

Wood & Steel

Fall Limiteds

**Macassar Ebony &
Sinker Redwood**

**Quilted Sapele &
European Spruce**

Blackwood & Cedar

Builder's Reserve

**All-mahogany
12-Fret + Uke**

**Figured
Walnut
GS + Amp**

QUALITY
Taylor
GUITARS



Kurt's Corner

Brand Transcendence

When you start and grow a business like Bob and I have, a lot of people over time become involved with the company, whether as owners, employees, vendors, dealers or customers. Or even people who just know about the company and its products. People who are involved directly add their ideas and talents, and through everyone's hard work and group effort, the company survives, grows and prospers. The company's course is positively impacted by the contributions of each and every person, and the company learns from the successes and failures experienced

a friend's Taylor, or an artist they saw playing a Taylor, or maybe an article they read. In other words, the way in which our company or our guitars have connected with someone and impacted their life is what Taylor means to them. In that sense, a popular brand lives in people's hearts and minds, and is much bigger than the company itself. The brand is as big as there are people in the world who have connected with it in a positive and meaningful way.

We've been very fortunate over the years to have a lot of great people come through the door and join us

A popular brand lives in people's hearts and minds, and is much bigger than the company itself.

along the way. Over time, the company takes on an energy and life of its own, and is almost like an independent entity or organism that transcends the people or the ownership.

You see the external manifestation of this with popular brands like Taylor. Although Bob and I are the owners and the sole shareholders, and though we directly employ nearly 800 people across three continents, I think that when most people think of Taylor, they don't think about the people or the facilities. They think about what Taylor means to them on a personal level. They think of their own Taylor guitar, or

as members of the team, and help us grow, improve and evolve the company. Whether they stay with us for years or for decades, their energy and ideas and dedication become part of the wood and warp of the company, and remain with us forever. Just as Bob and I couldn't do this by ourselves and are fortunate that we each found a partner with complementary skills and talents, we couldn't do this without all the great people who have worked for us, and who continue working for us. Together, we've created and continue to create this awesome enterprise that transcends each of us and touches people

around the world through our guitars and music.

This issue of *Wood&Steel* features a profile of longtime employee Matt Guzzetta. As Matt prepares to retire from Taylor at the end of this year, we'd like to thank him for his many contributions and years of service, and celebrate his accomplishments.

Whatever your relationship is with Taylor, whether as an employee, vendor, banker, retail salesperson or guitar owner, you've contributed to the greatness of this company. We sincerely thank you.

— Kurt Listug, CEO

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2012 Taylor Factory Tours & Vacation Dates

A free, guided tour of the Taylor Guitars factory is given every Monday through Friday at 1 p.m. (excluding holidays). No advance reservations are necessary. Simply check-in at 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 the technical nature, the tour may not be suitable for small children. The tour lasts approximately one hour and 15 minutes and departs from the main building at 1980 Gillespie Way in El Cajon, California.

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

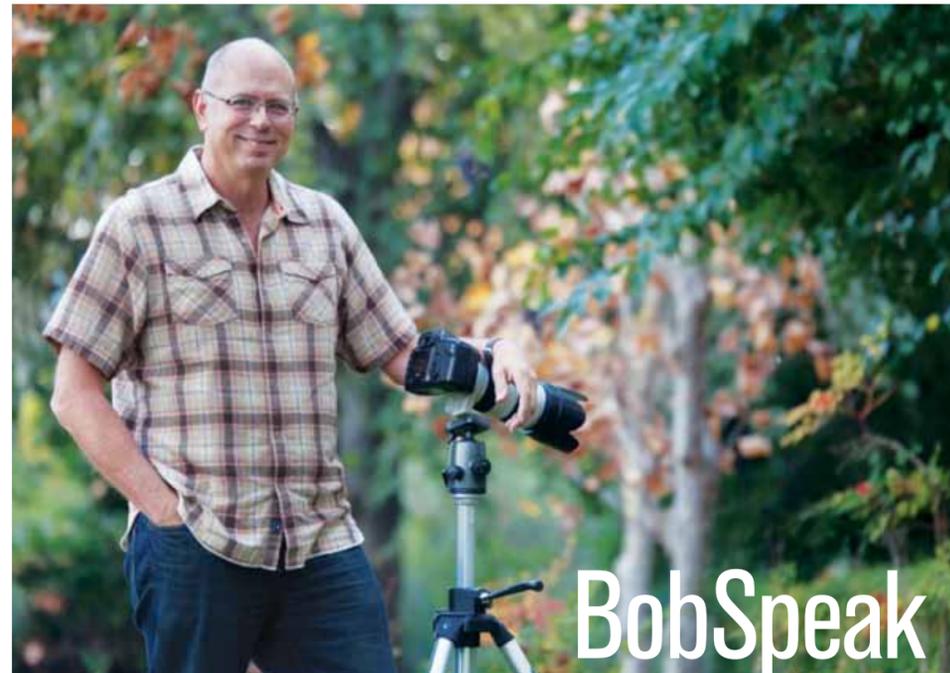
Holiday Closures

October 15
(Taylor Guitars Anniversary)

November 22-23
(Thanksgiving Holiday)

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

Ed. Note: Last issue's story, "More Than a Store," featured a photo of Taylor dealer Spotlight Music showing a sign that claimed the "largest selection of Taylor guitars in Colorado." To be fair, we should acknowledge that Wildwood Guitars in Louisville, Colorado technically has a larger Taylor inventory.



The View From Here

This issue I give you a photo of my chair. To me, my chair is kind of like Wilson (the volleyball) in the movie *Castaway*. It's my trusty friend, and it has seen many a beautiful place with me. I take its photo often, showing where we've been.

I've taken to iPhone photography lately in an effort to travel a little lighter, and frankly, to take fewer photos. For some time I traveled with full gear and came away with a lot of really fine photographs. But I noticed that I kind of missed the trip; I wasn't there in real time. So I'm in a different phase of travel now. The memories are mostly in my head, although I'm happy to share a few iPhone photos I've taken on my current trip.

In one of them, my chair is sitting inches from the edge of the Grand Canyon, the north side, where tourists seldom travel because it's hard to get there. We drove through thunderstorms to get to a dry spot. We were lucky, I guess, because the weather all around us was quite uncomfortable, and nearly dangerous. Last week 1,700 lightning strikes to the ground were recorded. The rain was coming down in buckets and the wind was howling. But we saw blue skies ahead in the direction we hoped for.

My iPhone is multitasking as my camera, map, typewriter (as I write this article) and music player. Right now, streaming via Bluetooth to my Jambox are the songs of Pablo Alborán, a young Spanish singer-songwriter who

has taken Spain by storm and who, like Columbus, has struck out to discover the Americas. You should seek him out if you're interested in some amazing music. His guitar playing is wonderful, and his voice is unbelievable. He's also made Spanish music very accessible to us Americans. I can't say enough good things about him.

I decided to get aggressive and actually go "get him" to be a Taylor player. That's something I just don't do, but this time was different. The funny thing is, once I got there I found him already playing Taylor guitars and learned that he's been a Taylor fan his whole life. When he got his first recording contract money, he ran out and bought a Taylor guitar.

Let's just say that a few more Taylors are heading his way. He's got my support and best wishes, and I'm proud to hear his voice echo down the canyon walls even now.

Among these huge pines and aspen-filled valleys where I'm sequestered, I can't help but think of guitar wood. This is where much of my attention lies lately. As we try to transition Cameroon into a sustainable source of ebony for guitars while keeping their forests in good health and also creating some kind of economy for Cameroonians, we haven't forgotten about all the other species around the world. It seems that each month there are new relationships and ideas to be developed to improve the sustainability of the timbers we use. It's quite fulfilling to work on projects that could have positive impact into

Wood&Steel Online

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



Top down: Bob's chair enjoys a view of the Grand Canyon; aspen trees; camping in Lone Pine, California

TOOL

ING AROUND

TAYLOR'S SECRET WEAPON, INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER MATT GUZZETTA, CHANGED THE WAY GUITAR MAKERS THINK ABOUT TOOLS AND HELPED SPUR TAYLOR'S MANUFACTURING GROWTH

BY JIM KIRLIN

Bob Taylor is sifting through Taylor memories, recalling the array of guitar companies who've sent employees to the Taylor factory over the years to get an inside look at our operation. After an in-depth tour, Bob's guests would typically venture home impressed by the proprietary tools and machines Taylor had developed to improve the guitar-making process.

"Almost every time I'd get a follow-up call," Bob remembers with a smile. "They'd say, 'Bob, I have one question for you: Where do I get a Matt?'"

Matt would be Taylor's Senior Tool and Machine Designer Matt Guzzetta, and who knows what Taylor Guitars might look like today if Bob had never met him. Through the lens of hindsight, there's no question that Bob possessed the passion and raw talent to become a successful luthier. His instincts for refining traditional guitar-making methods surely would have led to fresh innovations. That said, Guzzetta stands out as a key figure in Taylor's transformation from a small shop to an envelope-pushing manufacturer. In fact, his indelible contributions – including his creative mindset – are arguably as much a part of Taylor's forward-thinking culture as anyone's.

Guzzetta has officially been with the company for 20 years, but his association with Bob and Kurt stretches back to the seminal pre-Taylor days at the American Dream shop, where Bob and Kurt met. Guzzetta ran Don Vesco Products, which manufactured motorcycle racing parts, and his shop was in the same building, a couple of doors down. His ability to design tools made

a strong impression on a young Bob.

"Matt was great," Bob recalls. "He was older than me and knew a lot of tricky things that I didn't know how to do. I could go to his place needing a nut or a bolt and rummage through his coffee cans. He also had a little lathe that I could make things on."

Bob says he's not sure what trajectory his tooling development might have taken without Guzzetta.

"I knew how to make things, but I didn't know how to make things to make things, which was a big difference," he explains. "Matt did work that had complex shapes and fixtures to get holes drilled right. He taught me how to heat plastic and bend it, work with Plexiglas and drill jigs and Bondo and location pins, and make things accurately line up. He taught me about drill bushings. I learned how to make a lot of the simple tools we used back in the day from Matt. It made me want to start making guitar parts that were interchangeable."

Guzzetta's world was motorsports, and his innovative design work had already made a major impact among competitive motorcycle racers. The gas tanks he had designed for off-road racing became all the rage among the sport's top competitors; at one point the vast majority of the Baja off-road-winning bikes sported Guzzetta's tanks.

"We were selling 10,000 of them a year, exporting them literally all over the world," he remembered in a 1995 *Wood&Steel* profile. "We couldn't even keep up with the demand."

Guzzetta's interest in the physical mechanics of vehicle propulsion was sparked at a young age. By the time he finished high school, he had built a

hydroplane racing boat and a 13-foot, V-8-powered inboard. After high school, he spent four years in the Air Force, where he learned Russian and spent the early '60s working on an army sub-post in Germany intercepting and translating the conversations of Russian pilots.

After returning home he enrolled at the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles to study car design and for a class project began working on a streamliner-style racing car. After graduating, he was hired by BSA-Triumph Motorcycles in England, making him the first American ever hired to work on their new bike designs. While there he kept the streamliner project going on the side, and after the company ran into financial trouble, he returned to the U.S. Eventually he completed the streamliner, a first-of-its-kind, all-fiberglass 500cc Triumph-powered vehicle, and took it to the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah, whose speedway had become the site of many land speed records. There he met Don Vesco, a motorcycle racer who had just become the first person to break the 250-mph record. The two became fast friends, and Guzzetta convinced Vesco to go into business with him manufacturing racing parts.

Though Guzzetta's industry was, technologically speaking, far ahead of the more traditional world of guitar making, he says he had a deep appreciation for woodworking from the American Dream and early Taylor days.

"I loved the guitars," he says. "I didn't play, but the craftsmanship was fantastic."

He has fond memories of the free-wheeling days at the Dream shop.

"It was like a little hippie commune thing over there," he recalls. "Once or

twice a month they'd have a big pot luck, and they'd be roaming around playing music. Then Bob and Kurt bought the place and ruined it – they turned it into a real business," he laughs.

One of Guzzetta's valued remnants from Taylor's early era is a 1976 rosewood Jumbo 815 that he received in a trade for a finish spray booth. It's become a point of half-joking, half-defiant pride that he still has the original strings on it to maintain all-original parts.

As Bob and Kurt struggled to keep their fledgling enterprise afloat in the late '70s and early '80s, Guzzetta's restless creative focus shifted to the development of a super-aerodynamic, fuel-efficient motorcycle. In 1984, he etched his name into the Guinness Book of World Records for riding it from San Diego, California to Daytona Beach, Florida (2,400 miles) on less than 12 gallons of gas – averaging about 214 miles per gallon. (The bike is currently on display in the San Diego Automotive Museum.)

Though Guzzetta and Bob stayed in touch during those years, their paths would become more entwined around 1990, at the onset of what would turn out to be a new phase of Taylor tooling development. Bob had just bought his first computer mill, and Guzzetta, who had moved on from the motorcycle industry, had reapplied his creative focus to archery and the design of a revolutionary longbow. Bob offered to let Guzzetta use Taylor's mill after hours and on weekends to make some of the parts for it.

"It came full circle, where 15 years into our relationship, Matt was now

hanging out at my shop," Bob remembers, "and where I was able to help him do some stuff. At the time I was still the only tooling guy we had, so I asked him if he wanted to spend a little time here and get paid by the job or the hour. So he started doing that on a contract basis – he didn't want to be an employee; he hadn't worked for anyone for a number of years."

As Matt became more familiar with Mastercam, the program used to interface with the computer mill, his collaborations with Bob helped Taylor begin to carve out (often quite literally) a reputation for ultra-playable guitars that boasted a high level of consistent quality. Bob could explain the end result he wanted in some guitar-making process, and Matt would apply his industrial design expertise to fabricate a tool or machine that would achieve that goal in a more efficient and consistent way. As they worked closely together, they formed the nucleus of an in-house tooling department that would soon be capable of handling complex tool and machine design.

Guzzetta would eventually come aboard as a full-time employee, and in the years that followed, his designs would help Taylor grow more sophisticated and facilitate an increase in production volume without compromising on quality. Among his designs during the 1990s were: an aluminum kerfing clamp, which replaced the clothes pins traditionally used by guitar makers to hold kerfing strips to the inside of the guitar body; the fret buck, a device used to support the fretboard extension and absorb impact when the 14th

Matt Guzzetta, in front of an ultraviolet oven that he designed to cure a guitar's finish; Opposite page: Taylor's kerfing clamp, a Guzzetta design

through 20th frets were hammered in place on a neck that was attached to a guitar body (Taylor would later sell these to outside guitar repair technicians in the industry); a fretboard sander, incorporating a quick-change sanding drum attachment for a CNC mill to enable the sanding of the fretboard radius; and a vacuum chuck to hold a guitar body securely while allowing it to be rotated to scrape and level the binding.

One of Guzzetta's most revolutionary designs, and arguably his crowning accomplishment, was Taylor's ultraviolet oven, designed to cure the finish sprayed on a guitar (see sidebar).

Like Bob – perhaps even more so – Guzzetta has never felt beholden to the mold of tradition. In fact, he delights in bucking it.

"I like making things differently than other people do," Guzzetta says. "I think that's where it really came together with me and Bob, because neither one of us will look at something and say, 'That's it.' We'll think, we've got to add something to that, or we can do something better than that. If you don't think that way then you can't do what we do."

That mindset, coupled with Guzzetta's industrial design success outside the guitar world, proved to be a huge asset that influenced Taylor's conceptual approach to guitar making, as David Judd, a longtime member of Taylor's

product development team, can attest.

"One of the best things about Matt is that because of his vast experiences, he can think way outside the box, and bring ideas to the table that no one else would think of," he says.

Longtime finish department manager Steve Baldwin agrees.

"What's been great about working with Matt over the years has been his openness to new ideas, and being able to take an idea I had and make it usable," he says. "We've worked on quite a few projects together, and it's always been a pleasure to see the fruition of those ideas."

Among their collaborations were the development of the work station in which guitars are robotically buffed and the design of a spray cell and exchange station for Taylor's robotic, electrostatic finish spraying process.

Bob Taylor appreciates the innate depth of Guzzetta's curiosity and his positive outlook as he dives into a project.

"One of Matt's main assets is that he's highly interested," he says. "He's wonderful at researching things. He's also willing to change – 'Oh, you want me to do that now? Great, that'll be fun.' Most people aren't like that."

Bob also admires Guzzetta's ability to cross-connect ideas from different areas and reapply them.

"When Matt sees anything being made, he remembers it, and one day

he can go through his mental file cards and think, I saw how they used to polish glasses; that might be able to take the wrinkles out of copper when we build a pickup. So, he's a walking database of ways to relate non sequitur things."

David Hosler, a longtime member of Taylor's product development team who has also done a lot of design work over the years, is also a fan of Matt's design approach.

"Matt has become my standard for defining a truly creative industrial artist," he says. "He's a unique blend of genuine brilliance, inspiring creativity, and years of hands-on experience. His willingness to personally engage in projects on and off the drawing board is rare and valuable for all of us who work with him. I always think of Matt as someone who learned what he needed to know when information was critical and then went to the university of 'doing it.'"

Guzzetta's affable personality and straight-shooting ways have also endeared him to outside vendors and other collaborative partners over the years.

"We work well with other companies because if they want to try something, we'll tell them what we really think, and it won't be a biased thing," Guzzetta says. "And that word gets out. People want to do business with this company because we do stuff."

"Matt has a huge reputation among vendors, prospective vendors,

other guitar companies," Bob attests. "They're like, 'Say hi to Matt!' I've gotten more 'say hi to Matt' than we probably get 'say hi to Bob!'" he laughs. "Really!"

Throughout Guzzetta's tenure at Taylor, as the tooling and machine operation have grown around him – our product development group includes nearly 30 people, plus a team of ten responsible for equipment repair and maintenance – he's been able to adapt to the expanded organizational infrastructure. In return, he hasn't been pushed into a management position, which he acknowledges isn't his strength. To his credit, Bob says Guzzetta's ego doesn't demand that he be treated like the top dog. As long as he's got interesting projects to work on, he's content to be a designer.

Among his current projects is the design of some fixtures to make a new piezo-style pickup in-house. During one conversation in his office, he pulls up a 3-D image of the pickup and its carrier on his computer, within the design program Solidworks.

"With the piezo technology these days, they make a wire with a piezo film on it that's sensitive enough for you to bury them in the ground – they'll do it at the U.S. border – and it will detect everything from raindrops to a truck driving over it," he says.

He goes on to explain more about the pickup and the way it will be made.

Taylor recently bought a solid modeling machine that can make actual parts from the Solidworks design. The prod-

uct development group was also getting ready to purchase a high-precision injection molding machine.

"It's very small – it's made for doing things like medical stuff," he explains. "There's a lot of potential because we make a lot of little things, like knobs and other bits that go on a guitar that we don't use a lot of."

Listening to Guzzetta delve into the inner workings of a project or design, one can't help but get caught up in his unbridled enthusiasm, no matter how technical it may be. He has a way of making almost anything sound like fun. And most conversations are peppered along the way by "the Matt laugh," one of his most distinctive traits. It comes frequently, often after a wisecrack, and offers a constant reminder that work and play should be close friends.

"You can't look at your work as a job," he insists. "If you do, you'll never get anywhere doing it. It's not a job; it's like solving a problem. People do video games. Well, this is like a big, giant video game [laughs]."

Want to ignite Guzzetta's creative spirit? Tell him something can't be done. Even the trademark ponytail that still hangs from his head is the remnant of a defiant act.

"Years ago, my daughter had a boyfriend with a ponytail, and I made some comment about growing one," he shares. "She told me, 'You can't do that.' You can see how that worked out."

Even though Guzzetta's design fingerprints are all over the Taylor factory and his legacy is enmeshed with

Taylor's innovative industrial design, one of the products that's most associated with him at Taylor is the 1969 Datsun 510 he drives to work each day. He bought it new, and despite its compact size and clean, unassuming look (the paint color is "cool vanilla"), he's made, *ahem*, a few modifications to it. He's got a Ford 5.0 liter V8 engine in it, to the tune of 320 horsepower, with a Corvette's rear suspension and plenty of other fun customized features. He calls it his "street sleeper."

"It's kind of a cult car," he says. "It was an economy car that worked out really well in racing for 2-3 years, and it's got this aura about it. I built it for fun and to mess with BMW and Porsche owners, and to annoy other 510 owners," he adds with a chuckle. "People say you can't put a big V8 in it because it won't handle anymore. So that was just like putting a big red flag up – I can't do that? Oh, yes I can!"

Guzzetta belongs to the Sports Car Club of America, so every month or so he takes the car to a driving course in the parking lot of San Diego's Qualcomm Stadium, where he tests the limits of its handling.

"It's fun to go down there and play," he says. "The course is different every time, and you only get four runs. They don't call it a race. It's a precision driving test."

It's an outlet he doesn't take for granted, especially after suffering a stroke in late 2005.

"I was in the ICU for four days and walking on the fifth," he points out.

"Anyway, with all the eye-hand coordination and other skills required to drive the car, I told my doctor I should have been able to write off my investment in it as a rehab expense."

The end of this year would appear to mark the end of an era for Taylor and Guzzetta. Now at age 70, he's planning to retire, although he suspects he'll still be involved in projects.

"I came into this company as a consultant, so maybe that's the way I'll go out," he laughs. "Dave Hosler says they'll probably end up spending half their time over at my house when I leave. That would be kind of fun."

"Nobody here wants to see Matt leave," says Bob Taylor. "He has a huge, rich history in what we've done. And because of that, he's a springboard to anything that we're going to do. He's moved from making tools used to make our guitars to helping us invent new guitar parts."

While Guzzetta doesn't appear the least bit concerned about his legacy at Taylor – he seems perfectly content simply to know that he helped create some cool stuff – it's clear that his approach to design has become deeply embedded with Bob's philosophies as part of Taylor's innovative design culture.

"There just aren't very many people like Matt," Bob says. "He's eccentric in a charming way and in a practical way. A lot of people are eccentric but they're not practical. Matt's really practical and off-the-wall at the same time." **W&S**



Below: A sampling of the guitar-making tools Guzzetta designed. L-R: A vacuum chuck, used to hold a guitar body without damaging the surface of the guitar while excess binding is scraped; a quick-change CNC sanding drum attachment, which enables the fretboard radius to be sanded; (opposite page) the fret buck, designed to absorb impact and protect the guitar when frets are hammered into the fretboard extension



UV-Curable Finish

In the mid-'90s, Taylor introduced two innovations involving the use of ultraviolet (UV) light guitar finish applications: One was the finish itself; the other was a UV curing oven designed by Matt Guzzetta. The type of finish traditionally used had been nitrocellulose lacquer, which has several drawbacks. It contains a high level of chemical solvents (lacquer thinners), which are released into the air as the finish cures, and such emissions pollute the environment. The curing time also was lengthy – more than 10 days – with additional solvent vapors released beyond that, reducing the finish volume and often leaving an unsightly appearance. Lacquer also yellows over time and is susceptible to cold-checking (cracking) with dramatic temperature changes.

Taylor spent about four years working with outside finish suppliers to formulate a UV-curable polyester finish, constituted with considerably fewer solvents, making it much more environmentally friendly. It was also superior in other ways: It was thinner (thus enhancing the guitar's performance), clearer, easier to sand, and more stable amid temperature fluctuation.

The related improvement was Matt Guzzetta's customized UV curing oven to dramatically reduce the curing time. Though UV curing had been used in other industries like printing, it had been limited to flat surfaces because of the way the UV light needed to be focused. Three-dimensional products, such as guitars, were not candidates – until new lights were developed with enough power to cover a greater depth of field. Guzzetta's oven design incorporated a rotating setup along with the new lights, and the results were a dramatic improvement: Guitar finish could be cured in about 60 seconds, which greatly improved the efficiency within the finish department. Taylor's 3-D UV curing became recognized as a breakthrough in a variety of industries.

"We've had Trek Bicycles here, we've had aircraft people come through here – a lot of different companies," says Guzzetta. "Apparently when people talk about 3-D UV curing in the country, we're still seen as a pioneer."

Ask Bob

Headstock history, 12-string jangle, and campfire conditions

Have you ever built a mahogany-topped acoustic 12-string? In general, I find the “jangly,” “shimmering” characteristics of the twelve to be just a bit overstated, and I’m wondering if a mahogany top might help offset some of that or darken it up a bit.

**Dan Colehour
Nashville, TN**

I hear ya, brother. Yes we’ve made them, but that’s not the cause of the jangly voice. It’s all those jangly strings! That’s why many players, like Leo Kottke, tune down a couple of steps. It turns the guitar into a whole new instrument. It’s amazing. Also, you should try our Baritone 8-String. It has a tone I bet you’d like – it has the octave ring, but only on two pairs of strings, and it’s tuned low as well. Try one out and see if it fits.

I’ve heard that Malaysian blackwood is a premium tonewood for guitars. Have you made a guitar using this kind of wood? I think it would make a beautiful guitar, especially with the sapwood.

Henry Marksen

Henry, this is where local names fail to communicate which wood species we are talking about. I don’t know Malaysian blackwood. I’ll look into it. We use other woods called blackwood, an acacia, which is a cousin to koa acacia, and it comes from Tasmania. And lately we have become interested in another Tasmanian timber they call black sassafras, which has lots of sapwood. I guess if I added a footnote, I’d say we’re shying away from Malaysian wood at the moment, until we hear better reports of good forestry there.

I attended the Taylor Road Show in Lexington, Kentucky at Willcutt Guitar Shoppe, and what a show. Mr. [Wayne] Johnson was great; it was like being at a concert. I was pleased that my 114ce was built to the same standards as the high-end models.

Is there any thought of a sunburst option for the 100 Series models? I think you would sell quite a few at Road Shows.

Jacob Parks

I’m really pleased you enjoyed the Road Show, Jacob. Wayne can play anything and is very inspiring. As for the 100 Series, they are great guitars and built to deliver value. Part of the winning formula for the value in that guitar comes with the finish being quick and easy to do in the factory. A sunburst is a complicated and time-consuming finish, so it goes against the formula. One of us would lose. Either you’d pay too much or I’d work for free, so I think we’ll stick to the formula. But you’re right, if the price were right, they’d sell! We just don’t know how to get both a good price for you and a good cost for us.

I have a string question for you. How much of the tonal flavors come from the strings directly (verses the guitar)? Do the strings just act as a tool to create the resonance for the guitar to produce the tones we hear? With all the development in guitars over the years (new shapes, wood pairings, neck technology, bracing patterns, etc.), how come we don’t hear much about the development of strings and how to make them as tonally superior as possible? There are hundreds of acoustic guitar varieties out there, but not nearly the same variety for strings. It makes me think that strings aren’t as crucial to a guitar’s sonic palate as I once thought. Please enlighten.

Austin

Gladly, Austin. Strings are important. Just make friends with a string maker and tell them they’re not developing strings enough – they’ll give you an earful! Truly, there may be more development in strings than guitars, and each kind of guitar, like jazz, solid body electric, steel-string, classical, etc. has their own strings, and within that there’s a huge competition among string makers to be the very best one.

Probably the first indicator of how

much strings affect the sound of the guitar is that new strings sound good, and old strings sound dead. I invite you to try different strings to see what you like. It’s a great way to personalize your guitar. We use Elixir strings on the guitars that leave the factory because they last and last. It really helps the guitar make it through the selling process, with dozens of people playing them over an average period of three months per guitar and without having a string change. That’s a remarkable feature of Elixir strings.

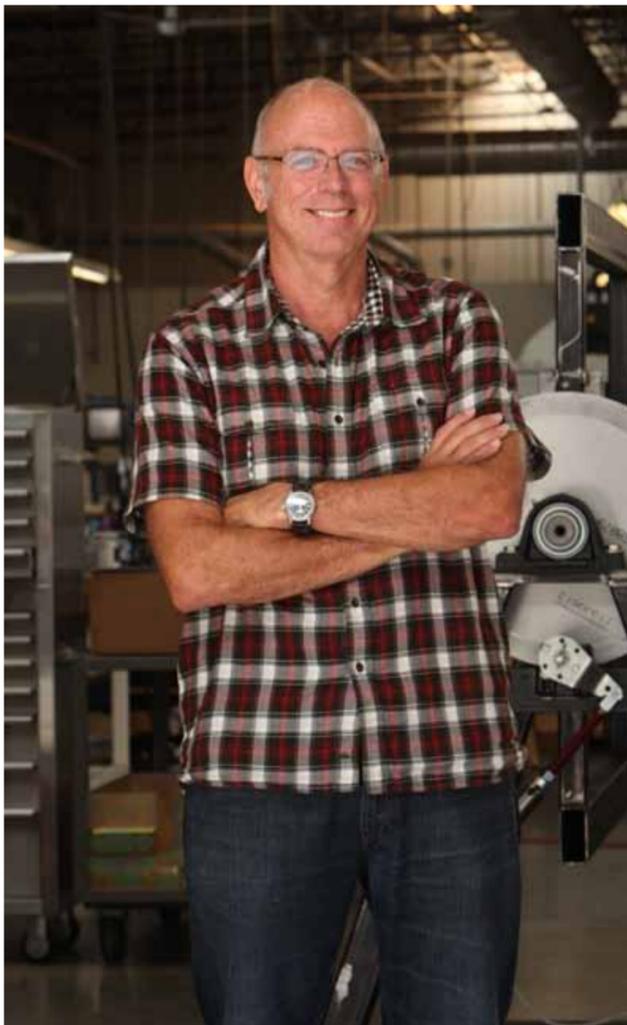
I live on Whidbey Island in Washington State and like to take my guitar with me on camping trips. On nice nights we like to sit around the fire and strum our favorite tunes. I had never given much thought to the effects this might have on the guitar, as I have always brought along a cheap guitar that I wouldn’t lose much sleep over if something bad were to happen to it. However, I recently acquired a new 114e, which I love and want to take everywhere. But now it’s got me thinking about how the conditions will affect the guitar. Even in the summer it can get chilly at night, so you have the cool outside air along with the heat from the fire. Is playing around a fire a bad idea?

David Scott

No, David, playing your guitar around a campfire is one of your best ideas. Keep doing it. Leaving it in the trunk of your car in the sun while you hike, now *that’s* a bad idea. I hope you see the difference. Take your guitar anywhere you want, play it, and then store it safely in between.

I have a friend who owns a 1986 Alvarez Yairi. He said the wood for the back and sides was listed as Coral rosewood. I have been into acoustic guitars (made a few and bought a ton) for over 30 years, but Coral rosewood is not ringing any bells. Do you know the species?

Loren Johnson



What inspired you to design the now very recognizable Taylor headstock the way it is? As you know, the headstock design goes a long way toward identifying the guitar brand.

Patrick Thompson

Patrick, you’ll love this. It was designed by Sam Radding, the owner of The American Dream, the little guitar shop Kurt and I bought and turned into Taylor Guitars. Sam is a good builder, and practical, too. He looked at his machines and saw a table belt sander with a 2 ½-inch diameter roller on the end. He walked over and sanded three scoops against the sanding roller, because it was easy. There you have it!

No, Loren, I don’t know it, and like an earlier question, that is a local name. For instance, we sometimes use a wood called imbuia, which is also referred to as Brazilian walnut. But it’s actually not walnut at all! Unfortunately I haven’t heard of Coral rosewood. I suppose I could Google it, but I think you’re really asking if I have experience with it and can comment one way or the other. And here I thought I was “the answer man!” Maybe not so much.

Bob, I just watched your online video on the future of ebony. It’s disconcerting to hear how this amazing wood is vanishing, but I applaud your efforts to manage the resource in the most responsible way possible. A couple questions came to me as I watched the video. First, what is the life cycle of ebony, and is it possible to replant these trees in a sustainable way? Second, I assume the 10 to 1 ratio of trees discarded to trees milled (favoring black wood) is consistent in other countries besides Cameroon. Is it possible to go back and salvage these discarded trees? I understand fallen wood has a shelf life, but ebony being as hard as it is, maybe it’s still usable? Thanks for making a difference...and great guitars!

**Jason Knott
Lethbridge, Alberta
Canada**

Thanks, Jason. Yes, it’s possible to replant trees, and we are learning about that. But since the growth cycle is about 80 years, they need to be planted in a forest that will be there in 80 years. Believe me, we’re working on that. Also, Cameroon is about the last place where ebony is harvested legally, so we are working hard to ensure its sustainability. We’re thinking the same thing you’re thinking, and while we stop the cutting of trees we won’t use, we are also looking at recovering some of those already cut. The jury is still out on that, but we hope some of them are usable.

I was intrigued by your recent discussion concerning depleted supplies of ebony. I knew mahogany was that close to the endangered list, but had no idea all the woods were so threatened. My question: As I understand it, maple is the tree equivalent of a weed; it’s everywhere. Yet guitars with maple back and sides are usually more

expensive than those made with the soon-to-be-endangered mahogany. Why is that? It would seem that the more prevalent maple would be less expensive because it’s so readily available.

Ken Moody-Arndt

Great question, Ken. The simple answer is that maple comes from developed countries like the U.S. and Europe, where things cost more. Much of the cost of any tree is the cost of getting it out of the forest. Also, the only maple guitars you see have flamed figure in the grain, which is representative of probably less than one percent of the maple. This makes it valuable, and not viewed as a weed. There is a very big business component surrounding timber. It’s quite complex, and this makes the prices vary greatly.



Flamed maple back and sides on a 616ce

Your story about rethinking ebony sourcing is inspiring. It got me to thinking about all the woods that go into building guitars. It’s not just ebony that’s being used up. I understand that for most woods, guitars account for a minor fraction of demand, but could you give us some insight into how many trees of various woods are used each year by Taylor? Or, for example, how many guitar tops can you get out of a typical Sitka spruce tree?

Lt. Col. Eric Kolb, USAF

Sure, Eric. Realize, however, that it depends on the size of the tree. Once, our supplier cut a spruce tree that yielded 40,000 guitar tops! That was a huge tree. But now the trees are smaller, so one tree probably yields 2,000-4,000 tops. Let’s put it into these terms: The trees that supply the U.S. market with an entire year’s production of guitars would be about what a lumber mill would cut in a couple

days for construction lumber. And that’s just one mill!

Now, let’s take mahogany. I imagine that our industry uses a much higher percentage of the mahogany than we do of the spruce, and by the time we get to ebony, I can tell you that nearly all the ebony cut is made into instruments. So we do have an impact, and we must take responsibility for that, and not hide behind other industries. I’m happy to do that, because it gives us the opportunity to change it for the better.

My grandfather and father were loggers when there was a market for persimmon, the American ebony. At that time it was used almost exclusively for golf driver heads, but now the market has disappeared. Is this wood appropriate for guitar [fretboards]?

**Steve Jordan
Rochester, NY**

Steve, it’s ebony, but it’s white. I’m still thinking about that. I can’t get it out of my head.

I have two Taylor acoustics already: an ovangkol 455 and walnut W10. I’m considering going with your BTO program and had some questions regarding wood pairings. I’ve noticed with a number of boutique manufacturers that certain wood pairings are common. I would like to go with an Adirondack spruce top, which seems to be more commonly paired with mahogany back and sides than with rosewood or cocobolo. Also, I’ve noticed that you never see Adirondack spruce paired with koa and was wondering if there was some logical reason for this. Your advice is greatly appreciated – the last thing I would want is a pairing of woods that was the equivalent of an “out of phase” sound.

Paul Oliva

Paul, I think most pairings have to do with tradition rather than something imperial about the sound. That’s not to say we can’t discuss them for hours. The reason Adirondack spruce is paired with mahogany and rosewood is because Martin used that spruce – it essentially grew in their backyard – and they made mahogany and rosewood guitars then. Now, all these years later, we still dream of those wood pairings. And rosewood was commonly paired with spruce as much as mahogany. The reason Martin started using Sitka

spruce all those years ago was because all the Adirondack spruce had been cut down. (We deforested even back then!)

Feel free to put Adirondack spruce on your cocobolo or koa guitars. It will work fine and sound great. Be sure to get Adirondack bracing, too, as I believe it makes more tonal difference than even the top.

The issue of properly humidifying a Taylor acoustic guitar has been addressed multiple times in Wood&Steel, and I’m grateful for how clearly you have detailed this important aspect of acoustic guitar ownership. I also have a SolidBody Classic (which I love!) and don’t recall any discussion of properly humidifying a SolidBody. Can you please speak to how and why the humidification requirements may differ from those of acoustic instruments, and how SolidBody owners can properly maintain our instruments?

**Matthew Davidson
Chicago, IL**

Sure, Matthew. They both need the same care. It’s that simple. If the guitar is properly humidified, the frets won’t poke out of the sides of the fretboard. That said, the SolidBody doesn’t have a thin spruce top that could crack, so it’s a bit safer from severe damage. That’s why we don’t highlight it as much.

I’d like to buy the first GS Mini in nylon. When will it be ready?

Gary

I wish I could tell you, Gary. That guitar will be a lot harder to make well than its steel-string counterpart. We haven’t even started on it.

About six months ago I was in the local music store to pick up strings, happened to see a Taylor GA5 (cedar/mahogany) on the wall, and was instantly drawn to it. I hit the first open chord and couldn’t believe what I was hearing. The instrument was literally full of music that poured out with such purity and clarity of tone that it took less than 20 minutes of playing to know I had to buy it.

I have a small home recording studio and like to leave my guitars on the rack in the studio rather than in cases. I keep a close eye on the acoustic guitar tops and necks

and humidify them in the case as needed. Does this guitar, because of the cedar top, need to be cased or protected more than a spruce-top guitar would need to be? I ask since cedar is less dense than spruce. Will it be more susceptible to changes in humidity? I would prefer to keep it on the rack but will case it if required.

**Dan Haws
Olympia, WA**

No, Dan, it’s the same as spruce, not less or more susceptible. If you treat it the same you’ll get the same results.

I have two wonderful Taylor guitars that I absolutely love: a GS Mini and a cocobolo GSce-LTD. Seeing as I am getting on in years and my voice has gone down in pitch a bit, I can’t hit the high notes like I used to. I would like to use an E-flat tuning on my guitar, or even a D tuning if I could, but I get some pretty serious string buzz when I tune down even to E-flat. I currently use the strings that came on the guitars, Elixir mediums. What can I do to eliminate the buzz?

**Kerry McLerran
West Richland, WA**

Kerry, try putting a heavier gauge string on and loosening the truss rod just a bit. That should solve it. And if you want a purpose-built guitar, try the baritone. You can string that with mediums and tune it to D, and it will have the exact same tension and tone as your standard guitars, only a full step down. Then, if you want, you can capo it at the second fret and have a normally tuned guitar for when you’re playing and not singing.

Got a question for Bob Taylor?

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

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

BUILDER'S RESERVE VII

Hog Wild

An all-mahogany 12-Fret and tenor ukulele pair up for a dynamic duet

Playing an all-mahogany instrument is a bit like getting together with an old friend – there's an underlying warmth and familiarity, and the conversation can easily get lively and animated.

With the seventh offering from our Builder's Reserve program, we fully indulge mahogany's appealing musical character with an all-mahogany 12-Fret coupled with Taylor's first-ever all-mahogany ukulele. Incorporating mahogany tops brings out the fullness of mahogany's voice, blending a punchy attack with plenty of tonal warmth.

"Both are really dynamic instruments," says Taylor luthier Andy Powers. "They have this really nice balance and sustain to them, with good volume. I was playing the uke in the shop and one of the guys came in and thought I'd put a pickup in it."

Andy says mahogany's warmth gives the tone an especially friendly, comforting appeal.

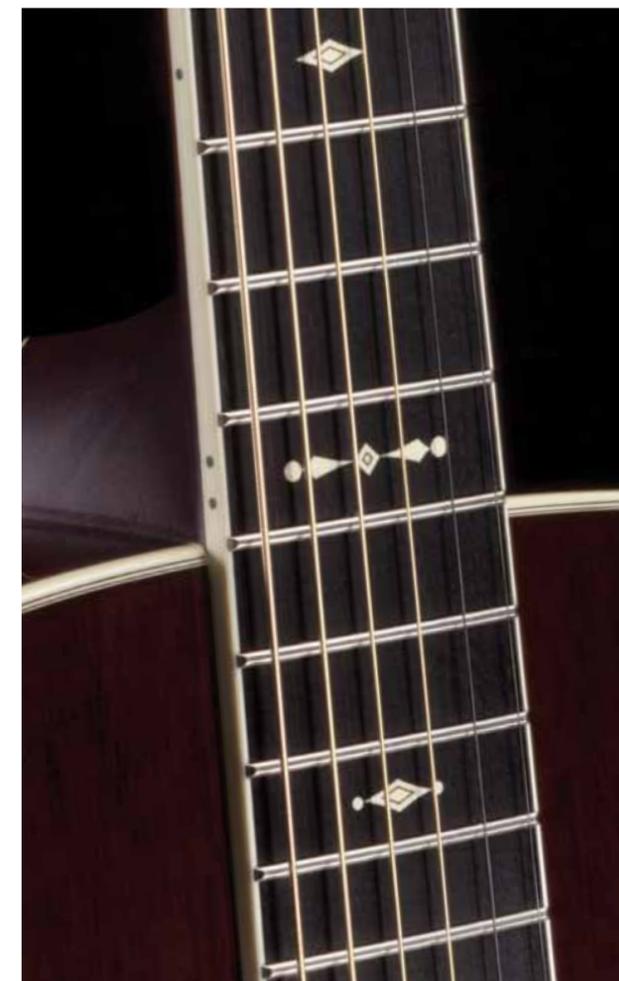
"It's not crazy exotic, or some far-away, unusual flavor – it's really familiar and easy to listen to," he says. "A fingerstyle player will love the 12-Fret. It'll sound great playing old ragtime, blues, Hawaiian music – all that kind of stuff. You might think it's an old-school bluesy guitar, which it is, but it's not just that. Because it's inherently pleasant to listen to, it will work well with all sorts of music. And the guitar and uke will sound amazing played together. Both sound like you've lived with them for a while."

Like the Hawaiian koa guitar/uke Builder's Reserve pairing from earlier this year, the all-mahogany versions will feature matching appointments. In this case the look is an understated vintage aesthetic, featuring ivoroid binding and inlays, with a vintage sunburst.

Each Builder's Reserve VII guitar/ukulele pairing will feature a custom label and will be sold to dealers as a matched set. Fifty sets will be made.

W&S

Clockwise from top left: Ivoroid Heritage Diamond fretboard inlays; the 12-Fret's 3-ring ivoroid rosette; mahogany back with vintage sunburst and ivoroid binding; the ukulele's single-ring ivoroid rosette



BUILDER'S RESERVE VIII

Curve Appeal

A custom contoured cutaway adds a smooth twist to a beautiful figured walnut/cedar GS, paired with a matching walnut amp

Contoured cutaway

Traditional cutaway

Top down: The contoured cutaway features a compound curve that flows smoothly into the neck heel; a traditional cutaway leaves a slight wood "shelf" between the end of the cutaway and the heel; the walnut back and sides showcase gorgeous variegation and figure; **Bottom right:** The sea kelp-inspired "Nouveau Bouquet" fretboard inlay in maple and myrtlewood

The lutherie practiced by our Builder's Reserve team is, by design, meant to stretch the outer limits of what we can do at Taylor. It's a vital creative arm for us, an environment where our team is empowered to explore new ideas and discover the next wave of guitar inspiration. The results are made available in very small batches partly due to the limited availability of certain sets of wood, but even more because the designs are so new we haven't yet developed the tooling necessary to craft larger numbers completely in a production environment.

The beauty of such work is that many of the design advances incubated here eventually trickle down to other Taylor models, whether it's to our Build to Order program or to certain series within the Taylor line.

Our BR-VIII guitar showcases a stroke of master craftsmanship that certain players and many fellow guitar makers will appreciate, even though it's not easy to spot: a contoured cutaway that flows cleanly into the tapered profile of the neck heel. If you look at a traditional Taylor cutaway from the back, you'll see that the end of the cutaway meets the other side panel at a 90-degree angle, with a capped edge that runs perpendicular between the guitar's top and back. Because of the way our heel tapers from the top to the heel cap below, an extra corner is left between the heel and the end of the cutaway. Taylor luthier Andy Powers wanted to essentially delete that corner by shaping the cutaway differently, giving it a compound curve that flows into the line of the heel.

"I really like the profile of our heel," says Andy, who designed the new cutaway. "Bob [Taylor] and Larry [Breedlove] worked on that profile for years, and what they've come up with is really elegant. So I decided to start with that profile and blend it into our Venetian cutaway shape, which I also like."

Andy acknowledges that a lot of people might not even notice the recontoured cutaway, but certain players will.

"When some players pick this up, they won't see the strap button right there in the heel, and when they play it, they'll realize that the high portion of the fretboard is a lot more effortless to access than ever because your hand or wrist isn't bumping into the guitar anymore."

Another reason that someone might not notice the contour, Andy says, is because it looks "right."

"When you look at the guitar from the back, from the sides, from any angle, aesthetically, all the lines flow into each other," he says. "It just looks right as a piece of sculpture. It has this appealing gracefulness."

The original inspiration for a contoured cutaway, Andy says, arrived about 10 years ago when he did some repair work on a Mario Maccaferri-designed Selmer guitar.

"They're pretty rare guitars," he says. "Django Reinhardt played one. To a really small degree, those guitars had a funny little bend right there in the cutaway. It was just a little quirk they did to make something line up. I don't know if it was intentional, but I thought it was kind of cool. So I made an archtop guitar and put the same little curve in there. I liked the way it felt, and gradually it started becoming more and more extreme. So, fast-forward to now, we decided to go all the way and see if we could pull it off."

He says it wasn't an easy concept to execute.

"This is an elaborately complex three-dimensional splined surface," he explains. "There's nothing predictable about it. There's no one uniform radius. What's tricky is you need to have a really clear idea of how it will end up as the finished piece, and then work backwards. Everything from the shape of the side when you first cut it out as a flat piece of wood has to be different. The sides have to get bent in this really complicated way. They have to get lined up just perfectly or it doesn't work. Then you have to glue them up perfectly and make sure everything stays in precise alignment. The whole body has to get built around these couple of dimensions that are hard to control, but it has to be done or the guitar just doesn't work at the end. We

also had to rethink how we were going to cut the little inlay cavity for purfling and binding because the surface that we used to index from isn't there anymore."

Andy sees this as one of the "cruel ironies" of design — that making something look and feel clean and natural often requires exceptionally hard work.

"It's kind of like playing pedal steel guitar," he says. "It's a form of guitar playing made very complicated in order to sound smooth and simple."

As for the wood selection, the design team opted for sets of beautiful flamed Claro walnut for the back and sides, with a cedar top braced with Adirondack spruce. They chose a GS body.

"It's a guitar with a really big personality," Andy says. "It gives you the warm, woody, rich sound of a cedar top, while walnut has a nice transparency — it's uniform and evenly responsive. It's really clear, yet with a rich overtone complement from the cedar top. Alternate tunings sound great, and it's one of my favorite combinations for a fingerstyle guitar."

The appointments follow an organic, all-wood aesthetic, featuring rosewood binding with maple purfling. The fretboard and headstock inlays are a custom design that was inspired at the end of one of Andy's ocean paddleboarding sessions.

"I was sitting on the board afterwards, floating and bobbing in the kelp bed, watching the kelp leaves twist and sway in the bit of surf that was there, and it really caught my attention," he recalls. "So I came back to the shop, sketched it out, and it turned into this inlay. I think of it as kelp with a Nouveau twist."

The inlay woods selected were white European maple with accents of myrtle for a subtle color shading. The rosette features delicately cut rosewood and European maple concentric rings sandwiched between wood purflings.

The guitar was paired with an ES-Amp™ that features more of the shimmering figured walnut, treated with a satin finish. Andy wanted the wood to be the aesthetic focus, so he kept the design simple, opting for traditional dovetailed corners. He liked the way the straight lines contrast with the contoured cutaway on the guitar.

"With those dovetails, the cabinet reflects that precise, orderly, Japanese woodworking tradition," he says. "And with this guitar body, there is not one straight line anywhere."

The Builder's Reserve VIII will be sold to dealers exclusively as a guitar/amp pair, and 30 will be offered. **W&S**

Soundings

Making the Rounds in Nashville

In early June, a Taylor contingent including Director of Artist Relations Tim Godwin, luthier Andy Powers, Communications Manager Chalise Zolezzi, and photographer Tim Whitehouse flew to Nashville to spend a few days meeting with artists, managers and other music industry contacts. They chose the right week, as a confluence of big events was on tap, including the CMA Music Festival (June 7-10), an album release party hosted by **Zac Brown**, and the CMT Music Awards. Here are some highlights from the week:

On Tuesday, June 5, Tim and Andy met with luthier and in-demand repair technician **Joe Glaser** at his shop, where Glaser had a chance to demo a Taylor 13-fret concept guitar they had brought. He loved it, and we're in the process of sending him one to share with clients for feedback. **Keifer Thompson** from the duo **Thompson Square** also had a chance to play the guitar and had good things to say.

That evening, Tim, Andy and Chalise attended a reception to unveil Zac Brown's new **Southern Ground Studios**, which, fittingly, kicked-off with a pre-release listening party to celebrate the band's new album *Uncaged*. The beautifully refurbished studio showcases some signature Taylor craftsmanship, including floor inlays of the Southern Ground and Taylor logos that were designed and installed by Andy and Bob Taylor. Brown (**custom NS74ce**) was extremely appreciative of the work and thanked Taylor Guitars several times. The Taylor crew spent time with the band, radio program directors, and Brown's management team.

On Wednesday, June 6, Tim, Andy and Chalise attended the sound check for the CMT Music Awards and spent time with **Johnny Lord** from Center Staging, who arranged crew access during the festival. Lord backlines most of the major awards shows, including the Grammys. The Taylor trio also met with members of the **Rascal Flatts** team (see "Backstage Pass" on page 26). That evening, they caught up with **Scott Borchetta** and **Jimmy Haren** from Big Machine Label Group, along with one of the label's emerging acts, **The Farm**, Keifer and Shauna Thompson of Thompson Square (who won "Video Duo of the Year"), country icon

Glen Campbell, and a slew of publicists and managers. **Alan Jackson** was also on hand, and his manager relayed how much Jackson loves his new custom Dreadnought adorned with a decorative gold leaf design. "All he talks about are his dang Taylor guitars," his manager quipped.

At an after-show party hosted by the Zac Brown Band, our team talked with **Jason "Slim" Gambill**, the guitarist from **Lady Antebellum**, **Steven Moore**, President of the Country Music Association, and **Bernie Cahill**, President of ROAR Management.

On Thursday evening, Tim Godwin met with guitarist **Phil Brown**, an amazing player whose chops have scored props from Jeff Beck. Brown has been playing our **Baritone 8-String**.

Friday morning was spent meeting with CMT and included a tour of their offices and studios. Next was some hang time with **James Wesley (DN7e)** and his band (**GS Mini, 414ce**) after their performance at the Chevy Riverfront Stage.

Though it proved to be a whirlwind week, our team said they had a blast and look forward to spending more face time with our Nashville friends.

An Enlightened View

In early August, singer-songwriter **Jason Mraz** welcomed an especially unique custom Taylor to his guitar family, thanks to longtime friend, artist **Jon Marro**. Mraz had ordered a custom guitar through Taylor luthier Andy Powers, also a good friend, and commissioned Marro to decorate the top with a painting of his choice. Marro's artwork has graced Mraz's albums, T-shirts, and stage backdrops over the years, and the two share a mutual admiration for each other's work, so Mraz left the design up to Marro. Both have been on a spiritual path that has embraced Buddhist principles such as compassion and love (Mraz's latest release is titled *Love is a Four Letter Word* and his signature Taylor has "Be Love" inlaid in the fretboard), so Marro decided to create an image of a bodhisattva ("enlightenment being") called Avalokitesvara, a combination of Sanskrit words that loosely translate into a great sound perceiver who "looks down upon sound."

Andy invited Marro to work in Taylor's product development design studio, where prototypes and Builder's Reserve models are often born. Marro spent a few long days there in late July, starting with rough sketches and then hand-drawing his illustration on the unfinished guitar – a cutaway GS with a Sitka spruce top and makore back and sides – using colored acrylic pens. The detail-rich imagery, which covers the soundboard, headstock overlay, and even the sides, took more than 70 hours to complete. The bridge was added later and the guitar given a gloss finish, adding a beautifully rich sheen that enhances the colors.

Andy was on-hand as Marro presented the guitar to Mraz at his house a few days before the start of a summer/fall tour, along with a hand-made "user's guide" that explains the iconography and symbolism. Mraz was deeply moved and said he planned to take it on the road with him and blog about the guitar as he spent more time with it.

As of our press date, Marro was getting ready to apply his custom artwork to the tops of two GS Mini guitars to be used for promotional purposes. One was to be offered as part of a prize package for a charity auction to benefit VH1's Save The Music Foundation, which supports music education programs in schools. www.jasonmraz.com
www.jonmarro.com

Scientific Method

Chicago's **Big Science** blends tasteful elements of Krautrock, post-punk and new wave on their full-length debut, *Difficulty*. From the somber synth overtones, fingerpicked guitar notes and choral orchestration of the album opener, "All the Heat Has Escaped," to the guitar hook/disco beat bombast of "American Gravity," the album is both a thoughtful meditation on urban malaise and an ideal choice for a summer dance party. Beyond their clever hooks and earworm choruses, the band employs sometimes cryptic sound effects, no doubt influenced by the sonic landscapes of legendary producers Brian Eno and Nigel Godrich, and acts from Manchester, England's famed Factory Records roster (Joy Division, New Order, etc.).

Guitarist/vocalist Jason Hendrix says that more than half the guitar tracks on the record feature his Taylor **SolidBody Classic** with two full-size HD humbuckers, and that the pickups are a great fit for the band's music.

"They push out a ton of signal but still maintain their clarity," he says. "This helps a lot in the studio, for obvious

reasons – it drives the front end of the amp and really helps define the high mids. The tracks that we used the Taylor on were the easiest to mix. They had a presence that made them sit well almost immediately, even without any EQ."

Hendrix says the pickups were especially well-suited for his effects-laden tone.

"I need as much help as I can get to get a strong signal through my maze of pedals," he explains. "These pickups keep my playing defined through the wash of reverbs, delays and fuzz that I drive my signal through. I've had moments live where I am just decimating my signal with every effect I have in order to get a huge wall of sound. Most guitar signals just turn to mud in a situation like this, but these pickups somehow manage to keep their articulation even then."

<http://bigscienceband.bandcamp.com>

Diamond Gift

Neil Diamond's longtime music associate, **Sam Cole**, reached out to Taylor after the music legend purchased a **GS Mini** while out on tour earlier this year. Cole started working for Diamond as a guitar tech back in 1974, has produced some of Diamond's recordings, and is the chief archivist for Diamond's catalog. He says that Diamond loves his new Mini and has been using it as his dressing room warm-up guitar and for songwriting. During a tour stop in the Washington, D.C. area, Diamond visited Walter Reed Army Medical Center and visited with a number of injured American war veterans, several of whom mentioned that they also play guitar. Diamond later arranged to purchase 10 GS Minis, which he donated to Walter Reed for the recovering vets to play.

Idle Plaything

We're happy to add former Monty Python funnyman **Eric Idle** to the growing list of blissed-out new **GS Mini** owners. Idle (**714ce, K55, K22, Baby Taylor**) recently blogged about picking up a Mini from a Guitar Center with a birthday gift card given to him by his friend, fellow comedian/actor (and banjo/guitar player) **Kevin Nealon**.

"... I found a guitar as good as almost any I have ever owned," he writes. "It's a Taylor...called a GS Mini, and it's a real beauty. An absolute cracker. I'm crazy about it. I can't put it down. I can't wait to pick it up. It sounds great, it's easy to play, and the acoustics are magnificent. It also

comes with a very strong, light, padded, traveling bag, so bless them, they have thought of everything."

Idle goes on to reminisce about visiting the Taylor factory a few years back with his friend, country star **Clint Black**, for whom he had written new intro lyrics for Black's cover of the Idle-penned tune, "The Galaxy Song."

"It's certainly the first time I have ever been in a Board Room where people pulled out guitars for a jam," he recalls. "So thanks Brothers Taylor, for this very travelable, very fine guitar, which accompanied me to Henley, Bath, London and Venice, and is now happily accompanying me to Biarritz for a family wedding in a rented Peugeot..."

www.ericidle.com/blog

Wing Man

Madly prolific composer/multi-instrumentalist/vocalist **Mike Keneally** dropped by the Taylor factory in July to catch up with us and delivered copies of his latest release, *Wing Beat Fantastic*. A project long in the making, the record brings to fruition Keneally's songwriting collaboration with visionary pop craftsman **Andy Partridge** from the legendary British band XTC.

The two became friends back when Keneally was Frank Zappa's touring guitarist in the late '80s, and years later, at Partridge's suggestion, they convened at Partridge's home in Swindon, UK, where they cooked up song ideas and recorded demos over two week-long sessions in 2006 and 2008. Keneally brought them home to Southern California and finally found time to complete the record in 2011 and 2012, between his gigs as a guitarist with the popular death metal band **Dethklok**, keyboardist in Joe Satriani's live band, and his own projects.

Though Partridge doesn't sing or play on the record (he did contribute several drum loops), his creative input helped Keneally further refine the tunes, and fans will recognize Partridge's artistic touches, from his lyrical point of view to the melodic and harmonic sophistication that colors the songs.

A creative union between two artists with such fertile avant-pop sensibilities might seem like a risky proposition. Might their songs collapse under the weight of their combined musical ambitions? Not to worry. Keneally distills the compositions with great care, serving up a sonic feast that is at once experimental and accessible. He handles much of the instrumentation, including acoustic and electric guitars (**514ce, GSMC, T3/B**), bass and keyboards, and his multi-layered vocal arrangements are at times reminiscent of Partridge's richly

www.taylorguitars.com



Clockwise from top left: Jon Marro's hand-drawn artwork on Jason Mraz's guitar; Mraz samples his playable art; Mike Keneally (photo by Scott Chatfield); Big Science guitarist/vocalist Jason Hendrix; the Southern Ground logo floor inlay with a Taylor 13-fret concept guitar; Andy Powers works on the inlay in the Taylor design shop



The 2012 Fall LTDs

Three of a Perfect Pair

Quilted sapele with European spruce, Macassar ebony with sinker redwood, and blackwood with cedar infuse this year's fall limiteds with fresh, inspiring tonal flavors

Twice a year we take pleasure in adding seasonal specials to the Taylor Guitars menu. As our design team draws inspiration from our wood reserves, the unique character of each batch of tonewoods they select informs their artistry and appointments, ultimately coalescing into a distinctive guitar personality. Like a master chef who understands how to balance flavors and deliver an inspiring visual presentation, our

luthiers employ their finely honed sensibilities to tantalize the senses.

With our fall collection we bring you three distinctive wood pairings. After years of waiting, we recently had the good fortune to acquire sets of rare quilted sapele, and we paired them with premium European spruce tops. We also put a fresh spin on our masterful Presentation Series by coupling two richly variegated tonewoods, Macassar ebony and the much heralded

sinker redwood, with striking results. Our blackwood 400 Series matches koa's closest relative with the warmth of a cedar top. And to reflect the diversity of the Taylor line in this year's fall limiteds, we've included nylon-string and Baritone 8-String models for both our blackwood and quilted sapele series.

Our Fall Limiteds are currently in stores, and we invite you to sample them firsthand. For complete specifications, visit taylorguitars.com.

Quilted Sapele Fall LTDs

Back/Sides: Quilted Sapele

Top: AA-Grade European Spruce

Models: DNce-FLTD, GAce-FLTD, GAce-N-FLTD, 12-Fret GCce-FLTD, GCce-N-FLTD, GSce-FLTD, Baritone-8-FLTD/S

Quilted sapele is an extremely rare find. Rare enough that the first and last time we offered it was on a pair of limited edition models to commemorate Taylor's 25th anniversary back in 1999. At the time we considered it a one-time fluke, so when we randomly received some figured sapele 4x4s in a shipment for necks about eight years ago, our wood purchaser, Bob Zink, told our cutter that if he ever encountered it again to call us before cutting it. A year and a half ago, Bob got the call, we were very interested, and an odyssey to procure some of the wood ensued.

After being harvested in Africa, the entire tree – a huge old sapele about 6-7 feet in diameter – was shipped to a sawmill in France, where it was cut into slabs with a massive saw. From there it had to be sent to Germany, where there was planer large enough to surface it. The original purchaser of the tree eventually shipped the slabs to his mill in the U.S., and when they finally arrived months later we were called and given first dibs on the wood. By this time there was other interest in it, with some parties offering to pay more, but the owner held it for Taylor since we'd expressed interest first. Within a couple of days Bob Zink and Andy Powers arrived in Cove City, North Carolina, a small port town where the mill was located. Once they were there, they sorted through every slab, selecting the ones with figure.

"We went through something like 12,000 board feet – a couple of tons of wood," says Andy. "Some of the boards we picked out were about four feet wide and in some cases 16 feet long."

They ended up buying about 2200 board feet (the rest of the wood wasn't quilted). The wood was flatsawn, which is cut 90 degrees different than the quartersawn sapele we typically use for guitar backs and sides. This not only allowed the beautiful figure to be showcased to maximum effect, it also added a unique twist to its tonal response.

"Sapele tends to be pretty stiff, and this stuff has a lot more give to it," Andy says. "You hear a little more power, a little more warmth on the low end compared to most sapele guitars."

For the soundboard pairing, the product development team chose AA-grade European spruce, which was first used for our spring Builder's Reserve guitar (BR-V) and blends the horsepower of Adirondack spruce with a splash of cedar's warmth.

The design aesthetic for these limiteds aimed to bring out the best of the figured sapele, so the back and sides were treated with the same light stain used on our mahogany 500 Series, which in this case, visually amplifies the depth of figure.

The appointment scheme also incorporates the sapele from the same tree, paired with ivoroid. The rosette features a sapele ring edged with ivoroid, ivoroid binding paired with sapele edge trim, and diamond "Solitaire" fretboard inlays that feature sapele outlined with ivoroid.

"It's basically a three-color treatment," Andy says: "Sapele, ivoroid and then either spruce or ebony. We wanted to keep it really elegant and graceful."

The quilted sapele limiteds are offered in all four body shapes, including a 12-fret GC, along with two nylon-string models and a Baritone 8-string.

**Presentation Series
Fall LTDs**

Back/Sides: Macassar Ebony

Top: Sinker Redwood

Models: PS14ce-FLTD, PS16ce-FLTD

For the past two years, the sublime appointments of Taylor's Presentation Series have embellished our wood pairing of cocobolo and premium Sitka spruce. This fall we wanted to apply that same decorative scheme to an alternative but equally worthy tonewood tandem, and our wood reserves once again delivered, in the form of Macassar ebony and sinker redwood. We've embraced that combination through our Build to Order program (see the back cover of our fall 2011 issue), and

loved the tonal response. We also love the way the paua inlay work visually sparkles against the warm, dark-toned woods.

The Macassar sets we selected are slightly different from some of the sets we've used before. Rather than dramatic, high-contrast striping, the variegation is more complex, blending cinnamon, milk chocolate and caramel color tones with occasional bold lines, calling to mind the buckskin-hued Brazilian rosewood sometimes found on

pre-war vintage acoustics.

Each of our sinker redwood soundboards, sliced from huge old-growth redwood logs reclaimed from the depths of Northern California rivers, displays a rich spectrum of variegation, the result of colors uniquely imparted from silt and the mineral-rich water. The age and size of these trees translates into a tight grain with nice cross-grain stiffness, so it will tend to have a fairly bold response, complemented by overtones similar to cedar.

Macassar has a tone that's reminiscent of rosewood, with a blend of fidelity and richness, and it's a little warmer than cocobolo. Together with the redwood, the warmth and complexity equate to a mature-sounding tone, says Andy Powers.

"I'm not a wine connoisseur, but sonically it reminds me of a Brunello, one of Italy's oldest cultivated grapes," he says. "It has this discernable maturity. There's something there that's complicated, but in a really good way.

It's not quite as youthful or vibrant or punchy."

The Presentation Series Fall Limiteds will be offered in our Grand Auditorium and Grand Symphony shapes, and a maximum of 80 total will be made.

We're unabashed fans of Tasmanian blackwood, an acacia wood species that's a close cousin of Hawaiian koa. Though it might not quite match koa's cachet in terms of exotic beauty, its tonal range is similar, and visually it often exhibits some of koa's same character traits. Blackwood also is sourced from forests that are responsibly managed, making it a sustainable wood for guitar making.

For this batch of limiteds, we selected some nicely variegated sets

and paired them with Western Red cedar tops. It's a combination we've rarely offered, but based on what our product development team heard from our prototypes, we think the tonal response will appeal to many players. Blackwood takes koa's basic tonal profile and blends elements of mahogany and rosewood, says Taylor's Andy Powers.

"It has a distinct personality because you're getting that koa kind of sound with some of the dry woodiness

of mahogany, and with a little more rosewood-like bloom," Andy explains. "And with the cedar top you've got that springy, woody, warm low end. It's not fuzzy, but its overtone profile has so much going on, all the notes end up with this real gentle, easygoing articulation to them. When combined, the blackwood and cedar make for a guitar with a relaxed personality."

Fingerstylists are bound to love the warmth of the cedar top, as will medium strummers. Even aggressive

strumming, which tends to overdrive cedar, can produce some interesting tones. "It's almost like a low-wattage tube amp breaking up on the low end," Andy says. "It's really fun."

Designed as a seasonal alternative to our 400 Series, the blackwood guitars feature wood appointments that support an understated, all-natural vibe, perfect for an everyday or performance guitar that players can feel comfortable playing out in the world. Rock maple was chosen for

**Blackwood 400 Series
Fall LTDs**

Back/Sides: Tasmanian Blackwood

Top: Western Red Cedar
(Sitka Spruce on Baritone)

Models: 410ce-FLTD, 412ce-FLTD, 412ce-N-FLTD, 414ce-FLTD, 414ce-N-FLTD, 416ce-FLTD, Baritone-8-FLTD/B

L-R: Front and back of a PS16ce-FLTD

L-R: Front of a Baritone-8-FLTD/B and back of a 414ce-FLTD



Return to Sender

An unexpected letter altered

Alex Woodard's musical path

when he needed it most. With

the help of some talented friends,

he learned to connect with others

by letting go of himself.

By Jim Kirlin

Alex Woodard wasn't doing so well. It was 2008, and after nearly 15 years of plying his craft as a performing singer-songwriter, the modest record deal he'd scored had gone sour.

"It sounds like a typical musician complaint, but the label didn't care," he explains from his home in Leucadia, California, a coastal community in northern San Diego County. "They were supposed to be distributing the CD, but they weren't really."

To make matters worse, around the same time, Woodard's beloved black Labrador retriever, Kona, his constant companion throughout his entire music career, succumbed to bone cancer.

The losses thrust Woodard into a period of intense self-reckoning. He understood the realities of the music business as well as anyone, and knew that he'd embraced a career path with no guarantees of success. As a survival mechanism early on he'd developed a mindset — a protective armor of sorts — that kept his music dreams insulated from the sometimes discouraging blows of the business. It allowed him to sustain the belief that success would eventually come if he stayed positive and focused on his craft amid the daily grind and inevitable setbacks. But his armor now had a chink in it. If anything, Kona's passing was a painful sign that his long-term dream of "making it," for years comfortably set in the open-ended future of "someday," might in fact have an expiration date. He wondered whether he was actually gaining any ground on his dreams.

It wasn't for lack of effort or creativity. His desire to connect with listeners

through songs had prompted him to offer a unique incentive to anyone who pre-ordered his most recent CD: He would craft and record a song for each person based on whatever they asked him to write about. In the end he had more than a hundred takers, and he penned an individual song for every request.

"I recorded them right here at my kitchen table," he says. "They weren't necessarily fancy, but they also weren't 30-second tunes; these were full-on songs."

Woodard says the requests ran the gamut, from light-hearted topics to romantic themes to a few heartbreakers that left him with a lump in his throat when he read the requests. He discovered that he liked the creative process, which marked a departure from his largely self-reflective songwriting focus up to that point.

"For whatever reason, writing about other people's stories came easier to me," he says. "My writing had been me-centered for a long time in part because I didn't have any mentors," he says. "I probably didn't think anyone would believe in me besides myself, so I wasn't very open. I wasn't looking for co-writing opportunities or anything collaborative. I kind of held everything tightly."

Woodard had moved to Leucadia with Kona a few years earlier, after being based in Seattle for years, to reconnect with the ocean and his family up the coast in Long Beach, California. As he rekindled his passion for surfing and made new friends in the area, he found himself welcomed into a close-knit community of accomplished songwriters and musicians. He started getting invited to regular "family dinners" — potluck gatherings that inevitably ended with infor-

mal jam sessions. The group included some acclaimed talents — people like Switchfoot frontman Jon Foreman (814ce, 614ce, 514ce, GS6, GS5), Sean and Sara Watkins of Nickel Creek fame, award-winning tunesmith Jack Tempchin ("Take It Easy," "Peaceful Easy Feeling," "Slow Dancing"), vocalist Jordan Pundik from the pop-punk act New Found Glory, and even luthier/musician and soon-to-be Taylor employee Andy Powers.

Woodard's new friends also got to know and love Kona, and later offered their support when she passed. Months later, Woodard was still in the midst of some soul-searching when, out of the blue, Emily's letter arrived from across the country. Woodard didn't know her, but his music had somehow found and connected with her. She wasn't writing to commission a song, but simply to thank him for the ones she had heard.

"I think your songs are gifts," she wrote. "Pieces of yourself used to help other people with their stories."

In her letter Emily explained that her soul mate had passed away several years earlier and that each autumn — their favorite season — she would write him a letter to share her thoughts and memories, even though the letter would never be sent. But this year she had decided to send it to Woodard to share a piece of herself in gratitude for his music.

The letter touched him deeply, both because of its personal nature and because of the realization that his music had moved Emily. He showed it to Sean Watkins, who was also moved, and the two were inspired to write a song together based on the letter.

"In sharing her letter, Emily was being so giving that I wanted to share

in the experience of writing a song about it with someone, and I'd never felt that way before," Woodard reflects. "I'd always been holding on [to the process] really tightly. With Sean, we'd gotten to be friends, and he's a great writer, so I thought, let's just see what happens. And with that first song, 'For the Sender,' the collaborative thing came not only from the writing but from the singing, because when we recorded it, Sean sang it. That was the first time that I didn't sing something I'd been involved with writing."

The experience proved to be a creative catalyst for Woodard, enabling him to open himself up to a slowly unfolding collaborative journey with his new group of friends. It would lead to heartfelt letters from others, which in turn inspired more songs, eventually culminating with an album and a book, *For the Sender* (Hay House Publishing), in which Woodard poignantly chronicles his transformative experiences and the strong connections he made with others along the way.

"I would have never, ever thought I would be doing this," he admits. "Writing a book — that was not on my radar. It wasn't even a dream."

Both the album's song sequence and subsequently written book follow the natural progression of the songwriting process. After he and Sean recorded the song they'd written in response to Emily's letter, Woodard sent it to Emily as a thank-you for sharing her letter. She replied with a beautiful note about how moved she was by the song, inspiring Woodard to write another song, "My Love Will Find You," also based on her original letter. He enlisted standout singer-songwriter Molly Jenson and Jordan Pundik to sing it.

"That was the first time I'd really had nothing to do with it," he says. "I mean, I wrote it, and I was recording them and producing the song, but I was completely out of the picture for the first time. So I let go of the performance side. I started to sense that I could get a much deeper connection if I just took myself out of it. I remember listening to Molly sing and thinking, why should I be singing this song? By then I realized I should just get the hell out of the way. Fortunately, in the years leading up to that, I had developed some skills for producing, arranging and recording. So I feel like everything kind of prepared me for this, for taking my hands off the wheel."

Woodard continued to collaborate with his songwriting friends. Emily's letter would inspire two more songs, one co-written with surfing buddy Jon Foreman, another written entirely by Foreman while he was out on tour and recorded when he was back in town.

In his book Woodard talks about the creative liberation he felt from writing about others' stories and recording other people singing.

"In this new anonymity I begin to feel lighter and free, like a door has opened into a bright, airy room I've never seen, one that's been in my house the whole time but I always just walked past," he reflects.

Other random encounters led to more letters and, in turn, songs. Woodard and Foreman spent time playing guitars and hanging out with teens at a homeless youth shelter in Oceanside, California that Switchfoot has helped support for several years. After the director, Kim, sent a thank-you note to

the two for sharing their time, Woodard wrote back to inquire what led her to do the work she does, and she replied with a heartfelt letter describing her own troubled youth living on the streets as a teenage addict, and of the people who helped her repair her self-image and rebuild her spirit. It would spawn three songs: a catchy, upbeat rocker written by Foreman, "Unbroken," and two Woodard-penned tracks, "Love Began as a Whisper," featuring the beautiful vocals of Molly Jenson, and a lively alt-country stomper, "The Right Words," featuring Jordan Pundik on vocals.

Another letter came from Haiti. After a powerful earthquake ravaged the country early in 2010, Woodard had been asked to contribute a song for a benefit record. His tune, "Rescue," ended up on the Web paired with some video footage of the relief efforts there, and a medic for Sean Penn's foundation, Alison, saw it and e-mailed Woodard to thank him. After an e-mail exchange in which Woodard asked what the conditions were really like there, she forwarded him a letter she had written to her parents explaining both the overwhelming suffering and the incredible resilience of the people she had encountered. The letter inspired two more songs: "Act of God," co-written with Jack Tempchin, and "Broken Wide Open," written with Tempchin and Sara Watkins, who also adds a lovely, plaintive vocal.

The fourth letter came from Katelyn, the widow of a police officer who had been fatally shot in Oceanside, near Woodard's town, a year and a half earlier, leaving Katelyn with a young son. It turned out that Woodard had met her prior to the shooting through a mutual friend. Katelyn had since remarried, and having heard through Sara Watkins that Woodard was writing songs based on letters, she wrote him one of her own. She explained that she and her husband had discussed the possibility of his being killed in the line of duty, and that he would want her to remarry and give her son a father. That conversation, she shared with Woodard, had enabled her to eventually move on.

The letter inspired Woodard and Sara Watkins to write the tune "From the Ashes." Woodard comments in his book that this theme flows through the stories told in each of the four letters – as he puts it, "beautiful truths buried in the wreckage of tragedy." Katelyn's letter would inspire a pair of other songs: "Begun," co-written with Jack Tempchin, about finishing what has been started, and "Hush," a lullaby written for Katelyn's young son and sung beautifully by another friend, Nena Anderson.

Even without the benefit of the



greater context that illuminates the inspiration for the songs, the album's tracks, which range from shimmering balladry to uplifting rock, boast a clarity, emotional depth and heartfelt melodic beauty. With the added knowledge of the letters and stories behind the songs, each track becomes even more powerful, revealing a deeper insight into the perspectives of the songwriters as they responded to a particular emotional theme.

Reflecting on the organic, home-grown nature of the project (including the recording process in his small home studio), Woodard says he was happy with the way the songs held together as an album, even though the creative approach varied for each song.

"I had to adjust to each person according to what their process is, but I'm pretty flexible with that kind of thing," he explains. "I want the best for the song, and that means what's best for the writer too."

In the book, Woodard weaves his own personal stories from different periods of his life into his narrative as he relates to the stories in the letters. He realizes that he effectively did the same thing as he was writing the songs.

"The way that I write hasn't really changed much," he elaborates. "I just feel like the source changed. Instead of being somewhere deep in my gut, now the source was on these pages that people sent me. Those are the same thing, really. My story is coming out through those letters, even if I don't think it is. My hopes and fears and dreams and all that stuff, it all comes out, even when I'm writing about other things."

Woodard's desire to share the songs with the letter writers led to another decision: to pay a surprise visit and play the tunes for them in person, often with some of his friends in tow.

He, Sean and Molly traveled to Connecticut to play their songs for Emily. He, Jordan, Molly and Jon went to the homeless shelter and played their songs for Kim. He brought Nena, Sara and Jack to play for Katelyn and her son. And although Woodard couldn't surprise Alison in Haiti due to the travel logistics, he flew there with his Big Baby to play for her and spent time in her world.

"I stayed in a tent in the living room of this burned-out house," he recalls. "There was no water or electricity. Alison's clinic was in pretty much the worst part of Port-au-Prince, called Cité Soleil, so that's where we spent our time. She took me around the slums and we went into schools there. And despite the conditions, the kids were all dressed up in their uniforms – there was just this resilient spirit. I remember that probably the most. I went into these schools and played for kids, and there were just smiles all over the place. When I would start playing they would just stop what they were doing and look up at you and gather around. It was pretty powerful. You wish there was more that you could do. But sometimes that's all you can do, go around and be present."

As Woodard looks back on the extraordinary way the project unfolded and the impact it had on him both creatively and personally, he says he learned the value of letting go.

"Maybe your dream isn't what you're supposed to be doing," he suggests. "And maybe what you're supposed to be doing is something more beautiful than you could have ever imagined. We all know stories of people who go after their dream with blinders on and they get it, and then the real trouble starts. So for me it was a recalibration of sorts. There's a great line from Bono in the U2 song 'Beauti-

ful Day': 'What you don't have you don't need it now.' And I started looking at the world through that lens, like, what I have right now is what I need, and these big music dreams, I must not need them now; I'm probably supposed to be doing something else.

"And the ironic thing about that, which is in the book, is that once I let go of all those dreams, they started to happen, and that's not for some kind of narrative convenience. That happened like it did. Great example: Shawn Mullins was a hero of mine in the songwriting world when I was cutting my teeth, and I tried to get on the road with him for something like eight years, but it ended up [not panning out]. So I kind of gave up and let it go. A year later he was in my living room through a vehicle I could have never imagined – a fan of mine gave a CD to his tour manager, and the tour manager gave it to Shawn."

Woodard's book and CD were scheduled for release together in September (the CD is included in the book). At the time of our interview in June, he was working out the details with Hay House for a promotional tour. Because of the unique nature of the project as a book and album, there may be a mix of events – some speaking engagements with some solo performance of the songs, and possibly some

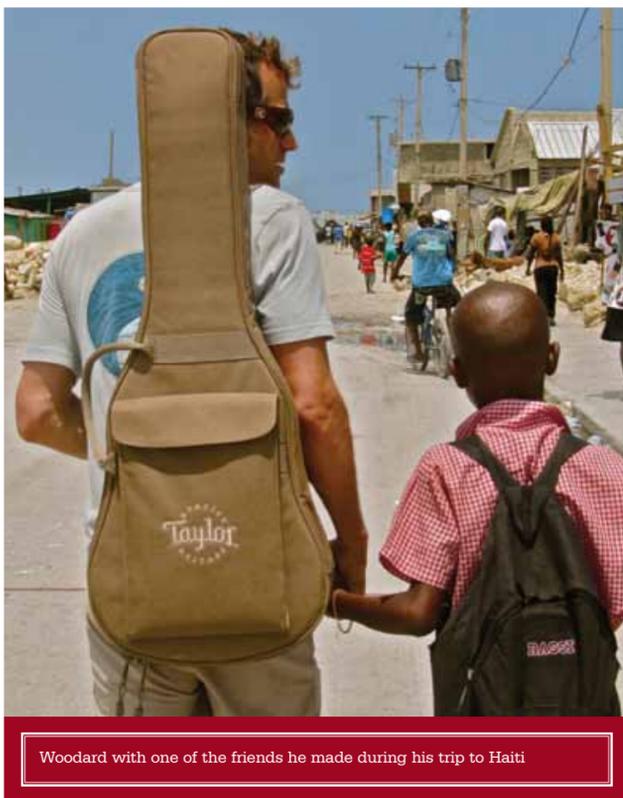
shows with some of the musicians who participated in the making of the record. He's done several gigs in the San Diego area, which made it easier for more of his busy friends to perform with him. The most recent show incorporated multimedia elements, including video footage from his visits with Emily, Kim, Alison and Katelyn, voiceover recordings of the letters from the writers, and live performance.

"No matter what form it takes, the start of the show will be the letters," Woodard says. "We were talking about doing a Thanksgiving tour with everybody for a couple of weeks, but logistically it's kind of a challenge. We might do just one show and record it, like a PBS special.

"I don't know that it fits into a kind of traditional paradigm as far as putting an album out and touring goes, but I love it," he says. "It's a complete departure from what I've been doing for the last 10-15 years, and it's so welcome. The model has just shifted so much that there isn't a model now, but there's still a lot of people out there who want to go see shows and listen to music."

W&S

You can read more about Alex Woodard's project and watch videos at www.forthesender.com and at www.alexwoodard.com.



Woodard with one of the friends he made during his trip to Haiti

Afterglow



Phillips in concert with his GS7e

Idol

American Idol winner

Phillip Phillips

talks about his love

of acoustic guitar

and the road ahead

By Chalise Zolezzi

For *American Idol* season 11 winner Phillip Phillips (GS7, 816ce, GS Mini), landing in the Hollywood spotlight and being broadcast to millions of viewers whose votes controlled his fate was overwhelming exposure. The Leesburg, Georgia native, who had spent much of his adult life pursuing a degree in industrial systems technology and working in his family's pawn business, auditioned for *AI* at their insistence. He never expected to land a top spot in the finals, let alone win. But week after week his nimble fretwork and soulful take on popular songs endeared him to viewers, culminating with his pure, tears-of-joy reaction to winning after a record 132 million votes were cast during the final episode.

The song Phillips performed that night, "Home," debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 at the number 10 spot, and within a week of its release, accounted for nearly 300,000 downloads, quickly surpassing previous *Idol* records. It would go on to clear the half-million mark, earning Phillips a gold record. And if you watched any of the U.S. broadcasts of the Summer Olympics, you might have heard his haunting vocals supporting video vignettes of U.S. athletes.

This past summer we caught up with Phillips during the American Idol Live! tour stop in San Diego, California, where he spoke about his connection with his Taylor, his playing style, and the role a karaoke machine played in his guitar development.

How did you find your first Taylor? I started out playing guitar when I was 14. I had a couple of cheap guitars, and as soon as I turned 17, I felt like I deserved a nicer guitar because I'd played out with my sister a lot. I needed something with a better sound, and I'd seen a lot of great artists play Taylors, so I thought I'd try one. I went to a store in Tallahassee, Florida with my family and was actually looking to get [another brand]. The [sales] guy was kind of rude to me, so we went to a little place just down the road and I picked up the Taylor [GS7]. I just strummed a chord and I said, 'Oh man, that was it.' I played a lot of guitars that day, and I just felt it had that deep, but not *too* deep, rich sound. I said, 'Man, I have to have this,' so the guy made a deal with me and put a [pickup] in there. It's been my go-to guitar ever since; I take it everywhere. It's got some battle wounds, but I love it. It's got a smooth feel, and the Indian rosewood is my favorite kind of wood on a guitar. There's something about the sound I just love.

How does that specific guitar figure into your style of music?

Every song I've written has that perfect sound for me, especially when I record with it – it just has that tone that I look for. I love full-body guitars. I like some cutaways, but I love that full-bodied sound. If I want to put it into Drop D tuning it really has a beautiful sound. I play a lot in standard also, but I can play in a whole bunch of different tun-

ings with it and it just has that perfect sound. It's just *it*. Right now I'm out on the road playing the GS7 and an 816ce. They have a similar sound; the 816ce is still full, but lighter. I actually play that in Drop D, and when I play smaller gigs, like for radio, I use the GS7 in open [tuning].

On *American Idol*, your guitar playing transformed popular songs. How would you describe your playing style?

When I started playing guitar, my brother-in-law taught me the main chords. I wouldn't see him too much, so I'd play CDs or tapes in my karaoke machine and figure out the songs the best I could. [I played] a lot of AC/DC. I love Angus Young – he's one of my favorite guitarists – and Steve Vai and all those guys; that's when I was big into electric. Then I picked the acoustic back up and started listening to John Butler, Dave Matthews, Damien Rice, Eric Clapton and lots of other acoustic guys. Man, I just fell in love with the acoustic. It's a lot different than playing the electric; you can have so many different sounds from an acoustic. You have to be really precise. I like that challenge. I didn't want to be a regular strummer. Ever since I started writing my own songs I didn't want to play regular chords. I would just mix songs up, [relying on] what I'd learned over the years – some different chords and strumming patterns – and bringing it all together.

Has being on *AI* changed your playing style?

Not really. Everywhere I played when I was younger and played gigs, someone always said, 'You're a really good guitarist,' and I appreciated that. I wasn't out there just to be a guitarist. I mean, I'm a good guitarist, and I can sing and play by myself and get away with it, but I'm not really a solo type [player]. I just really appreciate it when people actually listen and can tell I'm not really strumming chords, [that] I like doing different things.

What can we expect from you in the near future?

I've been writing quite a few songs. About 15 before the tour started [in July], and they all have their own sound. I try to write something that will connect with people, not just sound good for radio. I really like to tell a story or have meaning for people to connect with. My new album will be released at the end of November or beginning of December. It has a jazz, rock, acoustic rhythm feel to it.

As a guitarist, what is your dream?

I just want to play music and make a living doing something I love. It's happening now, and it's such a blessing. I never, ever, thought I'd be doing this. It's just really precious to me. I hope I can be doing this for 20 more years, or the rest of my life, and that people will enjoy it. **W&S**

BACKSTAGE PASS

JOE DON ROONEY

THE RASCAL FLATTS GUITARIST SHARES HIS TAYLOR STORY, AND WE OFFER A CLOSER LOOK AT THE BAND'S COOL NEW CUSTOM GUITAR

BY CHALISE ZOLEZZI



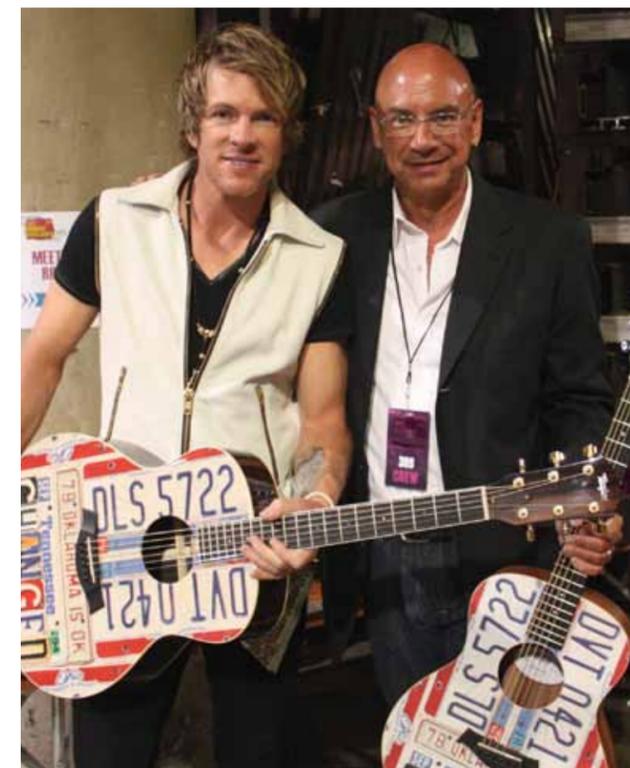
Life has been full speed ahead for Joe Don Rooney (GS8e, 714ce, 810ce) and his bandmates in Rascal Flatts ever since they assembled their harmony-rich country-pop act in 2000. Their musical resume speaks for itself: nine albums, 21 million records sold, 14 No. 1 singles, 25 million digital downloads, and more than 40 major music awards, including a heap from the Academy of Country Music (ACM) and the Country Music Association (CMA), plus a Grammy for 2006's Best Country Song, "God Bless the Broken Road." A prolific touring schedule along the way has earned them a passionate and ever-expanding global fanbase.

Comprised of Gary LeVox (lead vocals), Jay DeMarcus (bass guitar, keyboard, piano, vocals), and Rooney (lead guitarist and vocal harmonies), the band released their eighth studio record, *Changed*, earlier this year, and promptly hit the road for their summer tour. As we noted in our spring issue ("Soundings"), Taylor partnered with the band and Country Music Television to offer a unique contest and promotion: Fans were invited to submit a graphic design for the top of a Taylor GS acoustic guitar, and the winning design would be incorporated into a custom GS8 that would serve as the official guitar of their tour.

The winning design, created by Peter Geiger from North Carolina, featured license plates from Ohio, Oklahoma and Tennessee (signifying the band's roots), including a collage treatment that spelled out the word "Changed," a nod to the new album. The guitar was presented to Rooney by Taylor's Tim Godwin (artist relations) at the CMA Music Festival in Nashville during the summer, and besides loving the creative design work, Rooney and guitar tech David Graef had a chance to take it for a spin, which elicited a pair of instant raves. Not long afterward, Rooney took a few minutes to talk about his first Taylor experience, how the guitars inspire him, and the "get back" he enjoys with a Taylor in hand.

Tell us your Taylor story. When and where did you discover a Taylor acoustic?

I was on the road in 1999 playing lead guitar for Chely Wright. Around the same time Chely hired another guitar player by the name of Shayne Hill — an awesome guitarist — to play acoustic. Shayne brought a 1998 710ce with him. I asked him if I could play a little on it one day [and] after that introduction, I believe I played it more than he did! I fell in love with that guitar and became such a Taylor fan. Ironically, Jay DeMar-



cus ended up buying that Taylor from Shayne. So the good news is I wasn't out any cash, and now I can play that acoustic anytime I'm at Jay's studio. Gotta love that!

How does your Taylor inspire your writing and performing?

Taylor acoustics never stop inspiring. The playability and tone are always spot on. I play a 714ce a lot. Playing live, when it's time to hit the stage, I always know my Taylor will show up and perform at its best, and bring out the best in me as well. It's a two-way street: What you give is what you get, but the "get back" is what's so special with these instruments.

Tell us about your songwriting process.

I do a lot of songwriting on the road and at home, and a Taylor is normally my go-to. One of the cuts on the *Changed* album that I'm really proud of is a track titled "Sunrise." I wrote the first verse and chorus on my bus by myself with a Taylor. Of course, I enlisted the great singer, songwriter, musician and producer Nathan Chapman to help me carve out the remainder of the tune. Needless to say, I don't leave home without [a Taylor].

As a guitar player, what would you call your crowning achievement?

I would say my "crowning achievement" has happened a few times now. It's when the likes of a few of my musical heroes, like Neal Schon, Vince Gill, Steve Lukather and Dann Huff, tell me that they like my playing. Talk about cloud nine moments. You can't help but smile when people like that tip their hat to you. Hearing those guys say those words to me unsolicited is like icing on the cake.

Changed has been called the "most passionate [Rascal Flatts] album," and you've said it was 11 years in the making. Why is that?

I truly believe the past 11 years and seven [studio] albums, along with our experiences and memories over that time, have played into the making of *Changed*. We know what our strengths are now, and we know what we want to say and how to say it. It's taken a lot of time to get here, but if you really want to fully understand what Rascal Flatts is all about, then just sit back and listen to *Changed* and you can hear it. I'm so proud of it. **W&S**

For tour dates and other information on the band, visit www.RascalFlatts.com

Behind the Making of the "Changed" Guitar

Unlike most of the other guitar designs submitted for the Rascal Flatts "Changed" contest, Peter Geiger's winning entry was a photograph of an actual piece of industrial art he had fabricated. Geiger, an artist who has been designing guitar sculptures out of old license plates for about five years, had cut a few up, rearranged the parts to spell out "Changed," and glued them to a wooden template in the shape of a Taylor GS body based on dimensions provided on the contest entry page. Geiger said he was selective in his composition.

"Each guitar tells a person's life story," he explained after being selected as the winner by the members of the band. "I used those [license] tags because that's where the band is from — Ohio, Oklahoma, and now, Nashville, Tennessee."

Geiger said that as a country music fan, it was exciting for him to win the contest.

"It's the first guitar design of mine that will come to life and be played," he shared. "I can't wait to see it on stage."

Geiger's prize package included a VIP experience to see Rascal Flatts live and a Taylor GS8 signed by the band.

Completing the guitars took a bit of extra design work on our end. Geiger shipped the guitar sculpture to us, after which we photographed the top. Next, graphic designer and resident Photoshop ace Rita Hoffman from our marketing team (whose work *Wood&Steel* readers get to enjoy with every issue) worked her magic to extend Geiger's design inward to the edge of the soundhole. (The dimensions we had provided for the contest had made the soundhole area larger to leave room for a rosette to be added, but Geiger's design was meant to extend all the way to the edge without a rosette.) Once the graphic file was complete, she created a scaled-down version for the top of a GS



Mini that was also being made for a related promotion with the band. From there the files and the Sitka spruce guitar tops designated for the guitars were sent to an outside print house, which employed a flatbed digital imaging process. Each guitar top was first screen printed with white ink. Then the top was placed on a vacuum bed to secure it and a digital inkjet printer moved across it to transfer the image to the top. After returning to the factory, the tops went through the normal body assembly and finish processes, receiving a gloss treatment that adds a rich, high-end sheen to the graphic treatment.

Top center (L-R): Rooney with Taylor's Tim Godwin in Nashville; **Above:** Peter Geiger with his winning design

Taylor Notes

Tracking Progress in Cameroon

In last issue's cover feature on the future of ebony ("Ebony's Final Frontier"), we reported on Taylor's ownership stake in Crelicam, an ebony mill located in Cameroon. The story offered a closer look at ebony sourcing and exposed some of the harsh realities that Bob Taylor discovered there, including the way that demand for all-black ebony has led to the widespread waste of variegated ebony. Bob shared the new ownership's action plan, which aims to promote such ebony as a viable and valued wood; improve Crelicam's working conditions and wood processing capability; and provide a better ebony product to instrument makers.

Though progress has been made thus far, much work remains. In this update, we note the logistical groundwork that Taylor's Chief Financial Officer, Barbara Wight, has been laying for future improvements, and relay a field report from Anne Middleton, our environmental and community relations manager, who is based in Yaoundé, the country's capital.

Wight has brought useful operations management experience to the Crelicam initiative. Prior to joining Taylor in 2009, she served as Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer of T-Systems International, Inc., a global manufacturing company that provides irrigation solutions to growers. Through her work there she became well-versed in compliance issues relating to multinational manufacturing. Once at Taylor, she was instrumental in the establishment of our European headquarters in Amsterdam. Last year she spent about 60 days in Cameroon, including trips with Bob Taylor and on her own.

In early 2011, Wight joined Bob and Vidal de Teresa Paredes (from Taylor's ownership partner, Madinter Trade) to meet with Cameroon's then Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, Elvis Ngolle Ngolle. It was one of several trips to legally establish Taylor-Listug-Madinter (TLM) eligibility to become the new owners of the Crelicam mill and clear the way for the company to conduct business in a transparent manner. As Wight discovered in the course of several trips and many meetings, nothing happens overnight. She met several times with Minister Ngolle, and she and Bob, Vidal and

mill manager Jaime Mata Barceló even met with Cameroon's Prime Minister, Philémon Yunji Yang, along with many other government officials to talk about securing the company's permits to legally operate within the forests of Cameroon. These early stages were vital to the success of the new endeavor.

"What I discovered on every trip was that it's like peeling back the layers of an onion," Wight says. "At every turn, there was new information to be acted on."

Clarity relating to Crelicam's wood harvesting permits would be crucial. Though Crelicam was granted about 75 percent of the country's ebony cutting permits, there was no specification as to where the wood could be cut, effectively making Crelicam a company with no land.

In addition to resolving the regulatory details, one of the most challenging obstacles to overcome in the process, Wight says, has been one of preexisting perceptions. Cameroon has had a history of foreign companies arriving, depleting the country of its natural resources, and then departing at will. In the wake of such precedents, establishing a new foundation of trust was paramount.

"Most challenging were the unwritten rules," Wight explains. "The cultural rules, tribal rules, and overcoming fear. Many others have come in with a big vision only to leave devastation and broken trust. It makes it hard for employees; they want to believe, but they don't commit out of fear of being disappointed."

Significant progress has already been made with employees. Upon assuming ownership of Crelicam, TLM dramatically increased workers' wages, and has begun to provide additional training that will enable employees to complete more value-added processes with ebony. Over time, this will create more jobs and enable local communities to reap a greater economic benefit. At our press deadline, construction of a kitchen at the Yaoundé mill that will provide daily meals to employees was nearing completion.

Another way that Wight found herself bonding with Crelicam employees and other stakeholders was through a shared love of music.

"Music is integral to life in Cameroon," she says. "There's an artistic spirit that runs through the country and a great music culture with lyrical people."

Several employees, in fact, have recorded their own hip-hop tracks (you can hear a sample in our blog at taylorguitars.com).

These days when Wight travels to Cameroon, some of the employees address her as "mother," both as a sign of respect and as a term of endearment.

Among the other employee programs Wight is focused on are basic health care services – finding a village doctor to treat employees and members of the communities in which they live. A plan is also in the works to eventually establish a non-profit organization to fund various social programs in the communities. But Wight understands that any plan must be tempered with patience.

"Everything is a process in Africa," she says. "Truly, if you can accomplish 25 percent of your goal, you've been successful."

While Wight's work might seem unusual for a CFO, she says there's a level of personal investment that comes with the territory.

"It's so great to be able to work for a company that makes incredible instruments while also striving to make the world a better place," she reflects. "Spending time in Cameroon reminds me to stay humble and show great care for our team there. Frequently, when I'm at the El Cajon factory, I find myself thinking about our team in Cameroon and looking forward to my next trip."



L-R: Barbara Wight, Anne Middleton, Workshop Chief Eric Serge Biyogbe Bekalle, Crelicam Mill Operations Manager Jaime Mata, Assistant Operations Manager (Bertuoa) Tabitha Emmanuelle Ngo Nkeng, Operations Manager (Bertuoa) Guy Patrice Tamdjokam Sah

Into the Forest

Another member of our Crelicam operations team, Anne Middleton, has been busy since relocating to Cameroon in late spring. In addition to managing our compliance and sustainability initiatives, she has been building relationships with employees, contractors, community leaders, government officials and others.

As part of its ebony procurement model, Crelicam works with two prospectors and 25 local suppliers who will help meet its permitted quota for the year. Middleton recently traveled into the rainforest to get a first-hand look at the location of the ebony trees being harvested and the difficult work of removing the wood, and followed up with this report:

Arriving at an ebony stump took five hours of driving on a paved road and four hours of driving on a dirt road. These precious trees are not easy to find, but our skilled team of suppliers knows exactly where to look. Unlike the images of clear-cut rainforests of Brazil or Indonesia, ebony harvesting is selective. With proper long-term forest management, the ecosystem dynamics can be maintained, but we must take great care to design and implement management plans which incorporate the many moving parts here in Cameroon.

Ebony is widely dispersed throughout the forests in the southern half of Cameroon. Crelicam's suppliers must find the ebony trees on foot, cut them down, and saw them into manageable

logs so they can be carried out on their heads. The average log coming out of the forest weighs approximately 35-45 kg (77-99 pounds). Imagine carrying that out on your head with no groomed path; it's difficult work! I have particular admiration for our one female supplier. She's one tough cookie.

Since TLM assumed ownership of Crelicam, we've been implementing new measures to increase both the work standards for the employees and the sustainability of the raw material. The best example of improved practices has been increasing the price of the "déclassé" wood – ebony which may have cracks, pinholes or white streaks. This creates incentive for the suppliers to bring in every bit of ebony from the forest, and not only the pitch-black wood. Unfortunately, with Cameroonian technology, it's nearly impossible to determine the quality of the ebony before the tree is felled. We are working with the suppliers to help them understand that if an ebony tree is felled, bring it in – we want it! That message is sinking in slowly. Constant education and monitoring of the suppliers is necessary in order to maintain our new methodology, but that's why I'm here, and we have a great management team to help reinforce the message. Simultaneously, we're working out new systems at the factory to increase yield. Little by little, we are cutting fewer trees to make more fingerboards, and our employees are seeing positive changes in their working conditions.

Photo Finish

We bring you the best of our "Me and My Taylor" photo contest



Grand Prize Winner

Bo Struye: "Nothing Else Matters"

"Nothing will help you escape from the daily worries of life better than a glorious evening with your guitar."

This past summer we launched the second edition of our "Me and My Taylor" photo contest, and once again, the volume and range of submissions were impressive. The idea was not just to create a well composed photo, but also to capture a mood or environment that reflects what a Taylor guitar means to you on a personal level. It was great fun to survey the hundreds of photos that poured in and share them with the rest of the Taylor community. From inspiring settings to important life moments, your photos underscored the many ways that playing a Taylor guitar enriches our lives. We thank everyone who took the time to share a photo, and congratulate our winners, as selected by Bob Taylor and members of our marketing team. All finalists will receive a Taylor prize pack, and our Grand Prize winner, Bo Struye, will also receive a Taylor GS Mini and a Sony Cyber-shot® digital camera. You can view these and other contest photos online at <http://tylrgt.rs/2012photocontest>



Finalist

Cecilia Gault: "Me and My Taylor"

"Summer day in New York City with my Taylor GS Mini!"



Finalist

Elizabeth Bateman: "Me at College Playing my Taylor in the Sunshine"

"I'm a college student at Western Washington University. This is a photo of me playing my Taylor GS Mini Mahogany in the window of my dorm room. This guitar got me through a rough year, and I really love my Taylor!"



Finalist

Shari Wilbert: "Shotgun!"

"Hannah Claire and her Taylor koa are inseparable. For now, music takes the front seat..."



Finalist

Hannah Taylor: "My Friend"

"Life can be so crazy, but when I catch a few minutes to just sit in my bedroom and play my guitar I feel such peace. Playing my guitar and songwriting – that's when I'm truly happy."

Events

NAMM Musikmesse Russia Moscow, Russia May 16-19, 2012

Taylor made its debut as a trade show exhibitor at the first-ever NAMM Musikmesse Russia show, and it proved to be an enlightening experience in terms of deepening our connection with the Russian market. Taylor's European Sales Manager, Frank Stevens, and Trade Show Manager David Kaye represented the company, and with the help of their translator, Aurora Apushkinskaja, they were able to effectively communicate with attendees. Kaye said that for a first-year event, the attendance was strong.

"There was much more traffic than anticipated, and the interest in our guitars was evident in our many conversations with people," he noted. "As with any show we do around the world, our owners and fans are proud to share

their deep love of our brand. I met several multiple Taylor owners, including two of Russia's established rock stars, Garik Sukachev and Alexander Rozenbaum."

Kaye said that like other metropolitan cities around the world, Moscow has attracted an affluent demographic that appreciates (and can afford) high-quality items from prestige brands like Taylor. He said the current challenge – which was the overwhelming topic of conversation among guests – is the lack of access to our guitars. Part of the trip's objective was to address this by meeting with music retailers and broadening our brand exposure by cultivating our dealer network there.

"Once a dealer network is established, Taylor Road Shows and Find Your Fit events will be devoured by a musical community thirsty for knowledge," Kaye said. "Russia represents a huge opportunity for growth."



Summerfest Milwaukee, Wisconsin June 27-July 8, 2012

This marked Taylor's third year at Milwaukee, Wisconsin's annual Summerfest, billed as the "World's Largest Music Festival." The 11-day event typically features more 700 bands, and although a brutal extended heat wave caused a dip in this year's overall attendance (to *only* 805,000), festival goers were treated to a parade of top-notch talent, including Taylor acts Rascal Flatts, the Dirty Heads, Train, Thompson Square, the Zac Brown Band and Hanson.

Taylor co-sponsored the U.S. Cellular/Emerging Artist Stage, providing a GS Mini as part of the daily prize package. During the day, fans voted (via text message) for their favorite band; at the end of the day the winner was announced. Taylor's Andy Lund was on-hand for the second half of the festival (July 3-8) and helped coordinate a unique partnership arrangement with Sennheiser to co-sponsor an artist lounge. In past years the lounge (bus) served mainly as a hospitality suite for artists to relax (and cool down) before or after their gig. For Taylor, it has proved to be a good spot to connect with artists, front-of-house/monitor engineers, and tour managers.

This year, Taylor and Sennheiser decided to take the lounge experience to another level. We brought in another partner, UniqueSquared, an online retailer that owns a fully equipped recording bus. The company provided a sound engineer and a camera man. Sennheiser provided microphones. We stocked the bus with guitars, including an 814ce, mahogany Baritone-6, GC5e, GC7e, GS5e and T3/B. Over the course of the six days, 20 artists were recorded, incorporating a two-camera video shoot that captured a mix of performances and interviews that were dubbed the "Summerfest Sessions." Lund says it was a great set-up that everyone enjoyed.

"A lot of artists had a chance to play a mix of our guitars," he reported afterwards. "A couple of bands even ended up using the baritone as a pseudo bass guitar." We'll be posting some of the videos on the Taylor website as they become available.

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Bottom left (L-R): Taylor's David Kaye and Frank Stevens (photo by Alex Gourin); **Above:** Singer Alexandra Naples from the band Lovebette with the GS Mini the band won as one of Summerfest's favorite emerging acts; **Below (L-R):** Taylor's Andy Lund with Zac Brown Band ticket winners Christina Sifnaos and her friend Vaso through a co-promotion with Taylor dealer Cascio Interstate Music



0% Financing on Taylor Purchases Extended Through December 31

We're happy to announce that our GE Money Consumer Financing program has been extended through December 31, 2012. You can get 0% interest on select Taylor purchases if they're paid in full within 12 months. Monthly payments are required. Eligible Taylor models include:

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

Calendar

For all the latest Taylor event listings, visit taylorguitars.com/events

Our Road Show and Find Your Fit events continue this fall. If we make it your way, we hope you'll come spend time with our factory experts and sample some guitars.

North American Road Shows

Fort Collins, CO
Tue., Oct. 9 6 p.m.
Spotlight Music
(970) 377-8066

Colorado Springs, CO
Wed., Oct. 10 6 p.m.
ProSound Music
(719) 597-9962

Grand Junction, CO
Thu., Oct. 11 7 p.m.
Back Porch Music
(970) 243-9711

Sarasota, FL
Mon., Oct. 15 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(941) 351-4008

Memphis, TN
Tue., Oct. 16 6 p.m.
Martin Music
(901) 729-2466

Traverse City, MI
Tue., Oct. 16 7 p.m.
Marshall Music Co.
(231) 922-9503

Orlando, FL
Tue., Oct. 16 6:30 p.m.
Sam Ash
(407) 599-1222

Nashville, TN
Wed., Oct. 17 6 p.m.
Corner Music
(615) 297-9559

Lansing, MI
Wed., Oct. 17 6 p.m.
Elderly Instruments
(517) 372-7880

Miami Lakes, FL
Wed., Oct. 17 6:30 p.m.
Sam Ash
(305) 628-3510

Sevierville, TN
Thu., Oct. 18 7 p.m.
Music Outlet
(865) 453-1031

Northfield, IL
Thu., Oct. 18 7 p.m.
Gand Music
(847) 446-4263

West Palm Beach, FL
Thu., Oct. 18 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(561) 616-5601

Kingsport, TN
Fri., Oct. 19 7 p.m.
Tennessee Sounds
(423) 245-4005

Downers Grove, IL
Sun., Oct. 21 2 p.m.
Tobias Music
(630) 960-2455

Horseheads, NY
Mon., Oct. 22 7 p.m.
Robert M. Sides
(607) 739-1559

Dickson City, PA
Tue., Oct. 23 6:30 p.m.
Northeast Music Center
(570) 483-4184

McKinney, TX
Tue., Oct. 23 7:30 p.m.
Guitar Sanctuary
(972) 540-6420

Rockaway, NJ
Wed., Oct. 24 7 p.m.
Ritchie's Music Center
(973) 625-2500

Hawkins, TX
Wed., Oct. 24 6 p.m.
Action Sound
(903) 769-5262

Manalapan, NJ
Thu., Oct. 25 7 p.m.
Musicians Workshop
(732) 972-1118

Rockwall, TX
Thu., Oct. 25 6 p.m.
Peghead Guitars
(972) 771-1650

Salisbury, MD
Fri., Oct. 26 6 p.m.
B&B Music and Sound
(410) 543-2153

New Britain, CT
Sat., Oct. 27 1 p.m.
George's Music Center
(860) 496-9362

Langley, BC
Mon., Oct. 29 7 p.m.
Tom Lee Music
(604) 532-8303

Nampa, ID
Mon., Oct. 29 7 p.m.
Dorsey Music
(208) 466-5681

Victoria, BC
Tue., Oct. 30 7 p.m.
Tom Lee Music
(250) 383-5222

Idaho Falls, ID
Tue., Oct. 30 7 p.m.
Chesbro Music
(208) 522-8691

Vancouver, BC
Thu., Nov. 1 7 p.m.
Tom Lee Music
(604) 688-8929

Orem, UT
Thu., Nov. 1 7 p.m.
Best In Music
(801) 802-8022

Florence, AL
Mon., Nov. 5 6 p.m.
Alabama Music
(256) 764-3932

Palm Desert, CA
Mon., Nov. 5 7 p.m.
Musician's Outlet
(760) 341-3171

Montrose, CA
Tue., Nov. 6 7 p.m.
Grayson's Tune Town
(818) 249-0993

Macon, GA
Wed., Nov. 7 7 p.m.
Ken's Pro Sounds
(478) 257-6499

Greenville, SC
Wed., Nov. 7 7 p.m.
Fifth String Music
(864) 242-5428

Fresno, CA
Wed., Nov. 7 7 p.m.
Legend Music Sound Stage
(559) 224-5277

Atlanta, GA
Thu., Nov. 8 6:30 p.m.
Maple Street Guitars
(404) 231-5214

Hanahan, SC
Thu., Nov. 8 6 p.m.
Ye Olde Music Shop
(843) 747-0014

Santa Cruz, CA
Thu., Nov. 8 7 p.m.
Sylvan Music
(831) 427-1917

Lexington, MA
Thu., Nov. 8 7 p.m.
The Music Emporium
(781) 860-0049

Alpharetta, GA
Fri., Nov. 9 7 p.m.
Ken Stanton Music
(770) 670-4424

Wakefield, RI
Fri., Nov. 9 7 p.m.
Wakefield Music
(401) 783-5390

Wilmington, NC
Fri., Nov. 9 7 p.m.
Music Loft of Wilmington
(910) 799-9310

Rock Hill, SC
Sat., Nov. 10 7 p.m.
Woody's Music
(803) 324-9663

Owen Sound, ON
Mon., Nov. 12 6:30 p.m.
Fromager Music
(519) 371-9662

Renton, WA
Mon., Nov. 12 7 p.m.
A Sharp Music
(425) 251-5929

Jamestown, NY
Mon., Nov. 12 6:30 p.m.
Trinity Guitars
(716) 665-4490

Round Rock, TX
Mon., Nov. 12 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(512) 244-0101

Seattle, WA
Tue., Nov. 13 6:30 p.m.
Dusty Strings
(206) 634-1662

West Seneca, NY
Tue., Nov. 13 7 p.m.
The Guitar Factory
(716) 677-0908

San Antonio, TX
Tue., Nov. 13 6:30 p.m.
Sam Ash
(210) 530-9777

London, ON
Tue., Nov. 13 6:30 p.m.
Walters Music
(519) 660-1460

Milton, ON
Wed., Nov. 14 7 p.m.
Guitars and Amps
(905) 876-4400

Olympia, WA
Wed., Nov. 14 7 p.m.
Music 6000
(360) 786-6000

Ithaca, NY
Wed., Nov. 14 6:30 p.m.
Ithaca Guitar Works
(607) 272-2602

Stafford, TX
Wed., Nov. 14 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(281) 246-4001

Richmond Hill, ON
Thu., Nov. 15 7 p.m.
Cosmo Music
(905) 770-5222

Portland, OR
Thu., Nov. 15 7 p.m.
Portland Music
(503) 228-8437

Rochester, NY
Thu., Nov. 15 6 p.m.
House of Guitars
(585) 544-3500

Harahan, LA
Thu., Nov. 15 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(504) 818-0336

Keizer, OR
Fri., Nov. 16 7 p.m.
Sound Vibrations
(503) 393-4437

San Antonio, TX
Tue., Dec. 4 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Alamo Music
(210) 242-1010

Downers Grove, IL
Sat., Oct. 20 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Tobias Music
(630) 960-2455

Grapevine, TX
Mon., Oct. 22 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Grapevine Guitar Works
(800) 764-8144

Hamden, CT
Fri., Oct. 26 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Brian's Guitars
(203) 287-9190

Virginia Beach, VA
Sat., Oct. 27 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Alpha Music
(757) 486-2001

Logan, UT
Wed., Oct. 31 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
The Book Table
(435) 752-3055

Tuscaloosa, AL
Tue., Nov. 6 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
The Guitar Gallery
(205) 758-2220

Bogart, GA
Sat., Nov. 10 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Musician's Warehouse
(706) 548-7233

Edwardsville, IL
Mon., Nov. 12 1 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Mojo's Music
(618) 603-6600

Ellisville, MO
Tue., Nov. 13 1 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Fazio's Frets & Friends
(636) 227-3573

Rolla, MO
Thu., Nov. 15 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Merle's Music
(573) 341-3020

Lebanon, MO
Thu., Nov. 16 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Morgan Music
(417) 588-1970

Springfield, MO
Sat., Nov. 17 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Springfield Music
(417) 881-1373

Portland, OR
Sat., Nov. 17 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Portland Music Company
(503) 228-8437

Corpus Christi, TX
Sat., Dec. 1 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sound Vibrations
(361) 884-8981

San Antonio, TX
Tue., Dec. 4 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Alamo Music
(210) 242-1010

Austin, TX
Wed., Dec. 5 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Strait Music
(512) 476-6927

International Road Shows

Alkmaar, The Netherlands
Tue., Oct. 16 7 p.m.
Dijkman Muziek
+31 72 515 2511

Roeselare, Belgium
Wed., Oct. 17 7 p.m.
Key Music
+32 51 204 344

Groningen, The Netherlands
Thu., Oct. 18 6:30 p.m.
Tonika Music
+31 50 3120 437

Nijmegen, The Netherlands
Fri., Oct. 19 7 p.m.
Max Guitar Store
+31 24 360 4582

Valenciennes, France
Tue., Oct. 23 7 p.m.
Moreau Musique
03 27 46 84 15

Belfast, Northern Ireland
Tue., Oct. 23 7 p.m.
Matchetts Music
028 9032 6695

Tinqueux, France
Wed., Oct. 24 7 p.m.
Manoel Musique
03 26 47 36 25

Dublin, Ireland
Wed., Oct. 24 7 p.m.
Perfect Pitch
01 6771553

Guerville, France
Thu., Oct. 25 7 p.m.
Tomahawk
01 34 97 04 49

Dresden, Germany
Mon., Oct. 29 7 p.m.
Zoundhouse
0049 351 40768111

Hartenstein, Germany
Tue., Oct. 30 7 p.m.
Musikhaus Markstein
0049 37605 68720

Nürnberg, Germany
Wed., Oct. 31 7 p.m.
Musik Klier
0049 911 4399043

Utrecht, The Netherlands
Tue., Nov. 13 7 p.m.
Dirk Witte
+31 30 243 0097

Noordwijk, The Netherlands
Wed., Nov. 14 7 p.m.
Music All In
+31 70 361 5698

Poole, UK
Wed., Nov. 14 7 p.m.
Guitar Mania
01202 718886

Heerlen, The Netherlands
Thu., Nov. 15 7 p.m.
Muziekhuis Guus Arons
+31 45 571 7155

Exeter, UK
Thu., Nov. 15 7 p.m.
Mansons Guitar Shop
01392 496379

Haarlem, The Netherlands
Fri., Nov. 16 7 p.m.
Muziekhandel Alphenaar
+31 23 532 0244

Nancy, France
Tue., Nov. 20 7 p.m.
Music Challenge
03 83 32 99 45

Luxembourg
Wed., Nov. 21 7 p.m.
Guit Art
35 2 40 28 32

Coulommiers, France
Thu., Nov. 22 7 p.m.
MDS Audio
01 64 03 67 25

Braintree, UK
Tue., Nov. 27 7 p.m.
Peach Guitars
01376 55 016

Brighton, UK
Wed., Nov. 28 7 p.m.
Guitar Amp and Keyboard Centre
01273 665400



Renee, a night shift supervisor in our Body department, and Rich, our warehouse manager, each do their part to ensure an efficient production workflow. Renee adds a light layer with our Ladies' Long-Sleeve V-Neck Hoodie, while Rich debuts our new Men's Long-Sleeve Badge T.

shirts for the Taylor fan

A) Baseball T

Cotton/poly blend for an ultra soft, worn-in feel. 3/4 raglan sleeve, with Taylor Guitars headstock banner print. (White/Sand #2295; S-XL, \$28.00; XXL, \$30.00)

B) Taylor Dri-Fit Polo

Dri-Fit fabric draws away sweat to keep you dry and comfortable. Embroidered Taylor logo on chest. Made by Nike. (Charcoal #2705; M-XL, \$49.00; XXL, \$51.00)

C) Men's Antique Logo T

100% cotton, fashion fit. (Moss #1431; S-XL, \$22.00; XXL, \$24.00)

D) Men's Funky Guitar T

100% cotton, fashion fit, distressed lettering. (Khaki #1488; M-XL, \$22.00; XXL, \$24.00)

E) Men's Logo T

100% pre-shrunk cotton. Standard fit. (Dark Brown #1920; S-XL, \$20.00; XXL-XXXL, \$22.00)

F) Men's Long-Sleeve Zodiac T

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

G) Men's Guitar Stamp T

Lightweight, garment-washed 100% cotton jersey with a worn-in look and feel. Fashion fit.

Distressed Taylor guitar stamp design on front. (Gray #1478; S-XL, \$28.00; XXL, \$30.00)

H) Men's Vintage Peghead T

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

I) Taylor Work Shirt

Permanent press, stain-resistant poly/cotton blend. Two front pockets. Distressed screen print over left pocket and on back.

(Charcoal #3070; M-XL, \$34.00; XXL-XXXL, \$36.00)

Pictured left (L-R):

Ladies' Long-Sleeve

V-Neck Hoodie

Lightweight 100% cotton slub with subtle texture. Features Taylor Guitars script graphic over 800 Series inlay elements. Slim fit. (Black #4501; S-XXL, \$34.00)

Men's Long-Sleeve Badge T

100% preshrunk cotton, super soft lived-in look and feel. Generous cut for greater comfort. Rib knit cuffs. (Chili #2070; M-XL, \$28.00; XXL, \$30.00)



great holiday gift ideas



1) Musician's Gear Bag. Over 25 internal pockets, 9 removable section dividers, 3 large side pockets and outside access to interior compartments. Reinforced backpack straps and a strong luggage handle. Measures 14" high x 17" wide x 11" deep. (#61160, \$70.00) **2) Men's Cap.** Pro style cap. Structured Chino twill with Taylor round logo in burgundy and white on front. Adjustable fabric strap with custom embossed peghead clip buckle closure on back. One size fits most. (Charcoal #00375; \$25.00) **3) Taylor Mouse Pad.** Custom shape featuring a high-quality cloth top and soft surface for a precise glide. Non-slip rubber base. Measures 8" x 9-1/2" x 1/4". (Red/Cream #71900, \$10.00)

4) Travel Guitar Stand. Sapele, lightweight (less than 16 ounces) and ultra-portable. Small enough to fit in the pocket of a Baby Taylor gig bag. Accommodates all Taylor models. (#70198, \$59.00) **5) Taylor Mug.** Glossy ceramic bistro mug featuring the round Taylor logo. Holds 15 oz. (Brown with cream interior, #70006; \$10.00) **6) Guitar Lessons by Bob Taylor.** (Wiley Publishing, 2011, 230 pages; #75060, \$20.00) **7) Guitar Stand.** Features laser-etched Taylor logo, rich satin finish, and rubber pads to protect your guitar's finish. (Sapele/Mahogany #70100, \$70.00; assembly required) **8) ES-Go™ Pickup.** Exclusively for the GS Mini. (#84022, \$98.00) **9) Taylor Silver Dial**

Watch. By Fossil. Stainless steel, Taylor-branded tin gift box included. (#71025, \$99.00) **10) Ultem Picks.** Ultem is a strong space-age resin with limited flex that produces a clean, crisp tone. It closely resembles real tortoise shell in sound and feel, but unlike tortoise shell, will not fracture. Ten picks per bag; one gauge per bag. Thin (.50 mm), Medium (.80 mm) or Heavy (1 mm). (Translucent gold with brown Taylor round logo, #8077; \$6.00) **11) TaylorWare Gift Card.** Visit our website for more information. **12) Digital Headstock Tuner.** Clip-on chromatic tuner, back-lit LCD display. (#80920, \$29.00) **13) Taylor Etched Mug.** 15 oz. mug with Taylor hand-etched into one side. (Black #70007; \$15.00)



Taylor Bar Stool. Easy assembly. (#70200, \$99.00) Add an extra \$5.00 shipping for each Taylor Bar Stool ordered. Overnight delivery not available.



A) Taylor Guitar Beanie Featuring Taylor name with a guitar emblazoned along the side. 100% acrylic. (Black #00116, Maroon #00115, \$16.00)

B) Taylor Scarf Features same embroidery as our Beanie. 69" long x 7.25" wide (Light Gray #00100, Black #00101, \$20.00)

C) Taylor Half Zip Pullover 100% yarn-dyed French rib cotton with embroidered logo, imported by Tommy Bahama. (Brown #2800, M-XL, \$96.00; XXL, \$98.00)

D) Taylor Men's Fleece Jacket 80/20 cotton/polyester body with 100% polyester Sherpa lining. Features cuffs with thumbholes, front pockets, and a media pocket with an interior hole for headphones. Charcoal with plush black lining. (#2891, S-XL, \$65.00; XXL, \$67.00)

E) Guitar Hoody Sweatshirt 50/50 cotton/polyester blend, drawstring hood, front pouch pocket. (#2898, S-XL, \$39.00, XXL, \$42.00)

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

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

H) Driver Cap Wool blend, sweat band for added comfort. Label on back. One size fits most. (Black #00125, \$25.00)

I) Taylor Guitar Straps (L-R): **Byzantine** (Brown #64030, Burgundy #64000, Black #64010, \$80.00); **Suede/Web** (Chocolate #65010, Black #65000, \$32.00); **GS Mini** (Brown/Brown Suede #66500, \$32.00); **Taylor Swift** (#66000, \$32.00); **Suede Logo** (Black #62001, Honey #62000, Chocolate #62003, \$48.00)

J) Men's Funky Guitar T See page 33 for description



New J Eric handles the fine details of pickup assembly on our electronics team. That rock star hair goes well with our new Funky Guitar T.

1-800-494-9600
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Wood&Steel

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*The paper we used is certified to Forest Stewardship Council standards.
The FSC is a non-profit organization that supports environmentally friendly,
socially responsible and economically viable management of the world's forests.*

Sapele Surprise

Quilted sapele comes along so rarely that years can pass between appearances. That was exactly the experience of our sapele cutter, who had gone more than six years since encountering any, until opening a huge, old tree and discovering a magnificent windfall. The tree's journey to us spanned three continents, and our wood experts traversed the U.S. in order to sort through its massive slabs and select the most figured portions. We think it was well worth it. The sapele was flatsawn to bring out the best in its figure, then paired with premium European spruce and later stained like our 500 Series mahogany to enhance its natural character. You'll find it among the choice offerings of this year's Fall Limited Edition collection. See more inside.

