by a quintet. All are uniquely wonderful, but

“

When I can disappear into the quieter confines of my workshop to build and listen, each sound becomes more distinct, as if each piece of wood has its own song to sing.

”

as if each piece of wood has its own song to sing. So it is with guitars. Each instrument has such a unique set of qualities, and they all seem endearing, even at a granular level.

admittedly similar when viewed from a more distant perspective. Zooming out from this picture, we might see a very different thing. If we compared a big band swing tune, a rock song, and an

acoustic ballad, they seem to have little in common other than the fact they are all songs. Similarly, like many guitarists, I often play electric guitars, flat-top guitars, and archtop guitars. These seem at times so different from each other; the only common trait is six strings and frets. Could I choose a favorite among them? Not a chance. The category is simply too broad for me to compare them. Each of these is nearly a genre to itself. Appropriately, most guitarists will approach these different instruments in distinct ways, often performing different sets of music suited to the sounds each instrument will make.

Lately, I've been particularly interested in constructing the Builder's Edition guitars we recently introduced and watching how players respond to them. While remaining in the flat-top guitar category, these instruments seem to blur some invisible but understood boundary between guitar types. As I've experienced myself, players will pick up the instrument and discover how the upper register lends itself to arch-top-like clarity. The contours and shape-ly cutaway are borrowed from the electric guitar world and encourage a person toward physical freedom, while still loosely wearing the flat-top guitar name badge. The music performed on them has similarly blurred boundaries. The performances I've heard on these guitars seem less like jumping from one genre to another, and more like borrowing from different styles and stirring them together into something new.

I suppose this would be a hallmark of some of my favorite songs and artists: those pieces and performers that don't easily fit into a labeled classification box at the local record store. These are the artists who borrow from their influences and mix the colors into new shades, expanding past their stylistic name badge, and in some cases shedding it entirely.

In the case of instruments, I can say the same of my favorites. They may not easily fit into a category, but they sure are fun to play songs with. This summer, we continue to introduce new guitar flavors. Some of these designs reveal subtle shades between their flavors. Others are so very different. Do we have a favorite? Yes. All of them. We hope you enjoy discovering what music can be expressed with them.

— Andy Powers
Master Guitar Designer

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NEW

L-R: Demetrius from Taylor's Body department in our new **Men's 1974 Raglan Baseball T**; Katryn from Customer Service in our **Women's California Bear T**; and Ryan from the Marketing team in the **Men's California Bear T**.

NEW

Crown Logo Cap

The Taylor Line By Series

A snapshot of our series framework, tonewood pairings, and current models. For complete details, including photos and specifications, visit taylorguitars.com

Presentation Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Striped West African Ebony
Top: Sinker Redwood (GC, GA, 6-String GS) or Sitka Spruce

Available Models

PS12ce, PS12ce 12-Fret, PS14ce, PS16ce, PS18e, PS56ce



800 Deluxe Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

810e DLX, 812ce 12-Fret DLX, 812ce DLX, 814ce DLX, 816ce DLX



800 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

810e, 812ce, 812ce-N, 812e 12-Fret, 812ce 12-Fret, 814e, 814ce, 816ce, 818e, 818ce, 856ce, 858e

Koa Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Hawaiian Koa
Top: Hawaiian Koa (Options: Sitka Spruce or Cedar) or Torrefied Spruce (Builder's Edition)

Available Models

K22ce, K22ce 12-Fret, Builder's Edition K14ce, K24ce, K26ce, K66ce, K28e



700 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Lutz Spruce

Available Models

710e, 712ce, 712ce-N, 712e 12-Fret, 712ce 12-Fret, 714ce, 716ce, 756ce



900 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

912ce, 912e 12-Fret, 912ce 12-Fret, 914ce, 916ce, 956ce



600 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Figured Big Leaf Maple
Top: Torrefied Sitka Spruce

Available Models

612ce, 612e 12-Fret, 612ce 12-Fret, 614ce, 616ce, 618e, 618ce, 656ce

500 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Tropical Mahogany
Top: Mahogany, Lutz Spruce (GS, DN), or Cedar (GC, GA)

Available Models

510e, 512ce, 512ce 12-Fret, 522ce, 522e 12-Fret, 522ce 12-Fret, 552ce, 562ce, 514ce, 524ce, 516ce, 526ce



400 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Ovangkol or Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

410e-R, 412e-R, 412ce, 412ce-R, 414e-R, 414ce, 414ce-R, 416ce, 416ce-R, 456ce, 456ce-R, 418e, 418e-R, 458e, 458e-R



100 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Walnut
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

110ce, 110e, 114ce, 114e, 150e



Academy Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Sapele
Top: Sitka Spruce or Lutz Spruce (Nylon)

Available Models

Academy 10, Academy 10e, Academy 12, Academy 12e, Academy 12-N, Academy 12e-N



T5z

Specifications

Body: Sapele (Hollowbody)
Top: Koa (Custom), Figured Maple (Pro), Spruce (Standard) or Mahogany (Classic)
Electronics: Proprietary 3-pickup configuration (magnetic acoustic body sensor, concealed neck humbucker, visible bridge humbucker), 5-way switching, onboard tone controls



Available Models

T5z Custom, T5z-12 Custom, T5z Pro (Tobacco Sunburst, Molasses Sunburst, Pacific Blue, Borrego Red, Gaslamp Black), T5z Standard (Black, Tobacco Sunburst, Honey Sunburst), T5z Classic, T5z-12 Classic, T5z Classic DLX

T3

Specifications

Body: Sapele (Semi-Hollowbody)
Top: Figured Maple
Electronics: Proprietary high-definition humbuckers (optional vintage alnicos), 3-way switching, onboard tone controls, and coil-splitting capability



200 Deluxe & 200 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Koa or Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce or Koa

Available Models

210e DLX, 214ce DLX, 214ce-K DLX, 224ce-K DLX, 214ce



Baby Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Sapele
Top: Sitka Spruce or Mahogany

Available Models

BT1, BT2 (Mahogany Top), TSBTe (Taylor Swift Model), BBT (Big Baby)



Available Models

T3 (stoptail bridge), T3/B (Bigsby vibrato tailpiece)

To see our full range of top options, color finishes, and other appointments for each series, visit taylorguitars.com



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Musical Miracle

The back and sides of this exquisite Presentation Series Grand Auditorium are 400-year-old "Milagro" Brazilian rosewood, procured from the famed Milagro ("miracle") tree. The tree's unique growth cycle produced fine-grained properties that translate into spectacular ringing tone — making it some of the best-sounding Brazilian rosewood we've ever heard. Harvested prior to 1992 (pre-CITES), the wood's legal status is fully documented. The limited number of sets we have represents the last of our Brazilian rosewood reserve, and once we use it, we have no plans to make Brazilian rosewood guitars again. Soundboard choices include sinker redwood, shown here, or Lutz spruce. As if the stunning sustain and projection of a guitar crafted with this special rosewood weren't enough to thrill connoisseurs of acoustic tone, we've also voiced it with our new V-Class bracing. The sonic experience is nothing short of a miracle. To inquire about availability, contact your Taylor dealer.

