

Wood & Steel

Wild Streak

Tasmanian Blackheart Sassafras Leads the Fall LTDs

Blackwood 500s

All-Koa 300s + GS Mini

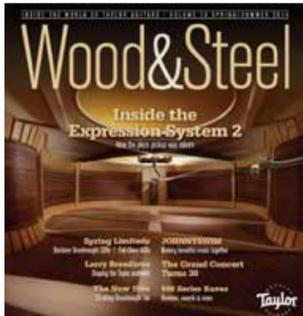
40 Taylor Innovations

Why You Should Plug In

When to Change Your Strings



Letters



A Welcome Addition

I just received my Summer 2014 issue of *Wood&Steel* and was delighted to find the addition of the new 150e 12-string Dreadnought. I ordered this guitar the next day from a retailer that had them in stock. I have been looking for a 12-string that fit my budget for some time. I have two other Taylor 6-strings, a 616ce and a Big Baby, and now am looking forward to the 150e. Thanks for making this guitar available to players!

Alan Hecko
Hurst, TX

ES2: Rock Without Abuse

On weekends I perform covers for folks enjoying an afternoon in Half Moon Bay, just south of San Francisco. I play a K14ce and a K66ce 12-string through a Yamaha PA. My right-hand style is very percussive. I've had to pound a bit on the strings and the tops of my guitars to get the rhythmic sounds for many of the songs I sing. So much so that, to my dismay, I'd worn the finish off of my K14ce just under the bottom three strings. It also needed a fret job, so I went to Gryphon Stringed Instruments in Palo Alto (a great shop) to see about refretting it and also what to do about the damaged finish. While there, I plugged in a new 814ce with the new ES2 pickup and discovered that I didn't have to hit the strings or top hard to get nice, percussive sounds! I began dreaming and scheming about playing a new 800 Series guitar. Well, yesterday, I performed with my new 816ce, and it was truly amazing! The ES2 and the new voicing, from the vibrant treble to the deep, articulated bass, made me want to rock that guitar even more than I usually do, and I didn't have to abuse it to get the acoustic sounds I wanted. I played extended versions of songs just

found in the van was a 6-string. I played the guitar myself all throughout the tour and kept myself entertained in the very rare moments of down time we had in our hotel rooms. When I turned the guitar in at the end of the tour I felt like I was saying goodbye to an old friend, after all eight months together, and I was very attached to the guitar. When I turned the guitar in to the road manager, he had no idea of its existence. Sometimes I wonder if I had just taken it back to L.A. with me or asked Prince if I could have it, things would have turned out differently. Oh well, honesty is the best policy, and that's the way I conduct my life.

Murray Levy

Ed. Note: Murray, we checked with Larry Breedlove, who confirmed that a purple 6-string was made in addition to the 12-string. Due to the experimental nature of our color application techniques at that time, the hues tended to vary, and as Larry recalls, the 6-string featured a less attractive shade of purple than the 12-string. It also may have had the Taylor name inlaid in the headstock (the 12-string didn't), and at that time Prince refused to perform with instruments that had the maker's name on them, which might explain why the guitar stayed in the van – or in your hands. It's nice to know that you enjoyed playing it.

Farid Essack
Johannesburg, South Africa

Concert Character

I own a Taylor 612ce that I bought secondhand early last year. I play mainly jazz (plectrum), and was so impressed with the 612ce that when I read through the 40-year anniversary issue of *Wood&Steel* and saw your new 800 Series, I bought a First Edition 812ce. The body size of the [Grand Concert] is perfect for my requirements, and the Indian rosewood used with the 812ce gives it a completely different character than the Big Leaf maple of the 612ce. I never know which one to pick up and play first, as they are both wonderful instruments. I know the 812ce will get even better with playing, although it's hard to believe it can improve on what I already have. As a senior guitarist with many years of experience behind me – some as a professional musician – I would like to thank you for producing such high-quality instruments.

Colin Williams

Spot-on Service

I'm writing to share a great experience I had in June at George's Music in Jacksonville Beach, Florida. While attending your Road Show, I spoke with your rep from San Diego, Zach [Arntz]. It occurred to me that I should ask him about an issue that I was having with my GS8, which I had purchased new in 2008 from Guitar Center. The bridge had slowly risen over time, caus-

ing higher action than desired. I had the saddle trimmed twice during that period to lower the action. The second and last time I had this done was in March. When I picked up the guitar, I immediately noticed that it had lost a tremendous amount of bass from the A and E strings. It crushed me – it no longer sounded like a Taylor. Furthermore, there was very little bridge left, and the adjustment had a damping effect on the sustain of my low E string. It no longer had that strong bass vibration that I used to hear and feel.

I asked Zach if he would take a look at it, and despite the fact that it was 7:15 p.m., and George's closes at 8:00, he agreed. I ran home, grabbed my guitar, and brought it back. Zach eyeballed it down the neck and said, "If it were me, I would remove the neck and adjust it to get the geometry correct first, and then put in a new saddle." I said, "So I guess I have to ship it to Taylor, right?" He replied, "No, I can take care of it!"

And the heavens opened up and the angels sang.

About 45 minutes later, my guitar sounded like a brand new Taylor. Unbelievable. And Zach did it for no charge. This is probably one of the best customer service experiences I have had in my 54 years of life. Writing a letter like this is not something I normally take the time to do, but I felt compelled to do so in this case. It is so rare that I see customer service at this level. I can see that Taylor is in it for the long haul, and I'm sure your customer base will continue to grow.

Thanks for sending Zach our way and for providing him with the tools and training necessary to do a repair like this on site. You now have another Taylor customer for life. (You actually had me before this.)

Brian P. Wray
Atlantic Beach, FL

Correction: The custom guitar shown on the back cover of our spring/summer 2014 issue featured a back and sides of Amazon rosewood, not cocobolo as originally reported. We regret the error.

We'd like to hear from you

Send your e-mails to:
pr@taylorguitars.com

Wood&Steel

VOLUME 80 | FALL 2014

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COVER PHOTO: A PAIR OF BLACKHEART SASSAFRAS GRAND ORCHESTRA MODELS



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KURT'S CORNER

The Grand Auditorium Turns 20

Last issue I wrote about our Grand Concert body shape, which was introduced in early 1984 and celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. We released the guitar during a low point of popularity for the acoustic guitar in general, and a difficult time for the guitar industry. We were a very small company at that time. Nevertheless, this new shape was well received and became a good seller for us. The balanced, clear sound addressed the needs of many players who required a less bass-dominant tone for their style of playing.

By the second half of the 1980s, acoustic guitar music started showing new signs of life, and was again being featured in TV and movie soundtracks. Our sales started getting a little easier to come by, owing in no small part to the popularity of the Grand Concert. This increasing interest in acoustic guitars and acoustic music was reflected and featured prominently in *MTV Unplugged*, a TV series which debuted in late 1989. The series showcased artists performing their hit songs on acoustic instruments. By the early 1990s, our sales had started accelerating.

In the summer of 1993, country artist Kathy Mattea, who was in San Diego for a concert, stopped by to visit the factory. Kathy had adopted the Grand Concert as her go-to guitar, and she and her husband, Nashville songwriter Jon Vezner, became friends

with our company. Out of appreciation for her loyalty and support, Bob offered to make Kathy the very first Grand Auditorium shape guitar, a guitar that at that point only existed in his mind.

Bob had been thinking about creating another new body shape for some time. He wanted to design a new guitar that was basically the size of a dreadnought, but with a different shape. Starting with the shape and concept of the Grand Concert, he began drawing, eventually creating the shape that would become the Grand Auditorium.

In terms of sound, Bob was looking for clarity, which is what he gravitates towards. So he began designing the guitar with both a new look and a clear sound in mind.

Bob offered to make Kathy Mattea the very first Grand Auditorium, a guitar that at that point only existed in his mind.

We introduced the Grand Auditorium in 1994 in celebration of our 20th anniversary, and offered it in just two models: the XX-MC (mahogany back and sides, cedar top), and the XX-RS (rosewood back and sides, spruce top). Guitar players loved it and warmly embraced the versatile, balanced, clear sound of this new guitar shape.

We followed up in 1995 with six different limited production Grand Auditorium models: the GA-MC (mahogany with cedar), the GA-RS (rosewood with Sitka spruce, GA-BE (Brazilian rosewood with Engelmann spruce), GA-WS (walnut with Sitka spruce), GA-KC (koa with cedar) and GA-KS (koa with Sitka spruce). In later years, Grand Auditorium models became standard throughout the different series of guitars we offer, and were identified by model numbers ending in “4,” our designation for the GA shape.

The Grand Auditorium proved to be the perfect guitar for the time. It's the shape most closely associated with Taylor due to its popularity and visibility in the hands of artists. It's not only a

bestseller for us; it has become truly the iconic modern acoustic-electric guitar.

— Kurt Listug, CEO

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| | | Volume 80 Fall 2014 | |
| Publisher Taylor-Listug, Inc. | | | |
| Produced by the Taylor Guitars Marketing Department | | | |
| Vice President Tim O'Brien | | | |
| Editor Jim Kirlin | | | |
| Art Director Cory Sheehan | | | |
| Graphic Designer Rita Funk-Hoffman | | | |
| Photographer Tim Whitehouse | | | |
| Contributors | | | |
| David Hosler / Wayne Johnson / David Kaye Kurt Listug / Shawn Persinger / Shane Roeschlein Bob Taylor / Glen Wolff / Chalise Zolezzi | | | |
| Technical Advisors | | | |
| Ed Granero / David Hosler / Gerry Kowalski Crystal Lawrence / Andy Lund / Rob Magargal / Mike Mosley Andy Powers / Bob Taylor / Chris Wellons / Glen Wolff | | | |
| Contributing Photographers | | | |
| Rita Funk-Hoffman / David Kaye / Katrina Horstman | | | |
| Circulation Katrina Horstman | Printing / Distribution Courier Graphics / CEREOUS - Phoenix | | |
| Translation Veritas Language Solutions | | | |
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BOBSPEAK

Savoring the Salt

I grew up on salt from the grocery store. You know, the salt that's iodized so it doesn't get sticky when it's humid and clog up the salt shaker. Salt is about the best absorber of humidity. In fact, salt solutions are used to calibrate humidity gauges, but that's another article, which you'd no doubt find boring. Well, I thought nothing of this salt that I grew up with. It was neither good nor bad; it was just salt.

As the years passed I started cooking more and more. The Food Network really changed things for me, as I watched people cook and then tried to emulate what I saw. I don't mean recipes so much as the way chefs cook: how they move, how they think, how a dish comes together, what food looks like when it's cooked right. Some cooking makes sense to me, and I enjoy it whenever I have the time. Over time I graduated to kosher salt from the grocery store and forever left iodized salt behind. What an improvement. I can't say it tasted a lot better. I think it did, but it was better in other ways. I quit using a saltshaker and started pinching salt with my fingers, tossing in what I wanted from a vessel of salt by the stove or on the table. Never again could I stand to look at a saltshaker. It signaled a low level of culinary ability to me. I wanted to feel my salt. I wanted more involvement than shaking out a bit here and there.

I dabbled in finishing salts, from places around the world, but there

wasn't a marked improvement. I decided I didn't like flavored salt. I'd rather have the flavor in the dish, and let the salt be the salt. All these experiences took place over 20 years of pretty successful cooking. My grocery-store kosher salt and I made a lot of people happy with our cooking.

Recently I tasted salt that changed my world. No, you don't understand! This salt is a leap forward in a way that I hadn't experienced before. I'd sign a paper right now saying it's the best I've ever tasted and probably will ever taste. It feels better too, being moist and flaky, and it looks better, like a snowflake. It even melts on your tongue like a snowflake and has a beginning, middle and ending taste. Tasting this salt I realized that it's delicious in its own right. The things besides the salt that I taste in there seem like they belong, and they're scrumptious. It makes me feel smart that I can even perceive it. What I now taste in other salts taste like contaminants, probably because they are. I literally cannot walk past my jar of salt and not steal a tiny pinch for my tongue. It's even kosher on top of all its other virtues. Who'd have thought!

A monk thought, that's who. His name is Andrew and he lives in Marblehead, Massachusetts. He uses the 1,600-year-old salt making method perfected by the Greek Orthodox monks on Mount Athos off the coast of Greece. Google Mount Athos; you'll be amazed. Anyway, Andrew and I became friends, and he found himself doing ministry around the world. These good works are funded by donations, and Andrew already had given away his own fortune and couldn't abide with the thought of using a dime of donation money to support himself, so one day he walked into the ocean with a five-gallon bucket and after many trips brought out 1,000 pounds of water. He made his first batch of salt in the monastic tradition in order to sell it to pay for his rent and food, so that he's not a burden on a donor. You can buy this salt from Andrew by going to marbleheadsalt.com. It is worth every dollar you'll spend.

Here's a little recipe: Slice a small piece of crusty bread and put some olive oil on it. Atop that, put a thin slice of tomato and a pinch of Marblehead salt. Taste the salt. Focus on it and enjoy it. Then repeat over and over until you feel like you should stop for some reason. Move on from there, using the salt, and you'll fall in love with it like I have. But be sure to stop and taste it. Pay attention. You'll see what I'm talking about. You won't want to go backward from there.

In many ways it's like how you don't

want to go backward from your Taylor guitar. It feels right and sounds good, and you get used to it. Your ear develops in the same way as your taste, and it brings pleasure. The experience is good on many levels.

I know another Andrew, but I call him Andy. He's doing with our guitars what Andrew did with salt. It's hard for me to go back now. If you've played our new 800s you know what I mean. And Andy is doing it to more of our guitars, which of course we will talk about at length, because you know us, right?

So there is an application to guitars with my infomercial for Marblehead salt. It's about developing your senses, and it's about makers of things taking it to the nth degree to get it right. It's about Andrew and me, and how I showed him a guitar he loves and how he showed me a salt I love. If you go to his site you'll see a link to a guitar project. Look there and read about Andrew buying GS Mini guitars to put into the hands of refugee kids in the Middle East who need something besides war in their lives. You'll be touched, you'll count your blessings, and you may even want to help Andrew spread salt and music into the world. I'm a fan.

I'm also a fan of Steve Baldwin, who is retiring from Taylor Guitars this year after an illustrious 30-year career here. I appreciate Steve's steadfast dedication to the Finish department, where he's contributed for all these years. He knows every method that we've used to finish our guitars, and his bad experiences combined with the good have forged him into a wise old dog who doesn't take kindly to changes that aren't tested. That's valuable! The last few years he's expanded his capabilities into robotics for spraying and polishing, and again, knowing how we did it in the old days makes a difference in how we choose to do it now.

Steve's also been a part of our 401(k) supervision team. He's been a savvy investor himself and has lived a clean financial life forever, making it easier for him to retire. I respect that a great deal. He's raising kids, too, kids who had nobody else to turn to. Steve, let's lift a glass to a career played well, and thanks for all your contributions. You always have a place at our table.

So I'll leave you with that, and what Andrew likes to say: "Stay salty!"

— Bob Taylor, President

Editor's Note

Pressing On

You'll find no shortage of inspirational quotes about perseverance. Writer Victor Hugo called it the "secret of all triumphs." The Chinese philosopher-poet Lao Tzu deemed it "the foundation of all actions." Winston Churchill, master of pithy wisdom about facing hardship, famously said, "If you are going through hell, keep going." Countless other accomplished figures, from Olympic athletes to titans of industry to groundbreaking artists, have eloquently name-checked perseverance as an essential ingredient of success. One might argue that learning how to overcome adversity is the single most useful life skill a person can learn.

This theme of perseverance percolates throughout the pages of this issue. October 15 officially marks the 40th anniversary of Taylor Guitars, and like other business success stories, the passion and talents of Bob and Kurt were amplified and sustained by their sheer determination. Many of the 40 Taylor innovations we spotlight in our anniversary feature required considerable trial and error to get right. Our profile of Nashville songwriter Marty Dodson chronicles his efforts to decode the songwriting process and learn from his many failures along the way. Award-winning Western music artist Belinda Gail had to start over and retool her career after losing her husband and then her longtime songwriting and performing partner. And in Cameroon, the slow progress we've been making with our ebony mill in the face of many complications would never be possible without the right balance of stubborn resolve and steady patience.

So, here's to Taylor's 40th anniversary and to the spirit of perseverance that we all have within us. No matter what our talent level may be going into anything we do, we all have the ability to keep trying. May we all chase our passions, get up when we fall down, and lend a hand to those doing the same.

— Jim Kirlin

2014 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!

Factory Closures

October 13
(Taylor Guitars Anniversary)

November 27-28
(Thanksgiving Holiday)

Monday, December 22 through Friday, January 2
(Company Vacation)

THE PERKS OF PLUGGING IN

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A STAGE-STRUTTING GUITAR HERO TO REAP THE BENEFITS OF TAYLOR'S ACOUSTIC ELECTRONICS

By Shawn Persinger

As someone who performs live several times a week, I often find myself plugging my Taylor 310e into a PA system. Using the original Taylor Expression System® (and having played a Taylor with the ES2), I do this without a second thought regarding the quality or consistency of the tone I'm going to hear coming out of the speakers. This goes for large outdoor festival gigs as well as more intimate spaces like a house concert. My Taylor always sounds full and rich when amplified, and I can hear the subtle harmonic overtones just as clearly as if I was playing acoustically in a sound-treated studio.

Because of this personal experience, I am frequently surprised to meet students and clinic attendees who have never once plugged their guitar into an amp. Granted, some of them don't have a pickup system in their Taylor, but many players don't think they have the need or the means to amplify. Well, if this is true for you, I'd like to share some perks of plugging in that might have never occurred to you. And if you do amplify your Taylor on a regular basis, I might have some tips for you as well.

Clarity vs. Volume

It's a common misconception to believe that plugging in is just going to make you louder. While access to more volume is certainly one of the reasons for amplification (let's face it, if you're playing an outdoor gig or in a noisy bar, your guitar can rarely be heard more than a few feet away), I would suggest that "clarity" is a more fundamental benefit.

For example, when I play large halls with my mandolinist, we are both plugged in and have a nice balance between volume and tone. But when we started playing smaller unplugged house concerts, I found that I just couldn't compete with the mandolin's overpowering volume, especially when I went to solo. So now we both plug in, even in a small room, with the mandolin's volume turned down to 1 and the guitar on 2 or 3. Most of the time the audience can't even tell that we are amplified and will ask us why we have a large speaker behind us. And that's exactly the point: clarity, not volume. The audience still hears my natural acoustic tone, plus a little bit more that they are unaware of.

Effects

Add to the subtle use of amplification a little reverb, maybe some ambient delay on a poignant song, or any other effect of your choosing, and suddenly you have a whole new sonic palette to draw from. Believe me, I'm all for the

sound of a pure acoustic guitar, but if you are playing a marathon three-hour set in a bar, it's nice to hear some other colors coming out of the amp. I try not to overdo it with effects – again, subtlety is the name of the game in my opinion – but having even just two different reverb choices to play with – short or long, church or bathroom, hall or spring – can help prevent ear fatigue during a long night of acoustic music.

Tone Options

Another useful feature wherein plugging in trumps playing unplugged or into a microphone is the ability to manipulate your sound with the guitar's tone and volume knobs. Using nothing more than bass, treble and volume, I can get a wide range of acoustic colors out of my Taylor. Normally, playing solo or in my duo, I just set everything at 12 o'clock and go. But if I'm playing with two or more guitarists, or a bass player, or a drummer, or all of them at once, it's really nice to have tone options that allow my playing to sit right in the mix. Three acoustic guitars that all sound the same are too much, and too boring. So I might add a little bite to my playing by boosting the treble. Actually, more often than not, to achieve this tone I'll dial back the bass. This allows my leads to stand out in the mix without being ear-piercingly annoying. Conversely, if I feel the mix needs more bottom end, I will turn up both the bass and treble knobs but turn my volume down. This gives me more low end without overpowering the other players, yet still maintains clarity. I'm looking for a deep, rich, full sound, not a fat and mushy one. Having these options at the tips of your fingers, rather than at the mercy of the soundman, is a serious advantage.

Getting Started

If you are completely new to the world of amplification – maybe you've got an amp at home and just haven't had the time to experiment with it, or perhaps you haven't even plugged in at a music store – I'd like to offer a few tips on how to test-drive your guitar's amplification system.

I'll be writing from recent personal experience, as Taylor was kind enough to send me a loaner 816ce with the new ES2 pickup to test out. I played it through a wide variety of amps, including an Ibanez Troubadour, an ancient (1989) Peavy PA, a Pre-Sonus Firepod recording interface, the Bose L1 PA, and even a Fender Delux Reverb. Not surprisingly, the ES2 sounded great through everything, with the three guitar amps providing some sort of unique colorization (playing through the Fender made the guitar sound like a bluegrass festival, circa 1977) and the PAs and

Firepod providing a clean and transparent signal. If feasible, I recommend that you also plug your guitar into as many different amps as possible. Once you're plugged in...

First, you actually should play relatively loudly, but don't jump into the deep end with both feet, especially if you're new to amps – you don't want too much volume slapping you in the face and scaring you. Set the amplifier's tone controls to the middle of each knob rotation. Turn the amp's volume about one-third of the way up. Set the treble and bass controls on the guitar (bass is closest to the back) in the middle (you should feel a slight bump at the center marker), with the white level indicator on both knobs pointing to the heel of the neck. Keep the volume control (closest to the soundboard) turned all the way down. Now strum a bit, gradually raising the volume control on the guitar until you feel comfortable with the sound. From there, you can begin to experiment with the tone controls on the guitar or amp. Beginning in this way will help successfully move you from a purely acoustic experience to learning to hear yourself through an amplifier.

The key here is that you don't want to be deceived by hearing more of your guitar's normal acoustic sound than what is coming out of the amplifier. There should be a balance, but let the amp do its job, and just remember, clarity rather than volume, so loud but not too loud. For example, I am used to playing my Taylor 310e, with the original Expression System, into a Radial preamp for a little volume boost. I found the new ES2 didn't need this, as it is 25 percent louder than the original ES. This actually took some getting used to. I was accustomed to having my levels at 5 or 6 on the PA, but the ES2 allowed me to turn down to 2 or 3. So be sure and find the right volume for your guitar. And don't be shy. I know it can be uncomfortable – either because you're self-conscious about your playing or because you don't want to look like a showoff playing loudly in a music store – but the more you can really hear what's coming out of that amp the better.

Second, play something you know really well. If you've played a fingerstyle blues a thousand times, play it a thousand and one times. The same goes for you strummers out there. If the only chords you know are G, C and D, don't be afraid to crank up and strum away. You want the sound coming out of the amp to match your normal acoustic sound as closely as possible. You can test this most accurately by playing a favorite chestnut rather than a song that's new to your repertoire.

Third, be patient. Different playing techniques will most likely require you to adjust your settings. For example, when I plugged the 816ce straight into my PA (with my new amp levels), with the guitar's bass, treble and volume all set at 12 o'clock, it sounded absolutely perfect for single-note melodies, but it was a little loud for strumming open-string chords. I was able to easily adjust the between the two techniques by simply turning the volume down to

Plugging in isn't for every acoustic guitarist. As I noted earlier, not everyone has the needs or the means to amplify. But I encourage you to give it a try. The simple act of plugging in can really electrify your playing (pun intended) and might just lead you into some new, unknown creative realms of personal expression. Or it might just be too loud. But you won't know unless you try. **W&S**

A NOTE ON RECORDING

Traditionally the best way to capture the true sound of your acoustic guitar is to place a microphone in front of it. Or better yet, two microphones. But for the last 10 years or so, I've also been plugging my guitar into a preamp of some sort to capture a third track of my live performance. I have found this technique to be invaluable when it comes time to mix. Though I might only use a hint of the "direct" track, it often enhances my recordings in ways that microphones cannot. For one thing, I move around a lot when I play, so inevitably I find myself shifting out of position of my stereo mike setup. Usually this isn't a huge problem, but every now and then a great performance is flawed by tonal inconsistencies. Enter the direct track, which I can use to boost any frequency that might be deficient in the mike tracks.

Or perhaps you don't have access to two microphones, or any for that matter. Well, don't forget, pickups are actually just small microphones, so let them work like any other mike. You can get an amazing range of tones from a direct track and a little EQ savvy. When I recorded my 2004 CD *The Art of Modern/Primitive Guitar*, I only had one good, high-end microphone. But I also had my Taylor 410e, which I plugged directly into my computer! No external preamp, nothing. Just right into the back of an off-the-shelf Compaq. *Acoustic Guitar* magazine went on to name that recording one of the "Best of the Year," alongside records by Paco De Lucia and Loretta Lynn. And I did it all in my bedroom with one mike, a computer, and my Taylor 410e.

11 o'clock. Additionally, I found that when I went to fingerpick, I preferred to turn the bass down a touch. What sounded great with a pick on the low E string seemed to boom out when I played it with the flesh of my thumb. My long-term familiarity with using guitars equipped with pickups, in conjunction with the amazingly versatile ES2, made performing these tweaks an effortless task. Your experience may take a little longer initially as you dial in the sound for your preferences, but that's normal. So take your time, turn those knobs, and trust your ears.

Shawn Persinger, a.k.a. Prester John, owns a Taylor 410, two 310s, a 214ce-N and an 8-string Baritone. His music has been described as a myriad of delightful musical paradoxes: complex but catchy; virtuosic yet affable; smart and whimsical. His book The 50 Greatest Guitar Books is being hailed as a monumental achievement by readers and critics. (www.GreatestGuitarBooks.com)

PATH OF PERSISTENCE

Marty Dodson was determined to become a successful Nashville songwriter. Getting there took years of struggle and failure, but his perseverance paid off in the end.

By Jim Kirlin

Earlier this year, we launched a campaign to celebrate musicians who embody the boldness and courage that we deeply value here at Taylor Guitars. These are people whose passion and determination have driven them to pursue musical goals even in the face of formidable obstacles. You can read short versions of our first five stories in guitar magazines across the U.S. and Europe. The longer profiles of each musician can be found at taylorguitars.com. Below you'll meet our friend, songwriter Marty Dodson, whose story will also be featured in magazines this fall. In our eyes, Marty personifies the commitment to persevere through difficult times in pursuit of one's dreams. We hope these stories inspire you to reach toward your own musical dreams. Or, as we like to say: "Step forward. Music is waiting."

As a kid, Marty Dodson loved the way songs could take him to places he'd never been.

"My family didn't have much money – I think we went on one vacation when I was growing up – so I had never seen much of the world," he says. "A cousin of mine had introduced me to the Eagles and John Denver, so I would listen to those albums in my room and imagine Colorado and all the places they were singing about."

Dodson got his first guitar when he was 11 and immediately started penning tunes of his own.

"I discovered that sitting and playing on the fourth step of the stairs going down to our basement would echo and sound cool, so I would sit there and write songs about the girl down the street or somebody from school," he remembers.

Despite growing up in the country music capital of Nashville, Dodson says

his early exposure to people pursuing a career in music didn't paint a promising picture.

"My earliest impressions were that the person coming to work on our air conditioner or every waitress was trying to be a songwriter or a singer," he explains. "So my only exposure was to people who were failing or struggling at it."

Dodson says his perspective stifled his own aspirations of becoming a songwriter for a long time. By the time he enrolled in college he had decided to pursue a degree in psychology. The lone music class he took only reaffirmed his doubts.

"It was a commercial class taught by a realtor who wrote jingles," Dodson says. "Even he didn't know how to become a songwriter; he just took us to his studio and showed us some things about writing jingles. It discouraged me even more because I felt a kind of impenetrable wall – it didn't seem like anybody knew how to make it. So I really just put it away and didn't write at all through college."

Dodson later got a part-time job as a youth minister for a church while going to school full time, and along the way got married and started a family. He says it wasn't until about six or seven years after he finished college that he picked up the guitar again and started playing and writing for fun. Around the same time he found himself reconsidering his job and career path.

"At that point I had three kids and had to be gone a lot at night doing activities with other people's kids for my job, and I decided I didn't want to keep doing that," he says. "So I quit, and my wife went back to work for a while until I could figure out what I wanted to do. It was during that period that I met Gordon."



A Much-Needed Mentor

Gordon Payne was a songwriter and singer-guitarist who had played with JJ Cale and Don White, Tanya Tucker, Waylon Jennings, and Buddy Holly's band, The Crickets (from 1985-1994).

"My dad would build computers for people, and Gordon became his client, so I ran into him several times," he says. "I thought it was interesting that he was in The Crickets, so I'd pick his brain about Buddy Holly and the history of their band. Eventually I got up the

nerve to tell him I'd written a song that I thought was pretty cool, so he asked me to play it for him. He said, 'It's not very commercial, but I love the idea,' and he asked if he could help me rewrite it, so he did that. Then he took me to a studio and he demoed it. I was blown away by the fact that the musicians could listen to our work tape one time and play the song. I was hooked. After that I thought, Gordon took me seriously enough that I think I've got some ability."

Around the same time, Dodson read the bestselling career guidance book

"What Color is Your Parachute?" which encourages people to discover what they love to do and then find a way to turn it into a career.

"After meeting Gordon I decided that making a living writing songs would be number one on my list," he says. "Fortunately, I was able to go all in – we were home-schooling our kids and my wife was working, and I was able to write quite a bit."

Still, Dodson struggled as he tried to refine his songwriting chops on his own. Money was also tight, so he tried to

find some part-time work to help make ends meet along the way, but his home-schooling schedule and commitment to writing made it difficult to find much. At one point he got a tempting offer for a full-time job.

"There was a guy who I think felt sorry for me, so he offered me a job writing instruction manuals for small appliances like toasters," Dodson shares. "It was more money than I'd ever made, it had benefits, and I probably could've stayed there forever. I felt like I had to decide whether I wanted to take the safe thing or actually be a songwriter. I turned that job down. A lot of people thought I was crazy, but it was a huge motivator."

To punctuate his renewed commitment to songwriting, he went home, picked an open spot on a wall, and hammered a nail into it. He'd decided he would hang his first gold record there.

Learning to Co-Write

Gordon Payne, who was writing at the time for Reba McEntire's publishing company, did Dodson another favor and put him in touch with a few other aspiring songwriters who were a little further along in their development. Dodson hit it off creatively with one of them, Terry Vonderheide, who soon scored a writing deal with successful songwriter and music publisher Kim Williams. Williams had penned hits for Garth Brooks, among others, and had liked the results of the co-writing work Vonderheide and Dodson had done together, so he asked to meet Dodson, and the two got to know each other. Eventually Dodson

was also offered a publishing deal.

Dodson signed a five-year deal that paid him \$866 a month. While the money wasn't much, he says the environment helped him hone his craft, especially co-writing with other people.

"Co-writing helped me realize the songs I'd written by myself were too personal," he says. "I had a song called 'She Stopped Living the Day He Died,' which I wrote about my grandmother because when my grandfather died, she'd been totally dependent on him. When I played it for my family they cried and thought it was amazing, and I would play it out and people would cry. When I played it for Kim, he said, 'That's the most depressing thing. That's not at all my experience with my grandmother. I think it's too personal!' Co-writing helped me learn how to take my experience and make it universal so other people could relate to it even if they hadn't gone through that exact thing."

Dodson also learned a lot about perseverance by working with Williams.

"He had been an electrical engineer, and something like 80 percent of his body had been burned in a horrible accident at a plant where he worked," Dodson says. "When I started writing for him he'd had huge Garth Brooks hits and been writer of the year at ASCAP, and he would still come in limping and write two or three times a day. So the work ethic in our office was, you show up and you just bust it until you've got nothing left, and then you go home. I learned a lot about work ethic and quantity of output from him."

Despite Dodson's efforts, after three

years none of his songs had turned into cuts, and he feared he was about to lose his writing deal. A conversation with Williams brought a revelation that would prove to be a pivotal moment in his songwriting career.

"I had written with guys who went home and made their own demos, had their own Pro Tools rigs and programmed drums and stuff like that, so I went out and bought all this equipment," he recalls. "I was trying to learn how to do all that, but I'm not a great guitar player – I can play well enough to write, but I can't play licks and lead parts. And as I was talking to Kim I realized that I just needed to focus on what I do really well and quit trying to learn how to do everything. So I told him, 'I think I'm really strong with ideas and lyrics,' and he said, 'Let's find you some people who play guitar really well!' He did, and I started writing with them, and then all of a sudden I started getting songs on hold, then getting cuts, and then it just really clicked for me that if I could maximize what I do well I could make something happen. That has been the key to the success I've had. Every single I've ever had has been written with one of those guys who plays guitar really well and is a good melody person."

After six years of walking past a bare nail in his wall, Dodson earned his first gold record with a writing credit on Lonestar's third record, *Lonely Grill*, which eventually went quadruple platinum. In the fourth year of his writing deal he scored a co-writing hit with the Rascal Flatts single "While You Loved

Marty Dodson on his Taylors

"When I was writing for Kim Williams I had this really cheap guitar – I think I paid \$69 for it. One day I was writing and the head just broke off. It went flying, strings everywhere. Kim loaned me a guitar for a little while, and that Christmas he gave me a Taylor 310. I'd never had a new guitar. I'd buy guitars at pawn shops, and I'd had some decent brands, but they were all beat up. I just fell in love with that Taylor. It sounded amazing.

"Then when I wrote for Clint Black, that first Christmas he gave us all Big Baby Taylors with our company logo engraved on them. Then I wound up buying an NS32ce when those came out because I'd always wanted a nylon-string guitar. The first song I wrote on that was "Let Me Down Easy," which was a No. 1 for Billy Currington. Now my co-writers and I joke about it every time I bring that guitar. They're like, 'Oh boy, you brought the lucky guitar.' Lately I've been doing a lot of corporate training events. I was flying with that NS32 a lot and kept thinking, I just know this guitar will get broken, and every now and then I would have to gate check it. So I bought a GS Mini. We wound up getting them for almost everybody on our corporate training team. They're awesome."

Me," which went to No. 7 on the country charts.

When Kim Williams decided to close his publishing business, Dodson got a deal with Clint Black's company, Blacktop Music Group, where he landed his first No. 1 single with Billy Currington's "Must Be Doin' Something Right." It was nine years after he had first quit his job to focus on writing. He's had five more No. 1 hits since, including Currington's "Let Me Down Easy" and Kenny Chesney's "Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven," and had songs recorded by the likes of Carrie Underwood, Leon Russell, Joe Cocker, the Oak Ridge Boys, and even pop-rock act Plain White Tees.

Dodson is both humble and proud as he reflects on his accomplishments, especially in light of his slow, circuitous path.

"I've had a lot of help along the way, but I've made a lot of mistakes," he says. "I've kind of stumbled along until I found what the right path was."

Mentoring Others

Now that he has an established career as a songwriter, Dodson enjoys using his experiences to mentor other aspiring songwriters. In 2013, he and successful fellow songwriter Clay Mills launched an online resource network called Songtown USA.

"Clay and I thought it would be a cool way to give back and help people avoid some of the mistakes we'd made," he says. "Both of us had been on the board at NSAI [Nashville Songwriters Association International], and we'd seen some of the great things they were doing for songwriters, but we kept run-

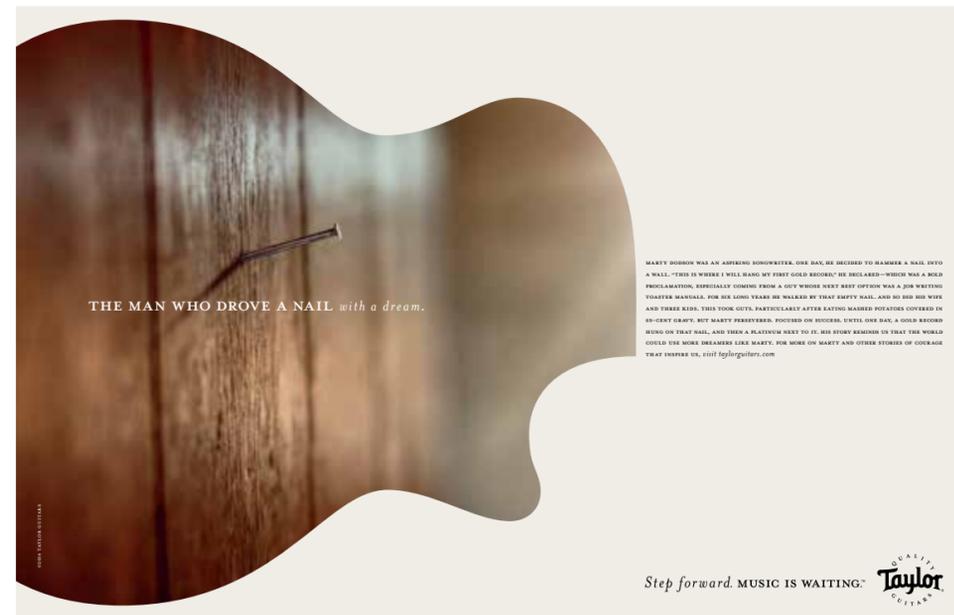
ning into people who were being ripped off. One of the things we discovered when we looked at other websites was that most of them were started by people who had come to Nashville and failed. Our thought was, if you couldn't do it, how can you tell me how to do it? One day Clay said, 'Do you think anybody would be interested if we started a website and actually told the truth about songwriting?' We thought it would be fun to see how people respond to being told that this is really hard, and lots of you aren't going to make it, but if you really want to, here's what you need to do. So we just started doing that. People would come in for mentoring sessions, and we'd be brutally honest with them."

A Songtown USA Facebook page (Facebook.com/songtownusa) was created in January of 2013 and a soon-to-be completed website (Songtown.com) will present educational programs for songwriters along with other collaborative resources that will help people find others to complement their skill sets.

Dodson says that on a good week, they reach about 35,000 people.

"We both love Nashville, and we'd hate for people to think that this is just a place that will scam you," he adds. "We wanted to educate people against that and try to inspire them to put in the work instead of just looking for a back door." **W&S**

Marty Dodson currently writes for the music publishing company ole, which purchased Clint Black's Blacktop Publishing Group in 2010. MartyDodson.com



The print piece inspired by Marty's story

Ask Bob

Wood grain orientation, ES2 nuances, and onboard tuners

I've been wondering how the narrowness or wideness of wood grain, as well as its orientation, affects guitar resonance and tone.

John Yamanaka
Irvine, CA

John, let's talk about tops primarily. The orientation is important because we like stiff tops. When the wood is perfectly quartersawn with grain lines that are exactly 90 degrees from the face, the wood is the stiffest. You can see the evidence of that cut by the cross grain in the top. We also like to call it silk. When you see a lot of that, you have very quartered wood. A few degrees off the quarter still works great, but I don't like it as much when it starts approaching 10 degrees. Regarding grain width in spruce, I prefer wider grain, because the wood is nearly as stiff as narrow grain but much lighter in weight, which allows easier movement. There is a limit to width that looks pleasing, which at this point in time is about ten lines per inch. One day, when we are cultivating spruce for guitars, and that day will happen, guitars will be made with five and six lines per inch, so prepare your kids to like wider grain, which they will.

As for the hardwoods, grain width doesn't matter quite as much when the wood is very dense. However, quarter-cut wood is always more stable, even if you might not perceive a difference in tone. But as always, every difference makes a difference, right? I love to answer these questions, but I also caution people against obsessing over the answers. It's our job to make guitars that sound great and last long with the materials the world offers now, and we're quite good at that. We follow the rules, but sometimes break them. A little knowledge is fun to have, but it can also be dangerous, so keep the whole in mind and try not to separate it into the parts.

I read your *Wood&Steel* article on the ES2 design. In understanding David Hosler's thought process in moving the piezo sensors behind the saddle, it occurred to me (and maybe

a side note, we do put a slight chamfer (bevel) on the bottom of the saddle edges to keep the corners fitting well in the slot while allowing a good slip fit of the saddle. A good saddle fit is also important for the acoustic response of the guitar as well as the pickup function.

Putting the pickup in front of the saddle was considered but would require making the bridge and pin plate larger to accommodate the pickup on the treble side. We tried several versions of this and found the current location to be ideal. We need adjustment for the reasons previously cited.

We also do plan on eventually offering the ES2 as a retrofit. Timing will depend on a number of factors, including our manufacturing ability for larger numbers of the pickups. We don't yet have a timeframe for when we'll begin to offer this service.

to you also) that the rocking motion of the saddle could be enhanced by slightly rounding its bottom edges. Might that make a noticeable difference?

I also wondered if it was ever a consideration to place the pickup in front of the saddle rather than behind it. My thinking is that in plucking a string and setting it to vibrate, you are shortening it and in effect pulling the saddle, which would make it rock forward toward the soundhole and neck more than backward, and you might not even need the tension adjustment set screws. The article also mentioned that you installed the ES2 on a few of Danny Rader's existing Taylors. Is that a service that you may offer to other Taylor owners in the future?

Tom Duncan

Ed. Note: We asked pickup designer David Hosler to respond to these questions.

Tom, your thoughtful questions are good ones and things that we tried in the development stages until eventually settling on the current design and placement. The most challenging aspect of using the saddle as the source for any pickup is the saddle's fit into the slot itself. It's almost impossible to machine all the surfaces of both the saddle and the wood slot to allow everything to work together acoustically without some sort of small mechanical interference. Repair technicians and builders have been trying with much frustration to make everything flat and level for years in order to balance under-saddle transducer pickups. We now know that the real solution was to have the pickup "in the correct place," but a good mechanical fit is still important even with ES2, which makes adjustment a very valuable tool!

The movement is so small (nanometers) that it takes a laser to see it or a piezo element to pick it up. Like the top of a guitar vibrating, you can't see it, but it is moving very dynamically. Rounding the saddle bottom does not positively affect the motion of the saddle as the movement is so small. As

Would you consider making one of your series with a pinless bridge? I have an older guitar with this type of bridge, and it's quick for restringing, has a less steep angle across the strings where they rest on the saddle, and also sounds very nice. My guess is that it also puts less stress on the strings where they come up through the bridge and intersect with the peg. Is it purely traditional to have pinned bridges?

Glenn

Glenn, we made a pinless bridge once on our original 400 Series. It was nice and had some manufacturing advantages. All the points you cite as being better have pros and cons. For instance, yes, you can re-string more easily, but you also put little dents in the guitar top more easily from the ball ends being dragged across the top. People complained about that back then. But those pros and cons aside, in the end we make an aesthetic decision, coupled with a functional and branding decision, and so we opt for a pinned bridge. I can't tell you a big story about how one is better than the other. For example, all classical guitars are pinless. They both work fine, but we choose the pinned bridge and will most likely stick with it.

I have an 816ce that I picked out after playing literally everything available in Pittsburgh. It was a Christmas gift from my wife in 2010. I am embarrassed to say that I just changed my strings for the second time since taking ownership of this fine instrument (a travesty for a guy



I recently became the proud owner of a Taylor T5-S and love it. I watched the video on your website of how to restring a steel-string guitar. The demonstrator slackened all the strings at once and took them all off. Is it OK to do this? Will the change in tension by removing all the strings do any harm to the neck? I've always been led to believe that strings should be changed one at a time.

Hal Darlington

Hal, feel free to take off all the strings at once. It won't harm a thing. And it allows you to wipe off your fretboard.

who used to change strings weekly), but since I no longer play in a band and I wipe down the strings well after each use, I didn't think much of it. Holy shimmer, Batman. My guitar sounded so nice before changing to the fresh set that I hardly believed it would improve much with the change, but boy was I wrong. It was full and deep with a detailed crispness that defines what I want in an acoustic sound. Maybe it's nice and broken-in now after four years of playing, but that changing to a new

set took me by surprise. Whatever the reason, this guitar sounds better than I remember, and it was already perfect. What do you think?

Paul W.

Well, Paul, strings wear out on guitars because people touch them with their hands. They don't wear out on a piano because nobody touches them, and the tones of the two instruments are different. But often in a guitar shop the guitar with the newest strings is the guitar that sells, even over a better gui-

tar for that very reason. This is one reason why we use Elixir® brand strings, because the tone lasts due to the fact that they are coated with a web of Teflon®, which keeps the oils and soils from your hands from lodging between the wrap windings. This gives our guitars a chance to be heard. If you're not going to change your strings often, be sure to try these. But there's nothing like a new set of strings to really hear what your guitar has to offer. After all, they are what make the sound. The guitar amplifies that sound, and better guitars do a better job of it, which is what we call tone. But without the strings, we only have a nice flower pot.

I just bought a 314ce and absolutely love it. It is easily one of the two best-sounding acoustics I've ever played (the other being the new 814ce, which I could barely put down). My question is about the new GO. I love my GAs for their versatility, but I am considering other body types for my next Taylor. The versatility, tonal uniformity, and bigger sound of the new GO have me pretty captivated. They seem to have all the volume and bass of a large body, and yet the responsiveness and tonal clarity of a small body. My question is three-fold: 1) Do you think the GO will prove to be as versatile as my beloved GAs? 2) Are you planning on offering a cutaway in the near future? (This would be a must for me.) 3) Will it become available in your lower models as well, or are you planning to keep it as an exclusive to your higher-end series?

One more related question: Any idea when the refinements of your 800 Series will be made universally available on all models? They are fantastic!

Brendan Denil

Thanks for the shout-out on the new 800s, Brendan, and yes, the appropriate changes are working their way into other models. It's not a cut-and-paste operation, as in applying everything from the 800s to each series, because each series needs its own changes. Your second question about the GO: Yes, it's a versatile guitar; it simply starts out bigger in size and sound than your GA. You can currently order a GO with a cutaway through our Custom program. And finally, we don't have any plans to make the GO available in the 100 or 200 Series. Someday we might see a 300 or 400 Series GO, but for now we are leaving it where it is in the line. These changes happen slowly, but I can remember when the GA was only

available as an upper-end model, and now you can buy a 114ce.

I am poised to purchase the new T5z Classic, adding yet another Taylor guitar to my stable. I read about your innovative change to the piezo pickup placement in your new Expression System 2. It would seem that a logical evolution would be for all your guitars to eventually follow suit. So, are you about to release a second-generation T5z with a behind-the-saddle piezo placement?

Bradley C. Smith
Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada

That's a good question, Bradley, and I'm sure others wonder about the same thing. We don't have a plan to change the T5 line to the new ES2 and the reason is this: The sensor in the T5 is magnetic and blends in tone and impedance with the two other magnetic pickups that make up the T5's trio of pickups. Since the ES2 is totally different in design, it is not a plug-in replacement. The difficulty comes in matching impedance while using the same preamp as the other pickups. They each would require a separate preamp and then need to be blended somehow. That would not be good design in the end. Also, as luck would have it, the current acoustic sensor on the T5 works incredibly well on that guitar, and the truth is that it works better on the T5 than on an acoustic guitar. So, in this case we're lucky because, while it would be difficult to change the T5 acoustic sensor to the ES2, we don't need to do so because the current sensor functions very well and we don't feel there is much room for improvement.

I love my 416ce. Have you ever thought about having a little red (battery low) warning light, maybe positioned near the volume control? I have had the battery go dead without warning and the sound becomes distorted through the speakers. Maybe a little warning would help.

John

John, if you look inside your guitar where the ES control knobs are, you will see a little LED light that shines when your guitar is plugged in. This tells you that your battery is good. When you don't see it lit, that tells you that your battery voltage is getting low and that soon it will be too low to work; it's in the dying zone. Also, when you put in a battery, it's a good idea to have

a Sharpie pen in your tool kit and write the date on the battery. That tells you a lot, but is just a suggestion. I don't want the light on the outside of the guitar, as it makes a hole that will become obsolete one day, while the holes for our knobs won't.



LED battery indicator light

I'm thinking about investing in an excellent rosewood/spruce acoustic guitar. I had been focused on the 714ce, but my attention has been diverted to the 814 by your design innovations this year. Last week, I had the chance to play 2013 and 2014 editions of the 814ce side by side and was impressed by the changes and the distinction in their voices. The 2013 model is a great guitar. The 2014 model is a GREAT guitar!

I have two questions. First, I'm a bit nostalgic about sunburst finishes because my first acoustic had a sunburst. Would the addition of a sunburst finish negatively affect the miraculous reduction in finish depth you've been able to achieve, and if so, how prominent would the change be to the guitar's volume and tone?

Second, I wonder whether an onboard tuner was considered when the Expression System was upgraded. This is a feature I use all the time on my Ibanez, which is equipped with a Fishman Aura electronics system. It is so convenient for stage purposes to have the tuner under my fingertips, including the ability to cut the signal to the amp with one touch for tuning. Do you have any thoughts on this? If the idea has been considered and dismissed, is it an aesthetic issue or a tone issue related to the inclusion of more non-wood components?

Scott
West Montrose, Ontario, Canada

Good questions, Scott. First, the sunburst. We wouldn't be able to produce as thin a finish on the 800 Series with a sunburst as we do clear. Everything matters, especially the finish. That said, it would still be a GREAT guitar with a sunburst. But thinner is better. As for on-board tuners, there is a dividing line in my mind, and I stick to it. On one side you have musical instruments, and on the other you have consumer electronics. Tuners are convenient, I will admit, but they fit into the consumer electronics class and only belong on guitars that are just as disposable as consumer electronics are. Our Expression System is in the musical instrument category. It is essential to today's music. We have designed it to function on an aesthetic platform (three small knobs and a battery-housing strap jack) that has stood the test of five revisions and one complete change of the electronic components inside. It is upgradable. So there is a difference between the "electronics" that we install into our guitar for the purpose of amplification and what I would call consumer tools or electronics that I feel should not be a part of the guitar itself. All those things become obsolete, cease to function, and need changing, while the guitar only gets better with age. I'd rather you do it with your foot on the floor and throw that piece of equipment away one day and keep your ever-improving guitar just as it is. I hope you see the sense in that. I'm truly trying to look after you in the long run.

Given the popularity of Taylor guitars in the acoustic world, when it comes to bluegrass, they seem to be on the opposite side of the spectrum – invisible, a taboo. I have yet to see a Taylor guitar being played in a bluegrass band, be it live or on the Internet. Do you have any explanations for this?

Bonifacio Gulla (618E)
Temecula, CA

Yes, I do. Most people who play bluegrass don't like Taylor guitars; they prefer Martin guitars. But we like them. And they should try a new 810 or 810e and see what they think. The fact is that the popularity of our guitars is very much associated with our sound, and that is because our sound was/is different than the traditional sound, and there are many people who prefer our sound. I once went to the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, and saw 51 contestants in the flatpicking contest and only one Taylor among them. Then I went to the fingerstyle contest and saw 47 contestants, and 44 of

them had Taylors. So I didn't work too hard to gain the flatpickers. Who would blame me? Andy Powers, who is designing our guitars now, likes both sounds and is a good enough builder to make a guitar that pleases both. So, I would say that a flatpicker should try a new Taylor 800 Series guitar. They might be surprised. The reviews are stellar among all players. Who knows, though, even if the sound is acceptable now, we still might have the wrong shaped headstock, pickguard and bridge for some people. I understand why, but I think we now offer a guitar that a bluegrass player could enjoy.

I own a 2003 cedar-top 714ce, which I have used extensively. Two years ago, I decided to take the high E string off! I prefer how it sounds that way, and it works with the kind of open chords and tunings I play. I tune down a semitone and use Elixir Custom Lights. It still stays in tune very well and sounds great.

Will the imbalance in tension along the guitar eventually damage the bridge, saddle or neck? I have asked a few different luthiers. Some think what I have done is almost heresy; others think it will be fine. Also, I'm considering purchasing one of your 12-strings and doing something similar. Would it eventually damage that instrument?

Luke de'Eça

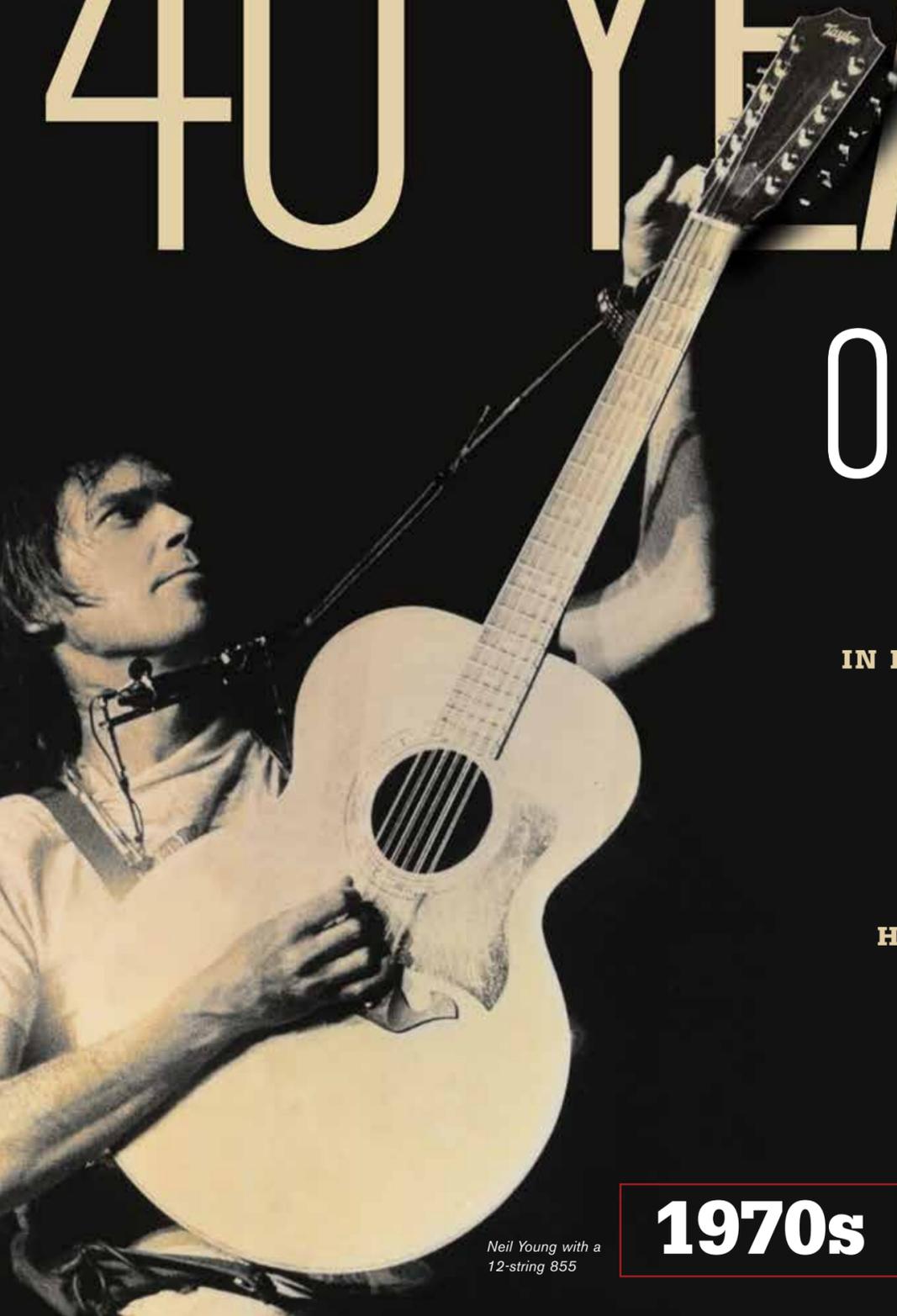
Luke, you can take off any string you want and play your music. Don't let others tell you that you can't. It won't harm the guitar at all.

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.

40 YEARS OF TAYLOR



Neil Young with a
12-string 855

1970s

IN HONOR OF THE COMPANY'S
40TH ANNIVERSARY,
WE HIGHLIGHT 40
INNOVATIONS THAT
HAVE SET TAYLOR APART

By Jim Kirlin

INNOVATION

12-Strings

Early in Taylor's history, Bob Taylor's 12-string guitars helped the company establish a differentiating niche in the guitar world. Most 12-strings of the day were notoriously difficult to play due to a combination of chunky neck profiles and relatively high action. In fact, most 12-strings had to be tuned down just to make them playable. Taylor's 12-strings were playable enough to be tuned to concert pitch, and thanks to the efforts of a few early Taylor dealers in the Los Angeles area, including McCabe's Guitar Shop and Westwood Music, our 12-strings were embraced in the '70s by the likes of Neil Young, David Crosby, and J.D. Souther, and later by John Denver, Kenny Loggins, and many others.

October 15, 1974, brought a soggy start to Taylor Guitars. Bob, Kurt, then-partner Steve Schemmer, and their small staff arrived at their shop in Lemon Grove, California, to find the floor under a couple of inches of water, the result of runoff from a rain storm the night before. Fortunately, the crew was able to bail out, mop up, and get to work without losing any wood or equipment. It would merely be the first of countless episodes of adversity the fledgling enterprise would face.

Forty years later, Taylor has not just survived but thrived, against the odds, evolving from a struggling shop into an industry-leading manufacturer, all without the need for Bob and Kurt to relinquish ownership or management control along the way. Their secret? A relentlessly innovative spirit infused with a blend of other attributes: raw talent, passion, youthful ignorance, problem-solving creativity, gritty resolve, trust, adaptability, and a knack for enlisting the help of others along the way. Add some random luck for good measure and you've got a blueprint for a company that slowly became, as Bob once described Taylor, a 20-year overnight success.

In honor of Taylor's 40th anniversary, it seems fitting to spotlight some of the fruits of that innovative spirit. We chose 40. By no means is this the definitive compilation, but it calls out many recognizable developments that have spurred Taylor's ongoing transformation. One thing is for certain: Within a culture of innovative thinking, fresh discoveries in turn spawn other new discoveries. As long as the company preserves that spirit, this list will continue to grow, bringing fresh inspiration to another generation of Taylor players.

continued on next page

1976 Slim-profile, Bolt-on Necks

Taylor's signature playability was the product of Bob Taylor's slimmer necks, an intuitive design decision that marked a departure from the bigger, rounder neck profiles of other acoustic guitars. Another contributing factor was a bolt-on heel design, a structural innovation that was initially sparked by a repair job Bob performed on a friend's Guild G-37, in which he converted a dovetail to a bolt-on in 1973. Bob introduced a more refined version of the bolt-on heel in 1976 with input from other luthiers in San Diego, including Sam Radcliff from the American Dream and James Goodall. The bolt-on neck also made it easier to perform neck resets.



1984



Grand Concert

The small body style was designed with input from national fingerstyle champion Chris Proctor during a time in the 1980s when a new generation of adventurous, genre-blending fingerpickers was searching for guitars that would better match their playing needs. The era's tools of the trade were largely Jumbos and Dreadnoughts with narrower fretboards and a boomier low end. The Grand Concert offered a more balanced and articulate voice.

1991



Fret Buck

Designed by Taylor tooling and machine design guru Matt Guzzetta to make the fretting process easier, this became a staple of Taylor's repair department for refretting guitars without having to remove the neck from the body (before the easily detachable NT neck was introduced). We still use it to service pre-NT guitars in repair, and luthier supply stores sell them to other repair technicians and instrument makers.

Workshop Program (1984)

Taylor's touring guitar workshops first rolled out in 1984 with fingerstyle champions Harvey Reid and Chris Proctor as clinicians. Both had showcased Taylor's guitars at NAMM Shows, and they took the guitar demo clinics on the road to Taylor's dealers as in-store workshops. Their grassroots promotion of Taylor was cheaper than traditional magazine advertising — an important consideration given Taylor's budget constraints at that time. Their efforts laid the groundwork for an expanded workshop program that featured a robust stable of world-class guitarists, including flatpickers Dan Crary and Beppe Gambetta, fingerstylists Laurence Juber, Pat Kirtley and Doyle Dykes, Piedmont blues picker John Cephas, singer-songwriter Wendy Waldman, and folk

players Chris Shaw, Artie Traum and Livingston Taylor, among others.

Artist Series (1985)

What began as Larry Breedlove's experimental color application techniques on maple/spruce guitars (including a purple 12-string made for Prince) grew into the stage-friendly Artist Series. With the acoustic guitar market slumping in the mid-'80s, the colored aesthetic recast the acoustic guitar in a more contemporary light, attracting a lot of attention and bolstering awareness of Taylor as other high-profile artists of the day, from Kenny Loggins to Billy Idol guitarist Steve Stevens, ordered custom models. The Artist Series eventually evolved into the maple/spruce 600 Series, which incorporated an array of color finish options.

Dan Crary Signature Model (1986)

Taylor's first-ever signature model was originally designed as a custom guitar for progressive bluegrass flatpicker Dan Crary, who craved a Dreadnought with a louder, more responsive treble, a more musical bass, and nice balance between the two. Bob Taylor essentially revoiced a rosewood/spruce 810 by shifting from scalloped bracing to taller, more blade-shaped braces and thinning the top. The guitar also featured a soft cutaway to give Crary access to the upper register for his blazing solo runs. Dan (and Bob) liked it so much that it became an official production model for a number of years. (See page 32 for more.)

Leo Kottke Signature Model (1986)

In the mid-'80s, a store-bought Taylor mahogany 12-string 555 lured fingerstyle virtuoso Leo Kottke back to playing guitar after a hiatus due to hand ailments. As the story goes, Kottke used a pocket knife to carve down some of the braces inside the guitar to modify it. Bob Taylor later connected with Kottke, and after a series of conversations, they decided to work together on the design of what Kottke thought would make the ultimate 12-string. The resulting LKSM retained the mahogany/Sitka wood pairing and Jumbo shape, with a flatter-style cutaway. Kottke felt that a 12-string's strength was a rumbling low-end and shouldn't be tuned to pitch, so it was designed to feature heavy gauge strings and to be tuned to C-sharp. A 6-string version was also made.

Guitar Cases (1989)

Guitar cases proved to be a problematic issue for Taylor in the late 1980s, especially as the company had begun increasing its daily production. Between the lack of a consistent supply from its vendor, quality issues, and an improper fit due to the nuances of Taylor's guitar shapes compared to several other major brands (which most cases were designed to fit), Bob Taylor decided to begin manufacturing cases in-house. Doing so resolved those issues and enabled Taylor to better manage the shipping flow. Bob took things a step further, overseeing the design of customized inserts for the boxes in which the cases were shipped, providing extra protection by enabling the cases to effectively "float" within the box.



1993

Kerf Saw & Clamps

Developed by Taylor's tool and machine designer Matt Guzzetta, the kerf saw automated the process of cutting the slotted kerfing strips that line the interior edges of a guitar's sides. The kerf clamps were machined from extruded aluminum to hold the glued kerfing strips inside a guitar's sides, replacing wooden clothespins.



1990

Computer (CNC) Mills

Taylor was the first acoustic guitar company to use computer numeric controlled mills. The game-changing machines brought exacting precision when it came to cutting, pocketing and shaping complex guitar components and brought unprecedented consistency to the guitar-making process. CNC mills also were used to fabricate proprietary fixtures and other tools that helped improve Taylor's guitar-making methods. They became a key catalyst for other innovations and helped spur Taylor's growth into an industry-leading manufacturer.



1995

UV-Curable Finish

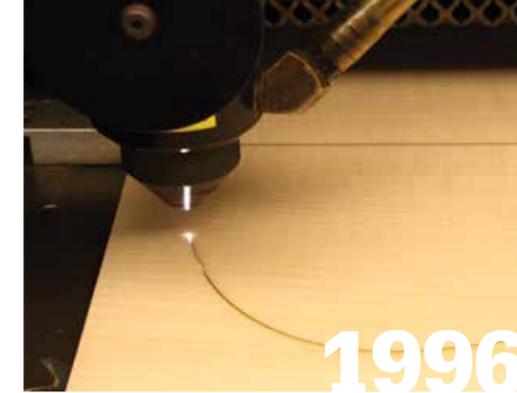
Taylor pioneered the development of new polyester-based guitar finishes that are more durable and contain fewer solvents than traditional nitrocellulose lacquer finishes, and can be applied in thinner coats to optimize the tonal properties of the guitar. Taylor's design of an ultraviolet light curing oven enabled the curing time to be reduced from days to minutes.

1995



The Pallet Guitar

It's a cult favorite among Taylor fans, but what might seem like a cool one-off novelty guitar was actually crafted to make a more profound statement. Bob Taylor was responding to the growing commentary that an exceptional supply of tonewoods was the secret of Taylor's great-sounding guitars. Making a guitar out of a distressed, discarded shipping pallet demonstrated that strong design and craftsmanship can transform virtually any materials into a guitar with great playability and quality tone.



1996

Laser Technology

After first using lasers to etch the rosette pattern for the Baby Taylor, the company expanded their use to include the cutting of guitar tops, backs, sides, intricate inlays, and other guitar components. Controlled by computer programs, lasers are able to cut wood parts quietly, accurately, and without chipping since there are no high-speed rotating cutters to stress the material.

1996



Baby Taylor

What was born as Taylor's 3/4-size mini-Dreadnought was initially conceived as a ukulele concept from Bob Taylor, but Bob quickly realized that a travel- and child-friendly guitar was a better idea. It turned out that the impressive playability and musicality of the guitar greatly diversified its appeal as a legitimate musical instrument for players at every level. Adult players bought them for their kids but also embraced the Baby as a slide guitar, songwriting guitar, an alternate tuning guitar, etc. Its popularity helped establish the travel guitar category.

Grand Auditorium (1994)

First offered as a limited edition to celebrate Taylor's 20th anniversary, the medium-size GA represented the crystallization of Bob Taylor's aesthetic design sensibility. Its greater versatility gave players a guitar that they could flatpick, strum and play fingerstyle on, and it fit into a recording mix nicely, making it a go-to guitar for session musicians. It became the quintessential Taylor body shape and redefined the acoustic guitar for the modern player.

Acoustic Bass (1995)

The offspring of a unique collaboration between Bob Taylor and envelope-pushing luthier Steve Klein fused Klein's radical design ideas with Taylor's aesthetic lines. The body featured a big, round lower bout, a Maccaferri-

style cutaway reminiscent of Taylor's LKSM, and a dramatically wedged body depth (3-1/2 inches on the bass side; 6-1/4 on the treble side) to maximize the interior air chamber while also optimizing playability. An offset soundhole increased the vibrational surface of the soundboard, while Klein's asymmetrical bridge was designed to help the top move more efficiently and boost the bass and treble. The interior boasted Klein's elaborate bracing scheme. Four models were offered, with tonewood choices that included imbuia and maple. While the size and nature of the design made it a niche instrument, it was well received by established bassists including Nashville session ace Michael Rhodes, Cheap Trick's Tom Petersson, and jazz virtuoso Stanley Clarke. With limited demand for

the instrument, it was discontinued in 2002.

Tecate Factory (2000)

What began as the relocation of Taylor's in-house case production from its factory complex in El Cajon, California, to a new facility in Tecate, Mexico, has gradually evolved into an integral extension of our guitar manufacturing operation. Located just an hour from our complex in El Cajon, Taylor's Tecate facility currently not only produces cases, but also crafts the Baby Taylor Series, the GS Mini, our 100 and 200 Series, and performs other wood processing functions for our production line. Tecate's close proximity to our

1999

New Technology (NT) Neck

Not only one of the most revolutionary innovations in Taylor history but in the entire acoustic guitar industry, the patented NT neck arguably represented the first major advance in acoustic guitar design since the birth of the steel-string. The neck design incorporated computer mill and laser technology to change the way the bolt-on neck attaches to the body of the guitar. The design brought more stability and precision to the neck, enabling unprecedented micro-adjustability to ensure a precise neck angle and easy serviceability to maintain the perfect neck angle. The three-piece design also brought greater structural resilience to the neck and significantly reduced the waste of mahogany and sapele wood.



2005

**T5**

A revolutionary "electracoustic" guitar design, the hollowbody hybrid leveraged Taylor's proprietary pickup design capabilities and bridged the acoustic and electric worlds in a truly unique and inspiring way, infusing a versatile palette of tones into one all-performance guitar. Compatible with both electric and acoustic amps and equipped with acoustic and electric pickups and five-way

switching, the T5 was one of Taylor's most successful product launches ever. The more recent T5z expanded the T5 family with a more compact body and a more electric-friendly feel.



2009

Custom Program

While Taylor's standard guitar line had evolved into a robust offering of body styles, wood pairings and appointment packages, we wanted to give customers an even broader palette of options to enable them to design a Taylor guitar that truly reflected their own tonal and aesthetic preferences. The Custom program features dozens of menu categories that are rich with options, and we've worked closely with dealers to enable them to help customers with their orders. The program also makes it easy for dealers to add truly unique models to their own inventory. We also love to spec out our own custom offerings and bring them to Road Shows for customers to experience firsthand. Best of all, with our production sophistication, we're able to offer superb turnaround time – less than eight weeks – on orders.

2011

**Taylor's European Headquarters**

After using external sales distributors in the European market for years, Taylor took on its own distribution by establishing a multifaceted facility in Amsterdam to better serve dealers and customers. In addition to inventory warehousing, our European headquarters houses our sales and customer service offices, dealer education space, and a fully equipped Factory Service Center that performs every level of repair that our factory in El Cajon can. The operation also supports our European Road Show events.

Small-scale Robotics

One of the newest frontiers of Taylor's high-tech tooling and manufacturing capability is the use of small-scale robotics to perform intricate assembly processes. First used to manufacture the pickup assembly for the Expression System 2, the robotic units enable the automated in-house production of complex guitar components.



2014

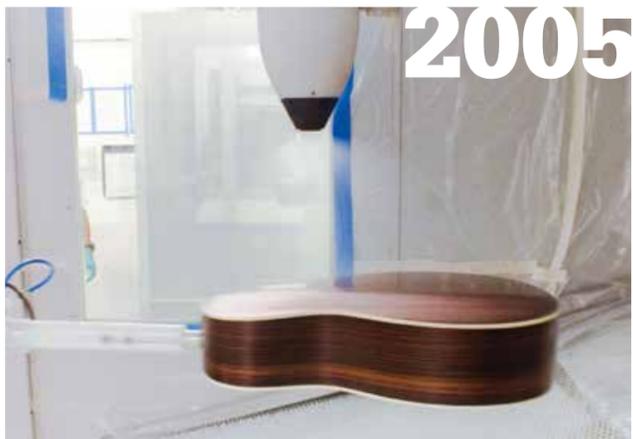
2003, 2014

Expression System®

After years of installing after-market pickups from outside manufacturers, Taylor's product development team applied its extensive guitar knowledge to design a proprietary pickup system capable of capturing the rich acoustic nuances and translating them into a more natural amplified tone that was reflective of both the guitar and the player. The original Expression System incorporated a network of magnetic neck and body sensors and a preamp designed with input with revered pro audio designer Rupert Neve. The latest iteration, the Expression System 2 (2014), features the breakthrough redesign of a piezo-style pickup.



2005

**Electrostatic/Robotic Finish Application**

Taylor dramatically increased the transfer efficiency of the finish sprayed on a guitar from 15 percent when sprayed manually to about 85 percent with the integration of electrostatic and robotic technologies. The electrostatic application is enhanced within a controlled spray environment, in which the finish temperature and the humidity levels are stabilized to create optimal conditions for finish attraction. The resulting finish coating is more evenly applied and more consistent across the production line.



2010

GS Mini

Taylor's next-generation version of a scaled-down guitar after the Baby Taylor was designed to create a bigger, richer guitar sound yet still retain the compact feel of a travel-friendly guitar. The guitar borrowed from Taylor's shapely Grand Symphony body style and incorporated many of Taylor's latest design ideas, including the patented NT neck. The design even included an easy-to-install aftermarket pickup, the ES-Go®. Right out of the gate, the guitar was smash success, yielding a full-size voice in a comfortably intimate package that suited both an active lifestyle and relaxed couch strumming. Four years into production, we are approaching 100,000 GS Mini models made.

2014

Revoiced 800 Series

The comprehensive design overhaul of our flagship and most popular guitar series made the bold statement that we believe in continual innovation and in exploring new frontiers in tone. The new 800s also showcased a fusion of Andy Powers' talents as Taylor's next-generation master luthier with the R&D and manufacturing sophistication that enables Andy's ideas to be implemented in an unprecedented way at a production level.



U.S. headquarters has enabled us to maintain Taylor's high quality standards, as production supervisors and machine and tooling specialists travel back and forth to the factory every day.

Mahogany Sourcing in Honduras (2001)

Taylor's philosophy of conservation-minded tonewood consumption led to our involvement in a pioneering partnership with remote forest communities in Honduras, which support themselves through the sustainable harvesting of mahogany. Because such forest communities are often working with less sophisticated tools and milling equipment, Bob Taylor modified our cutting specifications to provide a more practical approach that was easier to execute. The result was the increased yield

of usable wood for guitar necks from each log. The well-managed program has become a model of sustainable social forestry and enabled communities to improve their quality of life while properly managing the forest resources around them for the long-term future. The program's success has led to the expansion to other community cooperatives in Honduras.

Robotic Finish Buffing (2001)

Designed both to alleviate the physical demands of the manual buffing process and improve production consistency through automation, our buffing robot, "Buffy," made it easier to give a guitar's finish an even luster, which can be a challenge given the mix of complex shapes with different body styles. The 6-axis robots are programmed to inter-

act with buffing wheels that move to maintain an optimized pressure level throughout the process.

Nylon Series (2002)

Rather than designing a traditional classical guitar, Taylor developed its nylon-string guitars to be more compatible with the steel-string playing experience. Slimmer necks, cutaways and onboard electronics were among the modern and performance-friendly amenities, while still yielding the evocative tonal character of the classical sound. As a result, more and more players have incorporated Taylor nylon-strings into a broad mix of musical genres.

Relief Rout (2003)

The patented CNC-milled groove that runs around the underside of a guitar

top serves to expand the boundary edge of the soundboard, helping to enhance its tonal output.

Automated Sidebenders (2004)

Our side and cutaway benders were designed in-house and incorporate a Programmable Logic Controller to maintain a consistent temperature, tension and rate of speed. This has virtually eliminated breakage and other problematic issues associated with the manual wood bending process and enables us to make a more accurate set of sides.

Grand Symphony (2006)

The pursuit of a richer, more robust acoustic voice led to the GS. Bob Taylor and Larry Breedlove expanded the footprint of the Grand Auditorium,

raising and slightly widening the waist and rounding out the lower bout. The resulting shape retained an aesthetic family resemblance with other Taylor body styles while also yielding a distinctive tone profile that featured a deeper, piano-like bass, extra volume and low-end sustain, without ruining the clarity of the mids and highs.

Road Shows (2007)

The latest evolution of our in-store events pairs our sales rep for the store with a product specialist, resulting in an engaging mix of Taylor philosophy, fresh-from-the-factory product information, and guitar demonstrations that help attendees better understand the Taylor guitar line. The Road Show format offers players at every level practical advice on finding a guitar

that best fits their needs. Guests are also invited to test-drive Taylor models, including production guitars and an ever-changing selection of beautiful custom guitars brought by the Road Show team. A Q&A session rounds out the event by giving guests an open forum for discussing all things Taylor. Thousands of Road Shows have been presented to date, and they have spawned a series of more personalized Find Your Fit events, in which our sales team gives one-on-one consultations to help customers identify the best type of guitar for their needs.

SolidBody Electrics (2007)

Fueled by a continuation of our envelope-pushing pickup design, the SolidBody initially began as a more electric iteration of the hybrid T5, with new

pickups and a metal bridge design. The unique character of the pickups would soon spark the creation of a full-fledged solidbody that was designed completely from the ground up. Distinctive features included an ergonomic bridge, Taylor's single-bolt T-Lock™ neck joint (borrowed from the T5), and over time, an array of pickup choices, including several humbuckers and a noiseless single coil, plus single or double cutaway options and an optional tremolo. In addition to an array of customized ordering options, the SolidBody boasted after-market pickup-swapping flexibility with the availability of solderless loaded pickguards, which enabled players to change their pickup configuration in minutes. Though the SolidBody is currently on production hiatus, its design informed the development of the T5z.

8-string Baritone (2009)

This specialty design was something of an acoustic love child spawned from two special models created for Taylor's 35th anniversary: a 6-string baritone GS and a 9-string GS. The 8-string fused the lower, deeper tonal range of the 6-string bari (tuned from B to B) with some of the upper-octave shimmer that the 9-string produced. Looking to keep the jangle factor in check, Taylor's design team landed on the 8-string, featuring octave pairings for the third and fourth strings. The result was a uniquely inspiring guitar that blended elements of a six-string, a bass, and a 12-string into an expressive tonal palette. It lived as a standard model for several years before moving to our Custom program to give players more ordering flexibility.

Ebony Sourcing (2011)

In 2011, Taylor became the co-owner of Crelicam, an ebony mill in Cameroon. In the course of researching the harvesting of ebony there, Bob discovered that most ebony trees felled were left on the forest floor because the wood featured color variegation rather than the all-black appearance that has historically been valued by instrument makers. Bob shared this revelation with the music community in order to promote broader acceptance of variegated ebony among instrument makers. Bob has used Taylor's manufacturing expertise to upgrade the harvesting and milling efforts in Cameroon, improving working conditions for employees, introducing better tools and machines, and training employees to improve the mill's processing capability. Ultimately,

this will enable Cameroonian communities to build a better economy through responsible management of an important natural resource.

Grand Orchestra (2013)

The first full-fledged guitar design from Taylor master luthier Andy Powers replaced the Taylor Jumbo with a re-envisioned big-bodied shape that blended depth, boldness and complexity with remarkable balance and responsiveness, which is a unique tonal package for a big guitar. **W&S**



Island Roots

Tasmania's blackheart sassafras and blackwood, plus an all-koa ensemble, yield a trove of tonewood treats

By Jim Kirlin

Each year our Fall Limited Editions are thoughtfully crafted to inspire guitar lovers in fresh ways. This year's seasonal menu is connected by the theme of island origins, even if the islands represented are more than 5,500 miles apart.

Our first stop is the wildly beautiful Australian island state of Tasmania, the home of two fantastic tonewoods: rare blackheart sassafras, whose flamboyant complexion is the natural result of fungi that stain the trees' blond wood with bold, contrasting lines; and blackwood, an abundant Australian hardwood whose musical qualities are comparable to such longtime tonewood classics as mahogany and rosewood. From there we travel to the Hawaiian Islands, the source of Hawaiian koa, where our desire to use more of the wood from each log we procure spurred on a pair of all-koa 300 Series models along with a handsome GS Mini.

Beyond the island bond, the guitars of this year's collection are linked by our commitment to the responsible stewardship of the tonewood resources made available to us. As Bob Taylor has emphasized with our ebony sourcing initiatives in Cameroon, we feel a deep obligation to use what the forest provides, and to invest in the healthy long-term future of tonewood resources. We hope you enjoy this year's offerings, and invite you to sample them at a dealer near you.

A Taste of Tasmania

Over the years at Taylor we've produced several batches of limited editions featuring blackwood (most recently in the fall of 2012) sourced from the small Australian island state of Tasmania, located about 150 miles (about 240 kilometers) south of Australia's mainland. Taylor master luthier Andy Powers also has long admired blackwood's properties as a tonewood and has crafted guitars with it for years. After arriving at Taylor he became interested not only in continuing to work with blackwood, but also in Tasmania as a region that could potentially support the sustainable sourcing of other tonewoods as well. (See "The Craft" on page 27.)

"Australia as a country, and Tasmania in particular, are interesting because they have so many unique

species of wood," Andy shares.

"They're a developed country with troves of wonderful hardwood forests in abundance. In the past there have been times when those forests were not so highly valued, but recently we've seen some proven examples of viable selective harvesting."

As Andy researched different Tasmanian woods, he and Taylor's wood buyer, Chris Cosgrove, connected with a supplier based in Tasmania named Bob Mac Millan, proprietor of a small company called Tasmanian Salvaged Resurrection Timbers. Mac Millan's environmentally sound approach as a supplier aligned with Taylor's philosophy of supporting sustainable harvesting, and seemed to offer the potential for a healthy client-vendor relationship.

Because a lot of Tasmania is comprised of rural, family-owned farms, Mac Millan has built up a network of contacts with local farmers, many of whom have old trees on their property that were either naturally damaged by storms or are overmature and hampering new growth on the land. (For more on Mac Millan, see our sidebar on page 21.) If a tree has value to instrument makers, like an old blackwood, the farmer might call Mac Millan, and he'll often buy, log and remove it, and then replant the same type of tree in a nearby spot.

"It's the most select version of selective harvesting possible," Andy says. "Bob is only taking the trees that are best used for wood, and then turning them into their highest value usage rather than just shredding them for pulp or mulch or something like that; he's turning them into premium material because these are really great woods."

Andy and Chris traveled to Tasmania on a couple of occasions to do some boots-on-the-ground research and spend time with Mac Millan. They hiked into the bush and visited farmland and family woodlots to look at trees. They saw some wonderful blackwood specimens.

"Some of these trees are five to six feet in diameter and straight as an arrow," Andy says. "A farmer wants a fallen tree out of his pasture because his sheep are tripping over it; we want it out of his pasture because we want to make guitars out of it. Then you slice

into it and realize, this is absolutely premium guitar wood, every foot of it."

Blackheart Sassafras

Another wood that captivated Andy was blackheart sassafras, a visually striking aberration of the more common sassafras tree native to Tasmania. The "blackheart" moniker refers to dark, dramatic striping in the otherwise blond-colored wood, which is caused by fungi that form in the heartwood of the tree. Typically it forms as a result of branches that break off during storms, which enables water to drip down within the tree while it's growing, sometimes over the course of 100-150 years, according to Bob Mac Millan. The phenomenon differs from that of spalted maple in that the fungi that cause spalted are essentially wood rot that occurs after the wood is cut and can compromise its structural integrity.

"Often, spalted wood gets too soft and squishy and does weird things," Andy says. "This blackheart is not the same scenario. It just colors the wood in a very interesting way. The trees are a dense, slow-growing hardwood, and they're remarkably consistent in their sonic properties from one piece to the next. I couldn't pick out one piece that was harder or softer than another, or stiffer or more flexible. Something like spalted maple tends to have a huge range of possible densities, some from very soft to very hard, often within the same piece of wood. This sassafras is really wonderful to work with, to finish, and it sounds amazing."

Though blackheart doesn't have a deep-rooted heritage as a tonewood – it's been more popular among makers of high-end furniture and other woodwork due to its visual appeal – it's not due to any sonic shortcomings, Andy says.

"We were interested in using it because it brings this completely unique and inherently musical flavor to the voice of the guitar," he explains. "It offers a new kind of voice to even a seasoned musician."

Opposite page, L-R: 718e-FLTD, 512ce-12-Fret FLTD, GS Mini-e Koa, 324ce-K FLTD

continued on next page



L-R: Blackheart sassafras/Sitka spruce 718e-FLTD, 714ce-FLTD, 718e-FLTD

700 Series Fall LTDs

Woods

Back/Sides: Blackheart Sassafras
Top: Sitka Spruce

Models

712e-12-Fret FLTD,
714ce-FLTD, 718e-FLTD

Compared to normal sassafras trees, those with blackheart coloration are rarer, which is why this limited edition offering is restricted to several hundred sets. Even the sets cut from the same section of this particular log differed in appearance, so no two sets from this select batch are visually alike. While sassafras is normally light in color, the blackheart sets also showcase a kaleidoscopic mix of pink, red and purple hues, accented with bold lines.

As a dense, slow-growing hardwood, sassafras's tonal properties give it a truly unique sonic personality com-

pared to other tonewoods.

"If I were to try to offer a concrete description of this as a guitar wood, I'd say it's warm, with clear top end, a lot of focus, and it has great projection," Andy explains. "It's got some of the dry, woody response of walnut or mahogany, some of the note separation and focus of maple or myrtle, and a more articulated high-end overtone series like rosewood. In other words, it has a certain chime and breathiness up top, while also staying really focused. The low end has a warm dryness to it."

The sassafras was paired with a Sitka spruce top and is offered in three

models, a non-cutaway Grand Concert 12-Fret, a cutaway Grand Auditorium, and a non-cutaway Grand Orchestra. The guitars share many of the same tone-enhancing refinements first introduced on Taylor's newly revoiced 800 Series, including Advanced Performance bracing and protein glues, which give each model an extra rich, dynamic character. Between the unique tone profile of sassafras and the other design features, Andy says these guitars respond with a pleasantly chameleon-like tonal quality that reflects each player's individual style.

"The 800 Series design was

meant to be very dynamic and player-sensitive," he explains. "This sassafras, coupled with those additional design elements, has that same kind of personality – it goes where a player pushes it. Depending on the player, a person might bring out more of a mahogany sound, or rosewood, maple, walnut or even something else. I think this will be really appealing to players."

Because of the visual variance of the different wood sets, Andy and Chris worked closely with Bob Mac Millan's team while in Tasmania to cut back and side sets next to each other to maintain

a cohesive aesthetic. And given its

strong visual character, Andy didn't feel the need to add a lot of extra embellishment. Elegant aesthetic touches include rosewood binding, rosewood top edge trim, an abalone rosette outlined in rosewood, mother-of-pearl Heritage Diamond fretboard inlays borrowed from the 700 Series, and a pickguard-free top. The guitars also feature our Expression System® 2 acoustic electronics, a limited edition label, and ship in a Taylor deluxe hardshell case.

Bob Mac Millan's Future-minded Forestry

Working with wood has been a lifelong passion for conservation-minded craftsman turned supplier Bob Mac Millan, proprietor of Tasmanian Salvaged Resurrection Timbers, a small and nimble operation based in the small town of Bagdad, about 25 miles north of Hobart, Tasmania's capital city. In conversation, Mac Millan's affable personality is embellished by his pleasant Australian lilt and his plucky passion for his work.

"I'm a big greenie," he says of his environmentally conscious philosophy of forestry, and he hasn't shied away from publicly criticizing the Tasmanian government in the local media when its policies have supported big industrial logging companies that engage in clear-cutting forestry. ("I'm a bit of what you call a 'stirrer,'" he confesses. "I like having a go at the government.")

Scottish by birth, Mac Millan fell in love with woodworking at age 12 and moved to Australia in 1967. At university he studied fine furniture and sculpture, and later became a woodworking artist. He moved to Tasmania in 1968 and found it to be a magical place.

"I thought I was in wood heaven," he says. "The whole island was just thick rainforest."

He remembers seeing the effects of large-scale industrial logging companies as they clear-cut some of the old-growth forests shortly after arriving. While subsequent government policy curbed this practice, witnessing its effects firsthand fueled his desire to support more responsible, sustainable harvesting methods. He first began harvesting wood himself by salvaging the stump wood of felled trees for his own woodturning and furniture making. In the late '90s he started participating in online wood-

working forums to promote his wood products. Before long, wood turners in America and Germany who admired his work began to inquire whether they could buy some of the exotic Tasmanian hardwoods he was using. What began as a small enterprise eventually expanded beyond woodturning clients to include supplying instrument tonewoods such as blackwood, sassafras and myrtle to individual luthiers in Australia, and eventually, a few larger companies including Taylor.



L-R: Andy Powers, Bob Mac Millan and Chris Cosgrove

"I absolutely love it, because what better things can you see than a musical instrument made out of it?" he reflects.

Mac Millan developed his eco-friendly business model for harvesting the woods he supplies to his clients by targeting storm-felled and overmature old-growth trees. Because a lot of Tasmania's rainforests are privately owned, in many cases as family farmland, he began contacting individual owners about selectively harvesting trees from their property. His grassroots engagement with local Tasmanians proved to be an effective way to build relationships and a low-impact way of salvaging high-value wood. Some of the locals know of him through his interviews on local radio and TV programs.

"I've also gone around to areas and to pubs and had a beer and talked to the local farmers," he says. "I tell them what I'm about and ask if they've got any blackwood on their property that's old and dying. I've spent the last three or four years getting the word out there. I get dairy farmers who'll ring me up, for instance, with a couple thousand head of cattle, and they've got to put in an irrigation system, a dam. So

there are blackwoods that have got to come out, and they're usually very old trees."

As part of his harvesting services, Mac Millan says he also convinces the landowners to let him replant a tree of the same species in a nearby location.

"Some people will say, 'I won't reap the benefit of that – it'll be 100 or 200 years before there's a market for that timber we're planting,'" he shares. "And I say, 'Well, so what? It's there for the future, and that's what I'm about. I want to see it continue for hundreds and hundreds of years.'"

Mac Millan's company only has a handful of employees, including one of his stepsons, Nick Denholm, who is involved in all aspects of the business. Mac Millan says that despite the relatively small scale of his operation, he's able to compete with some of the bigger timber companies that also harvest blackwood by paying farmers higher dollar value for a tree. He offers an example.

"There's a big logging company up in the northwest coast," he says. "They've got a huge contract with the government, they've got [access to] the swamplands where the black-

wood comes from, so they go in and get whatever they want, but they only pay about 25 percent of what I will offer a farmer. I offer them a lot more money because if I make the farmer happy, he will tell other farmers to contact Bob, and we're all happy."

He believes it's a sustainable business approach for the future.

"Instead of going into a community and trying to rip them off by getting the timber at the lowest possible cost, if we offer people a good price everybody's happy, and the resource will be available forever, that's the way I look at it," he says.

Mac Millan has kept his operation lean by using local loggers and sawmills when needed to harvest and process the trees.

"I'm the one who finds the farmers, and then I'll bring a logging crew in to do the actual felling of the timber," he says. "Then I'll have the log delivered to the closest sawmill to where the farm is, and they cut to my specifications."

As a client, Taylor has supported Mac Millan's efforts by more than just purchasing blackwood and blackheart sassafras. During their visits to Tasmania, Andy Powers and wood buyer Chris Cosgrove have traveled

with Mac Millan to visit farms and shared their knowledge of how to cut wood for guitars.

"We've worked with Bob on how to cut guitar-specific boards out of these trees, exactly how we want to lay out each tree, where to take boards for sides, boards for backs and tops," Andy says.

Taylor also recently shipped a band saw to Mac Millan to enable his crew to do more refined cutting on their own.

"I'm hoping in the next six months I'll start resawing sets for Taylor rather than sending over billets," Mac Millan says.

Mac Millan believes that responsible sourcing methods resonate with customers who buy wood products and impact their purchasing decisions. As a wood craftsman, he's experienced it firsthand.

"You know all the craft shops that sell wooden bowls and that type of stuff made out of minor species timbers here in Tasmania?" he says. "Well, the tourists that come into Tasmania are starting to say, 'Does this come from clear-felled logging?' And if so, they won't buy it." www.tasmaniantonewoods.com



L-R: Blackwood/Sitka spruce 512ce-12-Fret FLTD and 514ce-FLTD with shaded edgeburst bodies

500 Series Fall LTDs

Woods

Back/Sides: Tasmanian Blackwood
Top: Sitka Spruce

Models

510e-FLTD, 512ce-12-Fret FLTD,
514ce-FLTD, 516ce-FLTD, 518e-FLTD

While Tasmanian blackwood can't claim the marquee billing of well-established tonewood counterparts like rosewood, mahogany, maple or even Hawaiian koa, we think its natural musical properties warrant a place at the table as a staple wood among guitar enthusiasts. If Tasmania hadn't been as geographically isolated from the Western world and blackwood had been more available to guitar makers decades ago, Andy suggests, it might have become a more popular tonewood sooner.

We're pleased to showcase it once again as part of a special 500 Series limited edition package. Blackwood's tone profile resembles that of koa or mahogany in its midrange focus – a little dry and clear yet also warm – with an added splash of top-end shimmer and richness found in rosewood. Its musicality also lends itself to a variety of body sizes and musical styles, which is why we've produced models in all five Taylor body shapes.

Together with Bob Mac Millan's

eco-friendly harvesting approach and the natural workability of the wood, Andy feels that it could have a future in the Taylor line at some point.

"It's a really good wood to make a guitar out of," he says. "It's stable; it works well, finishes well, glues well. Plus, the trees grow very large and straight, so you can get pieces that want to turn into guitars – you're not fighting to coerce them into becoming an instrument. That plus this incredibly responsible way of harvesting the mate-

rial is a match made in heaven. The fact that it has an inherent musical quality that's appropriate for a lot of different styles is great, too – it makes a nice fingerstyle guitar, a great strummer, and everything in between. We can make a great Dreadnought out of it or a really cool 12-Fret Grand Concert."

Andy preferred the straight-grained sets of this particular batch for their extra tonal clarity, and paired them with a Sitka spruce top. In terms of appointments, Andy chose to complement

blackwood's rich cinnamon-red hues with a shaded edgeburst body and neck, which help conjure a neo-vintage personality, especially paired with the ivory appointment package borrowed from our standard 500 Series. Each model features a limited edition label inside the guitar, comes equipped with Taylor Expression System® 2 electronics, and ships in a Taylor deluxe hardshell case.

Koa Curation

We love the richly figured sets of Hawaiian koa used for our Koa Series. Because we typically buy koa as a whole log, our wood purchasing team is always looking for contenders with worthy figure. The challenge is that without the benefit of being able to cut a log into boards for closer examination before purchasing it, it can be difficult to fully assess the prevalence of the figure, as wood buyer Chris Cosgrove explains.



"Sometimes figure is visible under the bark by what's called dimpling, but the best approach is to take a cut off the end edge of the log with a hatchet or machete or else you won't see the figure," he says. "You have to check both ends of the log to ensure that the figure goes all the way up the tree."

Even then, Chris says, it's hard to know whether the figure runs all the way into the heart or appears on all sides of the log.

"Figure can start strong and then disappear in any direction," he adds. "But we understand this and are able to grade and sort wood accordingly, with the intention of utilizing what a tree gives us to the best of our ability."

In addition to the wood that's appropriate for the Koa Series, AA-grade or master-grade sets are set aside for premium custom models. Less extravagantly figured sets are often saved for a more affordable batch of limited editions. In the latter case, we've made an all-koa guitar more affordable by crafting a pair of all-koa 300 Series limiteds, featuring our Grand Auditorium and Grand Symphony shapes. We're also pleased to offer a selection of all-koa GS Mini guitars.



L-R: 326ce-K FLTD, 324ce-FLTD

300 Series Fall LTDs

Woods

Back/Sides: Hawaiian Koa
Top: Hawaiian Koa

Models

324ce-K FLTD, 326ce-K FLTD

Unique aesthetic touches on our all-koa 300 Series guitars include an all-satin finish and a pickguard-free top, which visually amplify the organic beauty and variegation of the wood. Tonally, these guitars will sound slightly different than their Koa Series counterparts due to the use of our 300 Series bracing scheme (Standard II) rather than the CV bracing used on the Koa Series. The Standard II will punch up the midrange and favor a powerful strummer. With the addition of our Expression System® 2 pickup, these guitars make a great all-around choice for fronting a band as a rhythm player or a singer-songwriter, and should respond nicely to fingerstyle with a blend of midrange warmth and top-end articulation. Appointments include black binding, 4mm Italian acrylic dots, and a 3-ring rosette. The guitar ships in a Taylor deluxe hardshell case.



L-R: Front and back views of a GS Mini-e Koa

GS Mini-e Koa Fall LTD

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Hawaiian Koa
Top: Solid Hawaiian Koa

Model

GS Mini-e Koa

Our popular and portable GS Mini enjoys an exotic tonewood upgrade with this limited edition all-koa model. A pickguard-free solid koa top is paired with layered koa back and sides, with the addition of Taylor's ES-T pickup for instant plug-and-play fun. If you like the sound of our mahogany-top Mini, you'll also enjoy this model; the hardwood koa top will yield a focused response with a splash of extra top-end chime. Other standard GS Mini appointments include an all-matte finish, 5mm dot fretboard inlays, a 3-ring rosette, and chrome tuners. The guitar ships in a GS Mini hard bag.

Soundings

A Guitar to the City

Not only is El Cajon, California, the home of Taylor Guitars, it's also the hometown of six-time NASCAR Sprint Cup champion **Jimmie Johnson**. Johnson grew up in the area, attended local schools, and has continued to have a regular presence in the city, honoring his roots and enriching the lives of local students through donations totaling \$4.5 million.

On Tuesday, June 14, the City of El Cajon and other elected officials paid tribute to the accomplishments and charitable efforts of the local hometown hero with the declaration of "Jimmie Johnson Day." When it came time for Mayor Bill Wells to offer Johnson what would ordinarily be an honorary key to the city, Wells instead presented him with a **custom GS Mini** branded with his number, 48. Johnson was stoked. "I'm a music person and have always wanted to play the guitar," he said afterward. "Getting a Taylor custom guitar was one of the highlights of the day in El Cajon. I'm proud of my hometown — that day was such a celebration, and the guitar was just the icing on the cake. Amazing."

jimmiejohnsonfoundation.org

Taking it on Back

Over the summer, rising country artist **Chase Bryant (618e)** stopped by the Taylor factory. Bryant was on a radio station tour in support of his debut single, "Take it on Back," which debuted in the Country Aircheck Top 3 "Most Added" chart.

Born in the small town of Orange Grove, Texas, Bryant's musical heritage is a who's-who of country music. Bryant's grandfather played piano in Roy Orbison's first two bands and later for Waylon Jennings. His uncles co-founded the group Ricochet, which had several hits in the '90s.

"From the time I was a kid, the only thing I wanted to do was play music," Bryant says.

Bryant took his dream to L.A., first as a session player, and then to (the late) Barbara Orbison, Roy's widow and a Nashville publisher, who signed him in one of her last acts. He was soon led to BBR Music Group imprint Red Bow Records, and soon afterward he hit the road, where he's been on the cusp of breaking big.

At the Taylor factory, Bryant treated

a group of listeners of local country music station KSON to a mini-concert featuring his songs "Take it on Back," "Change Your Name," and "Please Come to Boston," all while playing his guitar left-handed, upside down and backwards, a preference he developed as a child.

"My grandfather had an old mandolin around the house that was strung ADEG, upside down, and [he] thought I would fix it, but I learned to play upside down," he explains. "My mom wanted me to learn the right way and play left-handed guitar, but I never liked the way it looked or felt."

Bryant now counts about 25 guitars in his collection, but says his go-to is the 618e he picked up in Nashville at Gruhn Guitars.

"It just sounds great. It can overcome anything. No matter what setting you're in, it can do its thing and shine." chasebryant.com

Four on the Floor

Portland, Maine-based singer-songwriter/guitarist **Jason Spooner (910e)** has always worked from a rich Americana playbook. Over the years he's stitched his eclectic influences into a well-rounded roots-rock repertoire that can stretch from intimate acoustic folk to electric jam band. Gifted with fluid guitar chops, a warm, willowy voice, and a keen lyrical point of view, Spooner has spun his musical versatility into a flexible musical asset, performing both as a solo artist and as frontman for the Jason Spooner Trio. Flanked by equally fluid players in bassist Adam Frederick and drummer Reed Chambers, the group has parlayed their groove-rich interplay into crowd-pleasing live shows.

The trio recently bolstered their sound with the addition of keyboardist Warren McPherson (and tweaked their name to the Jason Spooner Band), a move that Spooner says expanded the band's range "exponentially." Looking to exploit the four-piece's musical chemistry to the fullest for their latest recording project, the band found the perfect setting for the full-immersion experience they were craving: Midcoast Maine's HEARSTUDIOS, located in the scenic harbor town of Camden Village. The state-of-the-art new studio, completed in 2013, offered both an inspiring vibe

and a house on site, which enabled the band to live together during the recording process. The experience gave them more time to experiment in the studio, work through arrangements together as a group, and track the record live in a room together. Spooner says the approach helped the band capture their live energy in a way that wasn't quite bottled on previous studio recordings.

"The difference is night and day," he adds.

The results shine on the band's new album, *Chemical*. The opener, "Top Hat," sets the tone with a tight funk groove, as Spooner's twangy electric carves a sinuous melody over a simmering organ, with the smooth-handling rhythm section surfing the pocket.

"After All" stretches into a chill, bluesy jam with an improvisational, borderline Grateful Dead feel. "Long Cold Grave" balances Steely Dan's surgical precision with the warm gospel vocals of guest singer Darcel Williams.

"Fireflies" is a nostalgic slice of Americana, with Spooner's vocals sketching iconic images of summers past, flavored with harmonica, organ and guest guitarist Bucky Baxtor's weeping pedal steel. Spooner's 910 shines on the tender acoustic tune "Shrouded," channeling the band America with sweet harmonies before slowly drifting into the ether. On the darker-themed "Read Them Their Rights," a purring bassline seethes with hushed menace as Spooner's vocals amplify the tension. The clouds part on "Blind Side," a reggae-tinged roots-rocker infused with organic jammy goodness that's built for extended play on stage. "Red and Green" lays down a deliciously dark 'n' dirty blues groove with thick, fuzzy edges. "Blink of an Eye" is quintessential Spooner, as he wraps his nimble vocals around a sweet groove flavored with woody upright bass. "Back and Forth" embraces world-folk with a Calypso feel and vocal harmonies that imagine Paul Simon teaming up with America. On the acoustic instrumental "T'ump," the band leans toward a jazz-style jam with rotating solos that spotlight the musicianship of each band member. "Spell" closes with just Spooner and his 910 alone in a big, live room, pure and unvarnished, with an intimate vocal over a sweetly fingerpicked figure.

As a whole, *Chemical* feels like a fully realized record, as the addition of McPherson's keyboard textures bring a noticeable dimension that helps evoke the mood of each song with greater emotional depth. All four musicians seem completely in tune with each other, and that's always a good time to hit the "record" button.

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Weird Milestone

Despite crafting many pop hits over the years, comedian-singer and master parodist "Weird Al" Yankovic achieved something in July that he had never managed to do in his 30-year career: score a No. 1 album on the Billboard 200 charts. The release of *Mandatory Fun* was accompanied by a rapid succession of clever and entertaining videos that became a viral sensation. Longtime guitarist **Jim West** used his **514ce** on some of the tracks, including "Mission Statement," a harmony-rich send-up of corporate buzzwords and double-speak that channels the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young classic "Carry On." West says he even used David Crosby's tuning for the song: EBEEBE.

All of America Likes the ES2

Gerry Beckley and **Dewey Bunnell** from the band **America** are longtime Taylor players and between the two of them own many of our guitars. After years of using other after-market pickups, Dewey Bunnell recently had us upgrade one of his Taylors to the Expression System® 2, and following a string of live shows this summer, everyone was happy with the sound, reports the band's guitar tech, Travis Jameson.

"We just got home from doing seven shows with the ES2, and we all think it sounds great," he shared. "The guitar sounded warmer through the amps, clear in the band's in-ear monitors, and the soundman liked it through the main speakers. So, a big thumbs-up from everyone in America."

Taylorspotting

Gritty blues-soul provocateurs **Vintage Trouble** have released an acoustic EP, *The Swing House Acoustic Sessions*, and the smoldering set features guitarist **Nalle Colt** on a new **810e**. The guitar is featured in their music video for the tune "Another Man's Words"... **Dolly Parton** has been performing with a customized **GS Mini** featuring a white body adorned with a decorative pattern of beads, with an equally adorned headstock... 19-year-old country artist **Mary Sarah** recently released her breakout album *Bridges*, a collection of duets with some of country music's superstars, including Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard and Vince Gill, and has been out and about with her older model **K24ce**... **Dan Weller** from the chart-topping act **Florida Georgia Line** has been playing his **712ce** on

www.taylorguitars.com

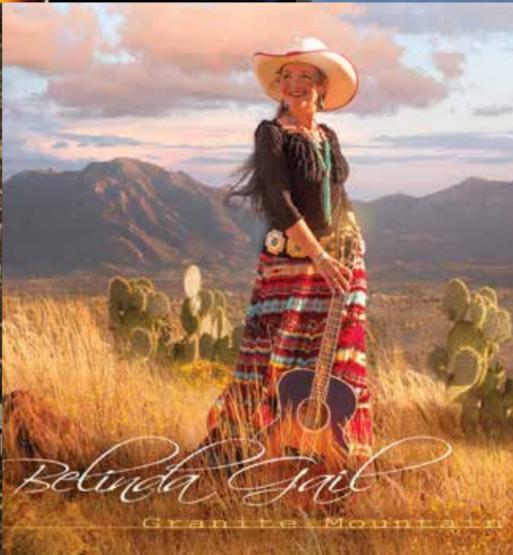
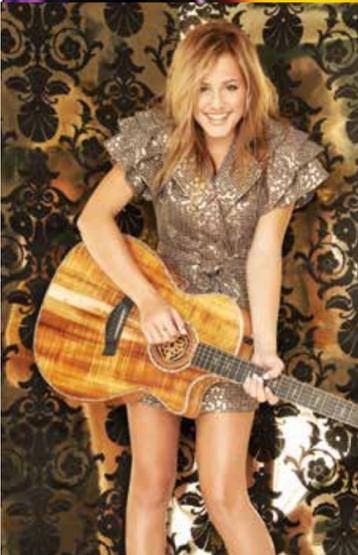
the band's current tour...Professional golfer, two-time PGA Tour winner, and Dave Matthews fan **Russell Henley** has been seen playing his **214ce-BLK** in between golf tournaments... In May, **Cassadee Pope**, winner of season three of *The Voice*, performed with her Taylor **710e** at a "Sounds Like Nashville" showcase event at the Gibson Guitar Studios in London.

Born in the USA

In August, Taylor Guitars was profiled in *USA Today* in recognition of the company's milestone 40th anniversary year. Writer **Jefferson Graham** interviewed Bob and Kurt, who reflected on their early struggles and eventual success, including a current No. 1 market share position in acoustic guitar sales, based on data from *MI Sales Trak*. Graham also highlighted luthier Andy Powers as Taylor's next-generation master builder and spoke with several Taylor dealers, who called attention to playability and crisp tone as signature features of a Taylor guitar.

Back in the Saddle

Despite the highly decorated music career of "America's Western Sweetheart," **Belinda Gail**, the Western music standout found herself emotionally daunted by the notion of recording her latest record, *Granite Mountain*. In 2008, the 7-time Western Music Association Female Performer of the Year lost her husband to a sudden heart attack, and in 2009 she lost her longtime recording/performing partner and dear friend, Curly Musgrave, with whom she had also won several awards as a duo. Though she initially felt adrift as she pushed on with her career, she says the experience forced her to elevate her songwriting and guitar-playing chops. She was also buoyed by the support of her many fans and talented friends in the Western music world. "It truly is an extended family," she says. "In a heartbeat, they are ready to jump in and help one another out." Gail's Kickstarter campaign to help fund the recording project quickly reached its goal, and she teamed up with award-winning Western music guitarist and producer **Rich O'Brien**, who used Gail's "Running Horses" sunburst **615e** on many of the tracks. ("He was so delighted with the sound that he tried to buy the guitar from me," Gail shares.) The album's tracks include a few penned by Gail, a few from her songwriting friends, and a few old-time classics, brought to life with a talented posse of Texas musicians and engineer/



Clockwise from top left: John Rzeznik with his 915ce (photo by Steve Parr); Jimmie Johnson with his customized GS Mini; Jason Spooner (photo by Cara Slifka); Chase Bryant at the Taylor factory; Belinda Gail's new release (cover photo by Steve Atkinson); Mary Sarah (photo by Russ Harrington)



vocal producer Aarom Meador.

Like much of the Western music genre, *Granite Mountain* is rich with story-songs that celebrate the spirit of ranching and cowboy life in the American West, from a deep connection to the land to the struggles and values of the past and present. Gail's warm and vibrant voice provides the perfect vessel to convey the dynamic emotional range of the songs, whether it's the title track's homage to the majestic mountain behind her home, the playful "Don't Talk to Jake," the mellow-swinging blues of the '40s chestnut "Along the Navajo Trail," or the anthemic "Cowgirl Creed," which calls to mind the shimmering voice of Linda Ronstadt. For pure vocal power, Gail's *a cappella* rendition of "Shenandoah" resonates with deep and reverent grace.

At our press deadline, *Granite Mountain* had just been nominated for Album of the Year by the Western Music Association, and two songs, "Along the Buffalo" and "He Sang for Me," were nominees for Song of the Year. Gail also was nominated for Female Performer and Entertainer of the Year. That's a fine return to form. belindagailsings.com

Doll Accessories

In mid-August we caught up with **Goo Goo Dolls** frontman **John Rzeznik** as the band was approaching the home stretch of their summer tour. The band had a full arsenal of Taylor acoustics in tow, no doubt to handle the mix of alternate tunings employed for their songs. "I think we have about

16 out with us," Rzeznik says, "and they sound great."

Rzeznik was a big fan of the original Expression System when it was first released, and earlier in the year we sent him a couple of new 800 Series loaners, an **814ce** and an **816ce**, featuring the Expression System® 2. We also upgraded his 2005 **914ce** to the ES2. The verdict?

"It's pretty amazing," he says. "There's a lot more gain. The guitars have a louder, more full-bodied feel to them. To me there's more wood in the tone, and they're a little bit more aggressive sounding. That was the first thing that was obvious. The tone was really, really sweet on the low and the high, which was pretty dramatic. You can dial in a serious amount of tone."

Rzeznik says he's been going back and forth between an Evil Twin tube

DI and a Vintech X73. "Sometimes I like the coloration that the X73 gives it, and sometimes I just like it straight through the Evil Twin because that's a really pure tube DI signal and really, really nice."

A lot of Rzeznik's Taylor acoustics are rosewood models, including several Jumbos, and he says he likes the blend of low end and sweetness in the tone. This past spring, the Goo Goo Dolls played a series of acoustic shows dubbed *The Otis Midnight Sessions Tour* with a young band from Los Angeles, Run River North. The band played an opening set and then joined the Goo Goo Dolls to form an 11-piece acoustic ensemble with extra acoustic guitars, percussion, vocals and violin. The fortified lineup enabled Rzeznik to dig deeper into the band's catalog and repaint some tracks the band hadn't

played in years with rich acoustic arrangements. Footage was shot with the intent of releasing a concert film in the near future.

As enjoyable as that expanded performance context is for him, Rzeznik notes that a good song will connect in its purist form.

"Most of the songs I write start out on acoustic guitar, because ultimately I like to be able to get it to where it can be stripped down just to the elements of an acoustic guitar and vocal," he says. "That's how I judge the writing: Is it good enough to hold up to that? You can play around in the studio and put a hundred tracks on something, but if it's just a vocal and a guitar and it's still a great song, then that's where it's at."

googoodolls.com

Time to Change Your Strings?

Here are some signs that it might be

By Rob Magargal

When was the last time you changed your guitar strings?

A lot of people don't like to. Believe me, I know. I've seen guitarists whose strings are funky and green where they pick and chord the notes, or who play their coated strings well beyond the point when the coating wears off. Put it this way: If your guitar sounds a lot better after putting fresh strings on, then you waited too long. Most of us wait too long.

So how often should you change your strings? Well, it depends on a variety of factors.

Not surprisingly, a big contributor is how much you play. If you play every day, you'll need to change your strings more often than someone who plays once a month. It's important to pay attention to the warning signs that your strings are starting to lose their liveliness. I've had many players ask me if something is wrong with their guitar because it won't stay in tune or intonate, even though a few months earlier it was just fine. The problem: dead strings. One person who brought me his guitar said he hadn't changed strings in two years and couldn't understand why it wouldn't tune properly. If you've experienced something similar, you might be able to save your guitar a trip to a service technician simply by changing your strings. You'd be surprised by how often that simple solution resolves a variety of issues. Think of it as the equivalent of rebooting your computer when you run into a problem.

Some people might not play frequently, but their guitar is always sitting out of its case, potentially exposed to dust. Those strings will lose their life span more quickly just from that exposure.

Here are some signs that your guitar might need new strings:

- Your guitar is in good shape in terms of action and set-up yet won't stay in tune
- The guitar is set up correctly yet will not intonate properly
- The strings are corroded
- Coated strings are fuzzy from extended play
- The guitar suffers from diminished sustain or dead notes

The Curse of Acid Fingers

It's always a good idea to wash your hands before playing guitar and to wipe down the strings afterward to reduce the grime factor and help preserve your string life. For some players, though, the pH levels of their finger perspiration contain an unusually high acid concentration, which in extreme scenarios can kill strings within a day or less (Bob Taylor calls it the Reverse Midas Touch. We had an employee at Taylor who was forbidden from touching the strings on newly set-up guitars for this reason.) Others might enjoy six months of healthy string life. For most people, the duration is somewhere in between.

I once worked with a customer who claimed his guitar was causing the strings to not only go dead, but to become completely corroded down to the core wire at every fret. He sent a photo of one of his strings as a reference for me. It was easy for me to see that the culprit was the acids and sweat from his skin. It didn't matter if he washed his hands beforehand. It also turned out that he'd been using uncoated bronze strings. He switched to a phosphor bronze, and the problem instantly went away. He has never had that problem since, and he plays his guitar every day. Our friends at Elixir® Strings point out that their coating protects both metals equally (since a player's finger acids won't come in direct contact with the raw wire) and that players with "acid hands" are among their biggest fans.

Clean the Fretboard

If you haven't changed your strings in a while, try this with your guitar: Run your finger under the B and G strings. You'll probably notice a couple of things. The first is grime. The second is

soft kinks where the strings touch the frets when pressed down. This means the strings are no longer straight and have been compromised. That's why you can't simply rely on whether the tops of your strings look and feel good. It's the underside of the strings that often take a beating. When you play the guitar, you push the strings against the fretboard and the frets. If the fretboard is dirty, the strings pick up that muck, and the tone can degrade more quickly. So if you replace your strings but don't clean the fretboard, you're only transferring that dirt and grime to the bottom of a new set of strings.

One of the premises of coated strings like Elixir® Strings (which we install on steel-string models at the Taylor factory) is that their coating seals the strings and protects them from the deadening effects of dirt and oil buildup between the windings. On uncoated strings, that fretboard muck can get into the crevices between the wraps of the wound strings, reducing their ability to vibrate properly. If the fretboard is clean to begin with, the strings will last even longer, even coated strings.

We recommend cleaning the fretboard with 0000 grade (very fine) steel wool. After you remove the old strings, cover the soundhole with a towel or low-tack tape like we use here at Taylor. You can rub hard to remove the dirt from the fretboard and polish the frets. Finish by rubbing lengthwise in the direction of the grain to remove the fine scratches created by the steel wool.

Next, if the fretboard looks dry, you might want to condition it with fretboard oil since the ebony is raw and unfinished. Most fretboard conditioning products incorporate either boiled linseed oil or mineral oil as their active ingredient. Apply a small amount to a rag and wipe it onto the fretboard (lengthwise in the direction of the grain), and then wipe away any excess. Then you're ready to re-string your guitar. Keep in mind that the technique you use will affect the ability of the strings to properly hold their tuning.

For more details on how to clean and restring your guitar, visit taylorguitars.com/support, where you can download our tech sheet and watch a video featuring yours truly. And then go do it. You'll be glad you did. **W&S**

Rob Magargal is Taylor's Service Network Manager.



The Craft

Precious Treats
Placing a high value on tonewoods can lead toward more sustainable consumption

“Save some for a rainy day.” How many times has this been uttered, and in how many contexts? It makes me think of being a kid, getting some special treat, and not wanting to consume it all at once so it could be savored. As a lumber lover, my special treat has always been wood and the instruments I can make from it. In fact, my love of wood may go further back than my love of guitars. My dad

recently pointed this out on the occasion of my toddler-age son's recent birthday. Like my wife, our son has a green thumb and really, really fancied a small-scale wheelbarrow and a bale of potting soil for his birthday. I was chuckling about his interests with my dad, who reminded me that for one of my own early childhood birthdays, I had asked, and then pleaded, for a big pine board from the local lumberyard. I had a little handsaw and desperately want-

ed a big, “real” slab of wood to cut up to supplement the small offcuts my dad would bring home from his work as a carpenter. My parents obliged, and for a good month, I sawed up that piece of wood. Not too fast, but slowly, to savor the fresh smell and texture of that plank as I stacked up the pieces I cut from it. You've got to save some for a rainy day.

Fast-forward to the present. Here I am as a guitar maker, still wanting to

save some wood for a rainy day so to speak. I hear the words “preservation,” “conservation” and “sustainability” daily in relation to all sorts of things. Here in the shop, it's usually about forests of guitar wood. As a relatively young guitar maker, I look forward to years of instrument making, and I hope those years of instrument making are spent working with wood. Our guitar-making team here at Taylor loves timber, and we want to be diligent and protect it so the forest resources not only stay healthy and thrive, but also so we can continue making guitars from these precious treats.

A few years ago I was reading a book about fish poaching and learned an interesting concept. A natural resource typically isn't protected until there is value assigned to it. Usually, value is assigned when commerce is done with that resource. Once there is calculable value for it, governing authorities will take notice and take steps to protect it. Whether the resource is a fishery or a forest, the concept is the same. If people see the value of timber coming from a forest, the forest becomes valuable to an accountant, and that forest is more likely to be protected. More than strict conservationism, which is itself a noble and wonderful pursuit, sustainable usage is often the most practical and effective way to ensure the future health of a resource.

Now, as a guitar maker, I've sampled lots of special woods. Tasmanian blackwood is a material I first encountered at a local exotic wood dealer. It was love at first sight. The first board I picked up said with a nearly audible voice, “I want to be a guitar.” I could see its beautiful color variegation, as warm as cinnamon, its straight, even grain, and feel its perfect density. It came back to the shop without ever leaving my hands

and turned into as wonderful a guitar as it first suggested. Blackwood and I have enjoyed a great relationship ever since. Over time, I became interested in learning where this wood came from and meeting its family. I wanted to know the condition of the forest where it grew. I soon discovered that blackwood had forest friends that also wanted to be made into guitars. My interest led me to meet Bob Mac Millan, another woodworker who had been charmed by Tasmanian woods. I learned more about his timber operation and how the wood was being harvested. In our first conversation, Bob said something like, “Ah, so you've fallen for the blackwood, too.... You should come down and have a walk out in the bush and take a look. I'm only on the other side of the world; it's not far.” Spoken with typical Aussie understatement.

Well, I've had a look. And I like what I see as a guitar maker and a timber fanatic. I see fantastic instrument wood being collected in a selective and low-impact way, and with a mind toward a healthy future forest. Although blackwood is a relatively unknown guitar wood in comparison to the familiar faces of India's rosewood, or central America's mahogany, or even Hawaii's koa, which is a cousin, this may have more to do with Tasmania's distance from large guitar makers. The familiar woods have a long history of importation for furniture making and have been available to guitar manufacturers for decades, so naturally they were used. Although blackwood hasn't been a regular attendee at the guitar party, it surely isn't for lack of good sound. This wood sounds better to me now than years ago when I first worked with it. In fact, I haven't heard a blackwood guitar yet that I didn't like. Sure, I'm biased because I like guitars, but I'm still a fan.

It's immensely rewarding to get to know the personality of a material like blackwood, or a newcomer like sassafras. As a builder, I notice the ways the wood's physical properties contribute to the musical values of volume, tonal color, sustain and balance of a finished instrument. There are common traits among woods to be sure, yet there are unique subtleties inherent to a particular timber. I often find myself lacking words precise enough to describe those traits, so I end up comparing them to other woods to provide a reliable reference. Yet this seems insufficient. It might also seem to imply that the wood is an inferior substitute, which is far from true. There is uniqueness that radiates musicality in many woods, both well and less known, which makes each board a unique treat that deserves to be valued and savored.

This season, we're thrilled to be making instruments with blackwood and sassafras from Tasmania, as well as blackwood's Hawaiian cousin, koa. We've been savoring the process of preparing and building these guitars with these precious woods. These instruments are a real treat for both the woodworker and the musician who can appreciate the aural and visual beauty of the wood. This treat seems to resonate even more sweetly when I know the forest is healthy and trees are harvested in a way that closely agrees with all that we as wood lovers value.

Taylor Notes



Snapshots from Cameroon

It's now been three years since Taylor and our partner, Madinter Trade, became co-owners of the Crelicam ebony mill in Cameroon. In that time, we've reported on progress made toward safeguarding ebony's future as well as our efforts to enrich the lives of our employees and the local community. Recently Crelicam added a pair of new achievements to its list. The first is a new structure to house our ebony milling and other factory operations. The structure offers a larger space for tools, machinery and wood storage, together with green upgrades such as natural light and ventilation. The second is the completion of a clean water project in which a team of Crelicam employees dug a well and plumbed an exterior faucet to provide clean water to the local community.



Clockwise from top left: A view of the new building structure; employees gather to march in a parade celebrating Cameroon's Fête du Travail, the country's Labor Day celebration; members of the Crelicam Women's Union celebrate International Women's Day wearing dresses made from this year's official commemorative fabric; members of the local community with a faucet that provides clean water; new safety gear for employees includes hard hats; Crelicam's recreational soccer team



Fond Farewells: Finish Expert Steve Baldwin and Director of International Sales Diane Magagna to Retire

Steve Baldwin grins as he recalls the extent of his interview with Bob Taylor for a job spraying finish back in 1983.

"Bob said, 'Do you know how to spray?' and I said, 'Yeah,'" Baldwin shares. "He said, 'Do you want to do finish here?' and I said, 'Yeah, okay.' He said, 'Can you start?' That was it."

More than 30 years later, it's safe to say it was a good fit.

Baldwin had learned to make banjos and spray nitrocellulose lacquer while working for luthier Greg Deering, a friend of Bob's going back to the American Dream days, although when Baldwin signed on at Taylor he'd been doing commercial refurbishing work.

"When I left my good-paying construction job to make guitars, people in my family questioned my sanity," he chuckles. "You're going to do *what*? What will that do for you?" Now we're a multi-million-dollar company, but back in the Lemon Grove days we were a multi-hundred-dollar company. I was there when Kurt was out on the floor making guitars. We were all struggling at the same time. It wasn't uncommon to work 12, 13, 14 hours."

Baldwin, Taylor's longtime Finish department manager and currently a senior finish consultant, will pass the 31-year mark at Taylor in October and retire at the end of the year. In those three decades, he has played a key role in the R&D and implementation of several major innovations in the finishing process, which have radically transformed it from a highly manual, labor-intensive approach to a sophisticated, technology-driven science. Gone are the days of hand-spraying nitro, watching guitars pile up during the 11-day air-curing cycle, and enduring the physical grind of buffing them by hand. These days we work with low-VOC polyester finishes, automated spraying, ultraviolet (UV) curing ovens, and robotic buffing cells.

"Our people nowadays have no idea how easy they have it," Steve reflects matter-of-factly. He says he reminds employees from time to time, but that the processes are so different now it doesn't fully register. Plus, he knows he sounds like a stereotypical old-timer grouching to the younger generation. "Back in the day when we had horse and buggy..." he deadpans, poking fun at himself.

Looking back on Taylor's pioneering developments in the realm of finish, Baldwin credits Bob Taylor as both a driving and supportive force when it came to pursuing new application techniques. He remembers Bob's return from a seminar on using ultraviolet (UV)

light to accelerate the curing process in 1991.

"Being the innovator that he is, he told us, 'This is where we're going, and I want to do what it takes for us to do UV-cured finishes on our guitars,'" Baldwin relays. "That started the ball rolling."

The challenge was that UV curing didn't yet exist for three-dimensional objects like a guitar, and finish manufacturers weren't initially eager to dial up the R&D for a small guitar company that wasn't a big-paying client. So Taylor had to do most of the legwork on its own. Bob hired a chemist to help with the development process.

"He and I worked together on getting the top coat, and we were also working to create a UV-curable filler paste," Baldwin says. "They were actually all Bob's ideas on how to turn a coating into a paste. He suggested that we use CAB-O-SIL," which is ground glass [silica], and it comes in different finenesses, like sandpaper grits. It was like powder or cotton candy that had no weight to it. But once you added it to the material and mixed it up it would turn the coating into a paste filler that we could apply. So the first UV-curable fillers that we used we created in-house."

The newly formulated finish top coat was polyester-based, and offered several advantages over nitrocellulose: it contained a lot fewer solvents, so there were environmental benefits in terms of reducing air emissions; it was more durable, enabling a thinner coating to be applied, which yielded tonal benefits; and it didn't yellow with age or fall prey to checking (small hairline cracks) with age and temperature fluctuation.

Eventually Taylor was able to enlist an outside manufacturer that had provided them with some of the materials to formulate the finish for them. It wasn't the last time that Taylor would bear the early load of R&D and then find a supplier to produce what they had developed. Fortunately, as Taylor grew into a more established company, suppliers became more willing partners in the development process.

Around the same time, Taylor also built its own UV curing oven in-house. Bob worked with tool and machine designer Matt Guzzetta, and the result was the ability to cure a coat of finish in about 30 seconds, which represented a huge breakthrough. The UV-curable finish application became part of the production process in 1995.

"We cut the time for finishing an acoustic guitar from about 11 days down to two days, and it was actually

more like hours," Baldwin says. "If we wanted to, we could finish a body from start to end in about 2-1/2 hours."

Robotic Buffing

Taylor's adoption of robotic buffing (2001) was driven not only by a desire for greater consistency, Baldwin says, but to relieve the physical stress of the manual buffing process.

"It's probably the most physically demanding job on the production floor," he explains. "We wanted to take that physicality out of there and automate it. One point worth noting is that when we went to robotics, we didn't replace any jobs. We kept everybody here. We just made their jobs a little bit easier."

Implementing the new technology in a production environment presented a steep learning curve for Baldwin because he had to learn how to program the system that controlled how the robot interfaced with a guitar and with the buffing wheels in a buffing cell. One of the biggest challenges was regulating the pressure against the buffing wheels. After initially using a first-generation robot and buffing cell that could only buff a portion of a guitar, Baldwin read about another company, Pinnacle Technologies, which had pressure-compliant buffing wheels.

"It means the wheels will move in and out to maintain the pressure that was programmed for them," Baldwin says. "And you can buff the top, back, sides, all the different body shapes, everything. It was great. The rest is history."

A Better Way to Spray

Several years later, Baldwin helped develop a new spray cell that also incorporated robotic technology. The

shortcoming of spraying manually had been a low transfer efficiency, which meant a lot of over-spraying and material waste, even with state-of-the-art spray guns. Baldwin, Matt Guzzetta and another machine and tool specialist at Taylor partnered with Pinnacle once again on the integration of the components. One of the technologies employed to increase the transfer efficiency was electrostatic attraction, which incorporates a rotary atomizer to spray. (The technology is used with powder coating.) In the end, the transfer efficiency was increased dramatically — from 15 percent manually to about 85 percent with the robotic/electrostatic method.

"The whole idea behind the spray cell, not only with the electrostatic, was to have conditions stabilized, so we began heating the paint, and we started controlling the temperature and the humidity in the cell," he says. "Maintaining those variables would also help us identify any issues if they came along," Baldwin explains. "That helped out tremendously."

Baldwin also was involved in Taylor's most recent advance in finish application, the thinner gloss finish for the redesigned 800 Series, which was reduced from an average thickness of 6 mils (.006 inch) to 3.5 mils.

"We've known for years that the thinner the finish the better the sound, so we've always tried to spray thinner," he says. "But now with the 3.5-mil finish, that brought on a whole new set of circumstances."

Those included having to modify the finish formulation to enable it to spray thinner and more evenly and refining some of the sanding techniques to accommodate the ultra-thin coating.

While it's hard work, pushing the envelope has become standard operating procedure for the finish team.

Of all the innovations he's helped bring to production, Baldwin says he's proudest of Taylor's UV-curable finish developments.

"We were one of the first instrument manufacturers in the world to be able to use UV like we use it today," he says. "Three-dimensional UV curing was basically non-existent. There was no book on how to UV-cure instrument material. We had to figure it out. Luckily, a lot of people helped us get to where we are today."

Baldwin says that in the wake of Taylor's developments, a lot of other manufacturers have consulted the company for advice, and it's been gratifying to share what they've learned.

"A lot more manufacturers out there are using similar methods because of what we've done," he says. "It's also good for the coating manufacturers because they can sell more coating. And if they have problems, or we have problems, there's someone else to talk with and compare notes."

Baldwin emphasizes that building good working relationships with suppliers has always been essential for Taylor.

"They're like co-partners in this," he says. "They've worked extremely closely with us on this stuff," he says. "They want to be a part of what we're doing here, and they've been willing to bend over backwards to help us. It's a great thing for the manufacturing industry to have these kinds of relationships. So that in itself, being able to build these relationships, has been quite gratifying over the years."

Those included having to modify the finish formulation to enable it to spray thinner and more evenly and refining some of the sanding techniques to accommodate the ultra-thin coating.

Diane Magagna



One could say the pulse of music is in Diane Magagna's blood. An East Coast native, Taylor's longtime Director of International Sales spent her summers as a young woman working at several family businesses off the coast of New Jersey on Long Beach Island, including the popular music club Le Garage Discotheque. She remembers meeting a couple of people who would go on to make an impact in the music industry: a young, unknown New Jersey artist named Bruce Springsteen, and the man who would eventually become her husband, David Magagna, an MI industry veteran.

After getting married, Diane began working with exported American-made music products including Gurian Guitars, Dobro, OME Banjos, Arthur E. Smith Banjos, GHS Strings and Bill Lawrence Pickups. She recalls first meeting Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug around 1975 or 1976 at the Winter NAMM Show at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, California. She was working in a small booth selling Gurian guitars.

"I looked in the doorway and saw these two guys schlepping their guitars," she remembers. "After talking for a while, Kurt remarked, 'I hope we get big enough to have someone sell our guitars. Maybe one day we will hire you.'"

From 1980-85, Magagna imported Lowden guitars from Ireland. In 1985, she made the move to the iconic Rickenbacker brand and served as a sales representative for the Northeastern United States and Eastern Canada. In 1992, at Summer NAMM in Atlantic City, New Jersey, she met TJ Baden, then Taylor's Vice President of Sales, who enlisted her to come on board with the urgent request, "We have 50 guitars in stock and we're panicked." She took the job as an independent representative for nine states in the northeastern United States and in 1998 moved to San Diego to join Taylor at its headquarters as the Director of International Sales, becoming Taylor's first female in a senior sales position and the first named female director for the company. In her position, she chartered the sales direction of the company into new territory, revising the roles of existing distributors and forging new relationships and distribution channels in various countries across the globe.

Through the years, Magagna estimates that she has spent more than 200 days on the road each year, but says she has enjoyed her work to the fullest.

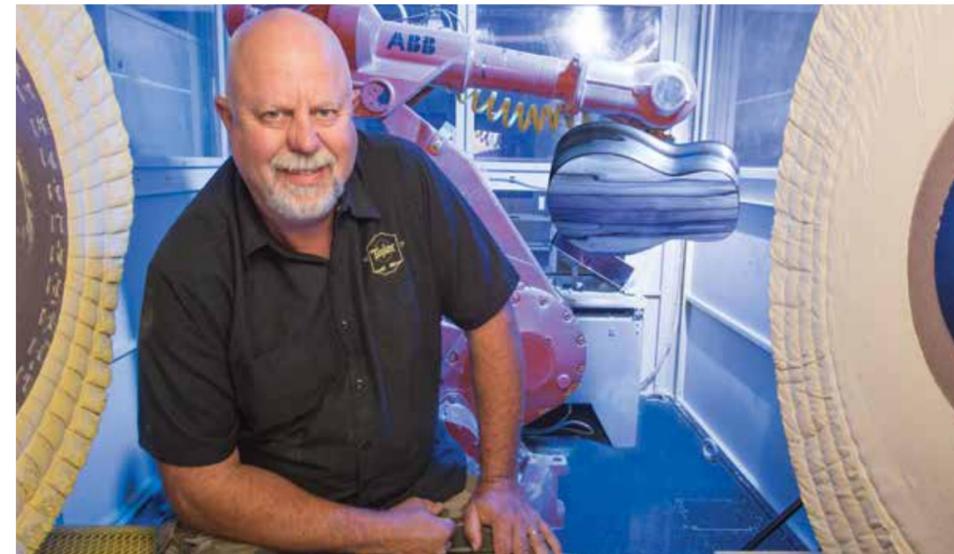
"I know I've been blessed with a great job when I don't have to set an alarm clock to be reminded to go to work," she reflects. "The greatest gifts Bob and Kurt give their employees, and gave to me, are the empowerment and trust to do my job."

As retirement approaches, she remains coy about her plans for the future. Nonetheless, her legacy of sharing the Taylor brand around the globe will be fondly remembered by her industry colleagues, many of whom have become friends, including Matt Umanov from Taylor dealer Matt Umanov Guitars in New York City, who has known Diane since the 1970s.

"There is no one finer, nor could there be, to grace us all with everything she represents in life," he says.

800 Series: Standard Model Options Now Available

As rave reviews of our new 800 Series continue to roll in, we're pleased to introduce more flexibility with several standard model options for the series. Among them are alternative tuner and nut width choices, Adirondack spruce bracing, a Florentine cutaway, and a clear pickguard or pickguard-free top. For more details, contact your local Taylor dealer.



Calendar

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

Our fall Road Show tour is in full swing, with many events scheduled throughout North America. In addition to our presentation on body shapes and tonewoods, our Taylor Road Show team will share tips on selecting the right guitar and demonstrate new product offerings such as the revoiced 800 Series, the Expression System® 2 pickup, and the new T5z. We'll also have a fresh mix of beautiful custom guitars to show. Below you'll find our latest event listings, with more on the way. We hope you can join us at a dealer location near you.



L-R: Kelly Hulme, Taylor's product manager for our Australian distributor Audio Products Group, with Taylor's Andy Lund during a Road Show at Big Music outside of Sydney

NORTH AMERICAN ROAD SHOWS

Hoover, AL

Thursday, October 9, 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(205) 824-6454

Huntsville, AL

Friday, October 10, 6 p.m.
The Fret Shop
(256) 430-4729

Jonesboro, AR

Monday, September 22, 6:30 p.m.
Back Beat Music
(870) 932-7529

Conway, AR

Tuesday, September 23, 6:30 p.m.
Jack's Music
(501) 327-8129

Longmont, CO

Tuesday, October 7, 7 p.m.
Guitars Etc.
(303) 776-8388

Englewood, CO

Wednesday, October 8, 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(303) 858-0858

Hamden, CT

Thursday, September 25, 6:30 p.m.
Brian's Guitars
(203) 287-9190

Clearwater, FL

Monday, September 22, 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(727) 791-7464

Lakeland, FL

Tuesday, September 23, 7 p.m.
Carlton Music Center
(863) 686-3179

Ocala, FL

Wednesday, September 24, 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center Ocala
(352) 861-4442

West Palm Beach, FL

Thursday, September 25, 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(561) 616-5601

Atlanta, GA

Tuesday, October 21, 6:30 p.m.
Sam Ash Music
(770) 818-0042

Wailuku, HI

Sunday, October 5, 3 p.m.
Bounty Music
(808) 871-1141

Hilo, HI

Wednesday, October 8, 7 p.m.
Hilo Guitars
(808) 935-4282

Honolulu, HI

Thursday, October 9, 7 p.m.
Island Guitars
(808) 591-2910

Idaho Falls, ID

Thursday, October 9, 7 p.m.
Chesbro Music
(208) 522-8691

Downers Grove, IL

Friday, November 14, 4 p.m. & 7 p.m.
Tobias Music
(630) 960-2455

Columbus, GA

Tuesday, October 7, 7 p.m.
Everything Musical
(706) 323-1809

Alpharetta, GA

Wednesday, October 8, 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center
(678) 893-0870

Bloomington, IN

Monday, November 17, 7 p.m.
Vance Music Center
(812) 339-0618

Avon, IN

Tuesday, November 18, 7 p.m.
IRC Music
(317) 271-1010

Monroe, LA

Friday, September 26, 6:30 p.m.
Matt's Music
(318) 387-3628

Kenner, LA

Monday, October 27, 6:30 p.m.
C&M Music
(504) 468-8688

Alexandria, LA

Tuesday, October 28, 6:30 p.m.
Red River Music
(318) 443-6365

Lafayette, LA

Wednesday, October 29, 6:30 p.m.
C&M Music
(337) 989-2838

Gonzales, LA

Thursday, October 30, 6:30 p.m.
Music Inc. of Louisiana
(225) 647-8681

Lexington, MA

Wednesday, October 29, 6:30 p.m.
The Music Emporium
(781) 860-0049

Wheaton, MD

Wednesday, November 19, 7 p.m.
Chuck Levin's Washington Music Center
(301) 946-8808

Westminster, MD

Thursday, November 20, 7 p.m.
Coffey Music
(410) 876-1045

Catonsville, MD

Friday, November 21, 7 p.m.
Appalachian Bluegrass Shoppe
(410) 744-1144

Fraser, MI

Tuesday, October 7, 7 p.m.
Huber & Breese Music
(586) 294-3950

Waterford, MI

Wednesday, October 8, 7 p.m.
Motor City Guitar
(248) 673-1900

Grand Rapids, MI

Thursday, October 9, 7:30 p.m.
Rainbow Music
(616) 774-0565

Ellisville, MO

Monday, October 20, 6:30 p.m.
Fazio's Frets & Friends Music
(636) 227-3573

Jefferson City, MO

Tuesday, October 21, 6:30 p.m.
Will West Music & Sound
(573) 635-7777

St. Joseph, MO

Wednesday, October 22, 7 p.m.
Lanham Music of St. Joseph
(816) 233-5142

Charlotte, NC

Thursday, October 23, 6:30 p.m.
Sam Ash Music
(704) 522-9253

Raleigh, NC

Friday, October 24, 6:30 p.m.
Sam Ash Music
(919) 855-9581

Dover, NH

Thursday, October 30, 6:30 p.m.
Ear Craft Music
(603) 749-3138

Asbury Park, NJ

Monday, November 10, 7 p.m.
Russo Asbury Park
(732) 455-8397

Phillipsburg, NJ

Wednesday, November 12, 7 p.m.
Dave Phillips Music and Sound
(908) 454-3313

Clifton Park, NY

Monday, September 22, 6:30 p.m.
Parkway Music
(518) 383-0300

Middletown, NY

Tuesday, September 23, 6:30 p.m.
Alto Music
(845) 692-6922

Horseheads, NY

Thursday, November 13, 7 p.m.
Robert M Sides Family Music Center
(607) 739-1559

Toledo, OH

Monday, October 6, 6:30 p.m.
Guitar Center Toledo
(419) 868-8779

Cincinnati, OH

Wednesday, November 19, 7 p.m.
Buddy Rogers Music
(513) 232-0777

Cambridge, OH

Thursday, November 20, 7 p.m.
Pavlov Music
(740) 432-2515

Kanata, ON

Thursday, October 23, 7 p.m.
Long and McQuade
(636) 227-3573

Keizer, OR

Monday, November 10, 7 p.m.
Uptown Music
(503) 393-4437

Portland, OR

Tuesday, November 11, 7 p.m.
Portland Music Company
(503) 228-8437

Carlisle, PA

Tuesday, November 11, 7 p.m.
JW Music
(717) 258-6765

Quebec City, QC

Thursday, October 20, 7 p.m.
Musique Gagne
(418) 525-8601

Victoriaville, QC

Tuesday, October 21, 7 p.m.
Gerald Musique
(819) 752-5912

Montreal, QC

Wednesday, October 22, 7 p.m.
Steve's Music
(514) 878-2216

Rapid City, SD

Friday, October 24, 7 p.m.
Haggerty's Music
(605) 348-6737

Madison, TN

Monday, October 20, 6:30 p.m.
Sam Ash Music
(615) 860-7475

Texarkana, TX

Wednesday, September 24, 6:30 p.m.
Texarkana Pro Sound
(903) 223-7799

Longview, TX

Thursday, September 25, 6:30 p.m.
Mundt Music
(903) 758-8872

Corpus Christi, TX

Tuesday, November 11, 6:30 p.m.
Sound Vibrations
(361) 884-8981

Austin, TX

Wednesday, November 12, 7 p.m.
Strait Music
(512) 476-6927

Houston, TX

Thursday, November 13, 7 p.m.
Great Southern Music
(281) 550-4545

Orem, UT

Friday, October 10, 6:30 p.m.
Best In Music
(801) 802-8022

Sterling, VA

Tuesday, November 18, 7:30 p.m.
Melodee Music
(703) 450-4667

Burlington, VT

Tuesday, October 28, 6:30 p.m.
Advance Music Center
(802) 863-8652

Olympia, WA

Wednesday, November 12, 7 p.m.
Music 6000
(360) 786-6000

Seattle, WA

Thursday, November 13, 7 p.m.
Dusty Strings Music Store & School
(206) 634-1662

Madison, WI

Monday, November 10, 6:30 p.m.
Madison Music
(608) 257-5877

Neenah, WI

Tuesday, November 11, 6:30 p.m.
Island Music
(920) 725-9000

U.S. FIND YOUR FIT EVENTS

Dania Beach, FL

Saturday, September 27, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
A1A Guitars and Art
(954) 925-7190

Jacksonville Beach, FL

Friday, December 5, 2 p.m. - 8 p.m.
George's Music
(904) 270-2220

Orange Park, FL

Saturday, December 6, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
George's Music
(904) 777-9393

Orlando, FL

Monday, December 8, 2 p.m. - 8 p.m.
George's Music
(407) 352-8000

West Palm Beach, FL

Saturday, December 9, 2 p.m. - 8 p.m.
George's Music
(561) 242-0345

Honolulu, HI

Friday, October 10, 2 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Island Guitars
(808) 591-2910

Nampa, ID

Saturday, October 11, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Dorsey Music
(208) 466-5681

Downers Grove, IL

Saturday, November 15, 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Tobias Music
(630) 960-2455

Worcester, MA

Saturday, October 11, 12 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Union Music
(508) 753-3702

814ce Named Best in Show at Summer NAMM

Members of Taylor's sales and marketing teams traveled to Nashville, Tennessee for the 2014 Summer NAMM Show, held July 17-19. The mid-year show is a fraction of the size of the winter trade event in Anaheim, California, yet over 400 exhibitors and 12,000 registered attendees make the trek to Music City to exhibit and see the latest gear and industry trends. The more casual atmosphere of the show allows Taylor's sales staff to spend quality time

with dealers, catch up on what is working well, and discuss what can be done better to enhance our partnerships.

Overwhelmingly the new 800 Series continued to receive the most attention and positive comments from dealers.

In fact, the 814ce was recognized at the popular "Best in Show" breakfast final day of the event. Led by *Music Inc.* magazine editor Frank Alkyer, dealers from across the nation highlight the best products, services and companies at the show. The panel, comprised of retail experts, selected products across

several categories, all of which stood out as a "must stock" item in the retail environment. Gabriel O'Brien from Larry's Music in Wooster, Ohio, chose the 814ce on the basis of Taylor's continuing drive to innovate.

"In search of better tone they've made a thinner-finish guitar and completely redesigned the bracing from the ground up," O'Brien noted. "It's really lively and has a great dynamic. I'm really knocked out by a company that, at the top of their game, will redesign their best-selling product for the sake of making it better."



A guest samples an 814ce in the Taylor showcase room at Summer NAMM

Case Study

BLUEGRASS REBIRTH

After arriving at Taylor's Factory Service Center out of the blue, a long-neglected Dreadnought finds a second home, and a happy new owner

By Eric Bacher

Ed. Note: Eric Bacher, a 26-year Taylor veteran and longtime final inspection specialist in our Final Assembly department, currently checks in many of the guitars that arrive at the Taylor factory for service.

On a whim she had packed the guitar in its case. Inside, the only real protection was some bubble wrap in the vacant areas. Packing tape tightly bound the outside of the case from top to bottom. No packing box was used or service ticket included. After securing the street address for Taylor Guitars to the lid, she shipped the case with its precious cargo from the arid Texas desert to California, leaving it up to chance.

Laura Lynch hadn't played the guitar, or any guitar, for many years. She gave it up when she moved to the Chihuahuan desert and changed her career. The guitar had lived with her in this dry climate, and over the years had gradually given up all of its moisture. It became so parched that it began to crack in many areas of the body, ultimately reaching a point when it became entirely unplayable.

Laura had a long history with this guitar, and although it was in disrepair, she loved it dearly. She maintained a deep respect for the quality of the instrument and its make. She enclosed a letter within the case containing these sentiments, also relating some of her own rich musical history in the country music scene (written in beautiful long-hand on vellum paper). Eight years of her life had been spent touring and making music, from playing on Dallas street corners to performing at the White House as a founding member of the Dixie Chicks. When I phoned her to discuss possible service options for the guitar, the conversation quickly led to the wonders of early bluegrass music, like the Carter Family and The Blue Sky Boys. I'm sure I mentioned my infatuation with the late Clarence White (I usually do, at least once a day). Our conversation meandered on, and soon it became quite apparent that she wasn't really interested in fixing the guitar for



herself, but was looking for a possible buyer. A buyer who was a flatpicker and a bluegrass lover.

The guitar is a 1987 Dan Cray Signature Model, or DCSM. This gui-

tar was introduced by Taylor Guitars in 1986, stemming from a friendship between Bob, Kurt and Dan. Dan was then, and continues to be, a world-renowned bluegrass guitarist and

educator, and this model was designed with his input and bluegrass music in mind. It boasts the classic combination of Sitka spruce and East Indian rosewood together in a Dreadnought

shape. The DCSM is braced with tall, narrow-top braces that were designed to bring out a strong treble response, and the oblong cutaway, while carefully designed to not lose much body mass, eases the reach to the upper register. The neck is narrower than most standard Taylors, measuring 1-11/16 inches at the nut, and the fingerboard inlays are hand-engraved mother-of-pearl diamonds. Some of the unique appointments of the early DCSMs are the cream-colored neck and body binding, the specific Kluson-style waffle-back tuning machines, the teardrop pick-guard, and the subtle aged toner on the spruce top. The peghead shape is also unique for this model – as a whole it is slightly narrower and elongated. This particular guitar has a wonderfully shaped thin-profile neck, and overall is balanced and lightweight.

As my conversation with Laura progressed, I realized that I was destined to at least try to purchase the guitar, and proceeded to make her an offer for a fair amount. She was thrilled and readily accepted. After having taken the chance of sending it, in one pleasant phone conversation she had succeeded in finding a new home for her beloved guitar. I, too, was thrilled, and once off the phone immediately showed the guitar to Tim Luranc in the Taylor repair shop. He's an original employee and was a guitar builder in the Lemon Grove shop at the time this DCSM was made. He took one look at the handwritten heel label and recognized his own writing; he was the original builder! I excitedly asked him if he would perform the body crack repairs, brace repairs, and set-up work on the guitar. He gladly agreed, and the result is what you see pictured here.

This flatpicker couldn't be happier. The first tune I played on the guitar was Clarence White's version of "Shady Grove." The clear tone of the guitar made every note count, leading the way into the sunlight. All I kept thinking was blue skies ahead! **W&S**

TaylorWare

CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS

Molly from our Marketing team, shown wearing our stylish new Ladies' Long Sleeve Peghead T, keeps our Visitor Center running smoothly. Ryan from the Finish department sports our stylish Chambray Shirt and handy new messenger bag.

NEW (far right)

Men's Long Sleeve Chambray Shirt
80/20 cotton/poly blend. Two chest pockets with embroidered Taylor logo above left pocket. Western back yoke. Slim fit. (Gray #3500; M-XXL)

NEW (above)

Ladies' Long Sleeve Peghead T
Tri-blend scoop neck. Preshrunk cotton/poly/rayon jersey. Slim fit. (Grey #4130; S-XXL, \$30.00)

NEW (above)

Taylor Messenger Bag
Coated cotton canvas with contrast stitching. Front flap features woven canvas Taylor label and magnetic front closure. Pockets include card slot, flap pocket, and large interior zipper pocket, plus three pen slots. Customized Taylor interior lining with padded laptop pocket and Velcro tab, plus additional interior pocket. Adjustable canvas/web strap. (Brown #61168, \$69.00)

NEW

Men's Long Sleeve Pick T
100% ringspun cotton. Fashion fit. (Cardinal Red #1730; S-XL, \$25.00; XXL-XXXL, \$27.00)

Rosette T

100% preshrunk cotton. Rosette design. Short sleeve. Standard fit. (Cardinal Red #1730; S-XL, \$25.00; XXL-XXXL, \$27.00)

SoCal T

50/50 poly/cotton blend. Ultra soft, worn-in feel. California peghead /74 design. Short sleeve. Slim fit. (Olive #1471; S-XL, \$30.00; XXL \$32.00)





Fleece Jacket

Wrap yourself in cozy warmth with our Sherpa-lined hooded fleece jacket. Boasting a hefty 14-ounce 80/20 cotton/polyester body with 100% polyester Sherpa lining, the jacket is stone-washed for a well-worn look and soft feel. Features a Taylor appliqué with an embroidered guitar across the chest, cuffs with thumbholes, front pockets, plus a secure media pocket with an interior hole for headphones. (Charcoal # 2891; S-XL, \$65; XXL, \$67.00)

Hoody Sweatshirt

50/50 cotton/poly blend with double-needle stitching. Doubled lined hood with drawstring. Orange Taylor logo and pouch pocket. Standard fit. (Sport Gray #2814; S-XL, \$39; XXL, \$42.00)



Men's Cap

Pro style chino twill cap with structured front and red/white round Taylor logo. Adjustable fabric strap with custom embossed metal peghead buckle closure. One size fits all. (Black #00378; \$25.00)



Military Embroidery Cap

Adjustable with Velcro closure – one size fits most. (Black #00402, \$22.00)



Richard from Finish rocks our new California Original T.

NEW

California Original T

100% combed cotton, featuring California flag/guitar design. Short sleeve. Fashion Fit. (Brown #1562; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL-XXXL, \$26.00)

Taylor Bar Stool

Padded swivel seat in black matte vinyl. 30" height. Assembly required. (#70200, \$99.00)



Logo T

100% preshrunk cotton. Standard Fit. (Olive #1670; S-XL, \$20.00; XXL-XXXL, \$22.00)



Baseball T

Vintage heather fine jersey. 60/40 combed cotton/poly blend. Gray body with navy 3/4 sleeve. Fashion fit. (Gray/Navy #2296; S-XL, \$34.00; XXL, \$36.00)



Aged Logo T

60/40 preshrunk poly/cotton. Short sleeve. Fashion fit. (Heather Dark Gray #1590; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL, \$26.00)



Reversible Beanie

Feel free to flip your lid anytime and look good inside and out. Embroidered Taylor round logo on one side, Taylor peghead on the other. 100% acrylic. One size fits all. (Black #00118, Brown #00119, \$20.00)



Abel (left) and Jon both work the night shift in our Finish department. Each debuts a separate black layer from our new collection.

NEW

Men's Fashion Fleece Sweatshirt

60/40 cotton/poly slub jersey full zip hooded sweatshirt. Two flap pockets with embroidered Taylor peghead on left chest. Standard fit. (Black #2896; S-XL, \$64.00; XXL, \$66.00)

NEW

Men's Guitar Stamp T

100% ringspun cotton. Short sleeve. Fashion fit. (Black #1444; S-XL, \$25.00; XXL-XXXL, \$27.00)



Glassware

Etched Glass

20 oz., featuring hand-etched round Taylor logo. (#70010, \$10.00)

Taylor Etched Peghead Mug

Ceramic, holds 15 oz. (Black #70005, \$15.00)

Taylor Mug

Glossy ceramic bistro mug featuring the round Taylor logo. Holds 15 oz. (Brown with cream interior, #70006, \$10.00)

Accessories



1) Digital Headstock Tuner

Clip-on chromatic tuner, back-lit LCD display. (#80920, \$29.00)



2) Taylor Polish Cloth 3-Pack

Microfiber with serrated edge. Features embossed Taylor logo. 11-1/2" x 9-1/2". 3-pack (Chestnut, Tan, Brown #80908, \$18.00); 3-pack (Black, Taupe, Charcoal #80909 [shown], \$18.00)



3) Taylor Guitar Polish

Spray-on cleaning polish that is easily and safely wiped away. 4 fl. oz. (#80901, \$12.00)



4) 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)



6) Travel Guitar Stand

Sapele, lightweight (less than 16 ounces) and ultra-portable. (#70198, \$59.00)

7) Elixir® HD Light Strings

The new custom-gauge set (.013, .017, .025, .032, .042, .053) was specially designed to bring bolder highs, fuller lows, and a balanced overall voice to our Grand Concert and Grand Auditorium models. Phosphor Bronze with NANOWEB® coating. (#89902, \$15.00)

8) Big Digit Hygro-Thermometer

Easy-to-read display shows temperature and humidity simultaneously. (#80358, \$44.99)

9) Mini Hygro-Thermometer

Compact digital unit works in a guitar case or in-room settings. Dimensions: 2" x 1.5" x .63" (51 x 38 x 16mm). (#80359, \$24.99)

10) Guitar Straps

Visit taylorguitars.com for a complete selection of Taylor guitar straps.



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1-800-494-9600
Visit taylorguitars.com/taylorware to see the full line.

Shady Maple

This special edition T5z Pro boasts a “two-tone” quilted maple top, a reference to the use of maple sets that incorporate a blend of heartwood and sapwood. Typically only maple’s sapwood is used for its prized blond complexion. In this case, the wood was cut in a way that utilizes more of the rare quilted figure and blends the slightly tawny color of the heartwood with the lighter sapwood. A custom-formulated molasses sunburst adds a deep, burnished bronze glow that amplifies the depth of figure and two-tone color dynamic. Gold hardware and a two-tone Spire inlay scheme complement the aesthetic. For availability, check with your local Taylor dealer.

