

Wood & Steel

Florentine Limiteds

Blackheart Sassafras
Quilted Sapele
Flamed Mahogany

Cedar Fever

Koa/Cedar GS
Rosewood/Cedar 314ce

Shaded Edgeburst 300s

12-string Dreadnought
Baritone + 12-Fret

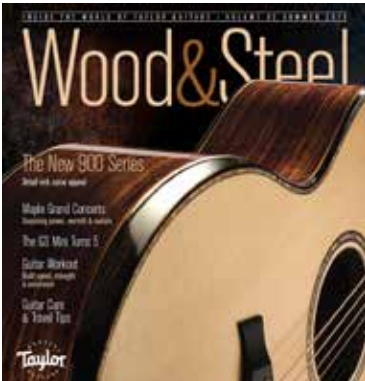
How Picks Affect Tone

QUALITY
Taylor
GUITARS

Dewey Bunnell & Gerry Beckley
45 YEARS OF

America

Letters



Maple Memories

I loved seeing Bob Taylor’s own 900 Series 12-string in the article “Fine Lines” from the latest *Wood&Steel*. I wanted to share what I know about the other first 900, the one Bob remembers selling to Robin Williamson. I believe that one is a 6-string. I’ve read in interviews that he found it at McCabe’s, which fits with Bob’s memories about it. On a personal note, I saw Robin Williamson play this guitar in the mid-1990s, when he was touring as a duo with John Renbourn. The maple struck my eye (along with Robin’s amazing, irreproducible technique), and the next thing I knew I had traded everything I could for a used 610 at my local shop. I have toured with that maple 6-string Dreadnought ever since. It’s been back to Taylor several times for refrets and other tour-related wear and tear but only sounds better and better with age.

I’ve never acquired a striking technique like Robin Williamson, but maybe somewhere along the line a younger musician saw my gorgeous 610 and traded everything he could for another maple Taylor, continuing the ripple from that first 900!

Damon Krukowski
Cambridge, MA

Blemished Beauty

First off, let me say that I don’t play guitar at all. However, I wanted to get my dad a guitar for Father’s Day. He has always worked hard to provide for our family and never buys nice things for himself. Because of his sacrifices, I am now in a very comfortable position in my life, and I wanted to get him a great gift to show him how much I appreciate him. The only things I know are that he has been playing for over 50 years, his favorite guitar is a Taylor (which model I don’t know), and he likes low action. With this “wealth” of information, I set off to find a guitar for him. I did massive research

on the web and went to the store (Sam Ash in Charlotte, North Carolina) and looked at the 416ce and asked if they had a 716ce. They did, brand-new, still in the shipping box from Taylor. It was beautiful, so I got it. When I got home I was very disappointed to see that the fingerboard was discolored. I called the store, and the salesman briefly told me about Bob Taylor and his effort to save ebony. I was a bit more encouraged, as I couldn’t imagine a blemished guitar leaving your factory. Then I watched the video Bob made regarding his efforts to save ebony even if it meant using blemished woods. Now not only will I not return it, I’m very proud to give my dad a guitar with two little white spots between the 11th and 14th frets. Maybe one day I’ll take up guitar playing, and if I do, it will only be on a Taylor.

Steve Bruno

Great Guitars, People

Today I visited the local Sam Ash store, and Taylor was there with [sales reps] Mike [Ausman] and Zach [Arntz] – great people. I brought my 2007 614ce with me. I had some static in the volume knob, and Zach checked it out. He changed the preamp for me and also changed a tuning knob and put on a new set of strings. It plays great, like brand-new. I like the new 614 but won’t part with the one I have. I also have a new 416ce that I love. And I have a 12-string 150e. I have my eye on an 814 but need to save for it. I just wanted you to know that your guys Zach and Mike represent your company very well. You should be proud to have good people working for you. I have always been treated well whenever I have dealt with your employees. Thanks for building such wonderful instruments.

Fred Olen
New Port Richey, FL

Custom Endorsement

It’s been a little over two years now since my 814c arrived, and it has far surpassed all my expectations. It really is an exquisite instrument, a joy to play, to hear, and to see. It’s opening up very well – of course, it gets played a lot – and the top is starting to take on an attractive, deeper hue. I had exercised some [custom] options: a short-scale neck, Gotoh 510 tuners, cutaway but no electronics, no pickguard, no strap button, and a three-piece back. Even so, you had it in my hands in under two months, which also surpassed my

expectations and industry standards by a long shot. After receiving it, I added some custom items: an ebony end-pin with abalone dot, fossilized walrus ivory bridge pins, a pre-ban West African hard ivory saddle and nut, and an ebony truss rod cover with abalone and mother-of-pearl inlay. The tonal depth, clarity and sustain are truly impressive. The guitar is a fingerpicker’s dream and a flatpicker’s delight. I was also pleasantly surprised by how well it projects, holding its own nicely when strummed with other instruments. Thank you so much for such a fine guitar.

To anyone contemplating standard model options or a fully custom Taylor, I’d say from my experience, “Go for it!” From planning all the way through to delivery and final touches, it was a completely enjoyable and educational experience. Playing an instrument that is uniquely your own and maturing along with it are pure pleasure, worth far more than every penny and the short wait.

Steve Mohr
Tiffin, OH

Bob’s Buying Advice

In your spring issue, Bob [Taylor] answered my question on cut orientation vs. tone with maple. His summary was, “If you like what you hear, just buy it.” I took him at his word and purchased a like-new 2013 616ce. Wow! It sounds great. I went further and purchased a 2015 416 as a backup and was amazed at how great it sounded. Now on Sunday morning I choose the one that goes with the songs we will play at church. I would venture to say the GS [body styles] will become your best sellers. Thanks, Bob!

Dave
West MI

Better Bluegrass with the GS Mini

I truly love my GS Mini Koa. It’s my favorite performing guitar. I can’t wait to afford one of your higher-end guitars. The Mini has increased my speed and accuracy in my bluegrass band, and enhanced my solo material so much. It’s such an incredible guitar at such an affordable price. Thank you so much for your contribution to music.

Richard Sharpless

Found His Fit

In 2011 I splurged and bought my first U.S.-made acoustic, a Taylor DN3. I followed that with the standard GS Mini, a mahogany GS Mini, and then the Holden Village GS Mini. I thought I was done buying Taylor guitars. After reading about the updated 600 Series,

I was curious to see and feel what all the hoopla was about. I really like the emphasis on the sustainability of maple and after meeting Andy Powers wanted to see what he did with the series. I attended my first Taylor Road Show in March. What a great way to learn about body shapes, woods, tones, etc. [Sales rep] Michael [Venezia] was so funny, and [product specialist] Corey Witt was fantastic. Before the presentation they answered questions and really made us feel welcome. During the presentation I found that the Grand Symphony shape gave me the feel and tone that best suited me. There were no 600 Series GS models available that night, but I got to try out the 614ce and 618ce – beautiful guitars inside and out with amazing tone. After a couple months of thinking about the models and styles, I ordered a 616. Simply put, this guitar is the most beautiful-sounding, -feeling and -looking guitar I’ve ever held. The finish is incredible. It looks like glass. It’s supposed to be super thin, but it looks like it’s a foot deep. When I strum a chord, the whole guitar resonates and sounds like a choir singing. My wife, who doesn’t normally notice my guitars, even commented on it. I’ve had it now for about two weeks, and I think I’ve played it almost every day. It’s the first guitar I have that, when I put it in its case (which, by the way, is incredible too), I can’t wait to get it back out and play it again. Thank you for your focus on the environment and for making the most beautiful guitars out there.

Mike Freed
Thompsonville, IL

Proud Former, Future Owner

As a former Taylor Grand Auditorium owner (I know that sounds weird, but there is a reason), nothing has filled me with more pride over the last few years than to find a kindred spirit who is truly “walking the talk” when it comes to sustainable tonewoods.

From your efforts to reforest Sitka spruce to saving wasted ebony in Africa to looking forward to that most sustainable of tonewoods, maple, you are becoming superheroes in the world of environmental responsibility, particularly in enriching the various regions of the world where precious woods were previously wasted in lieu of the perfect slice. Like protecting species of animals that would otherwise be trophies on the walls of the elite, you have shown locals a path to make an honest income from being responsible for other species of trees.

I had to sell my Grand Auditorium about 12 years ago when I became hit with not only rheumatoid arthritis, but a connective tissue disorder (ankylosing spondylitis), which makes me “relearn”

guitar about every six weeks as my now stiffening fingers lose their collective “memory.”

Now my focus is solely on tone, not on speed or intricate chords. I do not seek sympathy, but want you to know that I encourage students of mine, particularly children and disabled vets, to buy any version of your guitar they can afford with tone as the basis of their skill set. With vets and others who suffer from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), striking the right chord as in DADGAD tuning [elicits] a change in their focus and a release from what they were dwelling on. This effect sometimes lasts hours, and I’ve received many thanks from those who suffer from this malady. (Curiously, other tunings don’t provide the faster satisfaction of being able to play more intricate chords more simply.)

I have already requested a Taylor for my 60th birthday and am saving pennies here and there. Thanks to your dedication, science and innovation, I am thoroughly excited by this prospect and will hang onto this guitar with my sore hands and feet if anyone tries to pry it away.

Thank you for being the industry standard for tone, playability and, now even more than before, innovation.

Joseph Rattledge
New Bern, NC

Moving Up the Line

It began with the purchase of a GS Mini a few years back. This was a great-sounding smaller guitar. However, having been exposed to the Taylor sound, I wanted a larger guitar from the regular line and traded up to a 214e. I could not believe the clarity and great feel. After a couple of years, I decided I needed a solid wood model and traded up to a 414ce with the new Expression System® 2. Since this recent purchase, I have been unable to put the guitar down. I have been playing for over 50 years and never have heard such a rich tone, especially through an amp. Last night my wife came downstairs thinking she had left the stereo on (it sounded that good), but it was only me playing. Now I think I’m done, as the 414ce is the perfect instrument for me.

Joey Steiner
University Heights, OH

We’d like to hear from you

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



ON THE COVER

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COVER PHOTO (L-R): DEWEY BUNNELL AND GERRY BECKLEY ON STAGE AT THE FESTIVAL DU BOUT DU MONDE IN BRITTANY, FRANCE IN AUGUST OF 2014. PHOTO BY JEAN-MICHEL SOTTO



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Artistic Integrity

It's great to read Jim Kirlin's interview with Gerry Beckley and Dewey Bunnell in this issue. Gerry and Dewey are among that special group of artists who discovered Taylor guitars in the early 1990s, when Taylor was a small company known mainly to "insiders." As our brand was little known at the time, artists who chose Taylor guitars did so because the guitars worked. They were reliable, stayed in tune, sounded great, were easy to play, and worked well for live performances. In early 1977, just a few years into business, we were faced with our first artist relations decision. An artist in L.A. for the Grammy Awards discovered a Taylor guitar in a music

decision formed the basis of our artist relations philosophy. We want artists to use Taylors because our guitars serve their artistic needs better than anything else. For that reason, we've never believed in soliciting artists to play our guitars. We want artists to use the instruments that best suit their needs, and hopefully they choose a Taylor. We don't want to use guitars as currency, in effect exchanging instruments for the exposure of being played publicly. And thankfully, the guitar business is a small industry, unlike sportswear, so it's very uncommon for an artist to be paid endorsement money for using a particular brand of instrument!

We don't have exclusive endorsement agreements with any artists. We believe an artist should use whatever instruments inspire them, and our job is to design and make instruments that do that.

store and offered to endorse it in exchange for the guitar. After Bob and I discussed it, we decided that not only could we not afford to give a guitar away, but we felt an artist should like the guitar enough to buy it. That

We don't always make the instrument that someone has in mind, however. We've been known to work with an artist to develop an instrument, or even make a one-off guitar to help them find the instrument they're looking for.

Hopefully we succeed, and the artist is inspired by and uses the guitar. We've even worked with artists who are associated with other guitar brands and who approached us to explore design ideas. We've been willing to help them, even though we know the artist is unlikely to ever publicly play the guitar we make them. We're willing to invest in the artist and in developing new instruments without knowing what we'll get in return.

We don't have exclusive endorsement agreements with any artists. We believe an artist should use whatever instruments inspire them, and our job is to design and make instruments that do that. In fact, many artists associated publicly with other guitar brands are also Taylor players, and use our guitars for writing, scoring movies, or recording.

Over the past 41 years, our approach to artist relations has served us well. We do quality business that we believe in, and we've retained our values. We haven't had to shift course or compromise our integrity. We've been rewarded with growth and prosperity, and great relationships. A special thank-you goes out to those artists who have continued working with us throughout the years, and especially to Gerry and Dewey for their many years of loyalty.

— Kurt Listug, CEO

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The Rhythm of Growth

Often I try to write something profound in my column, but today I just want to share news. There's so much going on that it's hard for me to focus on one particular item this issue. Where should I start?

Our production is at an all-time high, not only for us but for what anyone has ever done in the realm of what I'd want to describe as good guitars. Now, one reason Taylor has such huge market share is because Kurt and I have always expanded our production. We've done that regardless of sales. I've always said that we cannot have market share unless we make the guitars. I'm production-driven, with quality being the key component to higher production. Higher quality equals less struggle and better production.

In the past when sales were higher than production, we always viewed it as a success. Nowadays, though, we view it as a bit of a problem because part of what we stand for is availability, so when sales are high and demand is climbing and we cannot keep up, we fail on our promise to deliver. What a balancing act!

Demand for layered guitars from our factory in Tecate, Baja California, Mexico, is ridiculously high. So we built a new factory that is probably the nicest guitar factory in the world. But it's taking this whole year to move into it, as we work from the old and the new buildings simultaneously. Our produc-

tion is capped for this year even though the quantity is very high.

The GS Mini has become so popular that we're considering a stand-alone factory for just this model. Steve McMinn, who cuts our spruce tops, calls it "The Volks-Guitar" (The People's Guitar) because of its widespread acceptance. Filling demand for that is a great opportunity. Of course, in order to do this, we once again need better methods. Right now, it's pretty much world-class guitar building at Taylor Guitars, but it needs to be better, so we're adding some great talent to our roster of engineers, machinists and craftspeople. We enjoy it to no end.

Meanwhile, ebony has gotten into my veins. Not the wood as much as the resource, the forest it comes from, the people, and the country. That's not saying I don't love the wood, because I do, but it's the social and ecological aspects that cause me to be so passionate. It's amazing how this wood has opened doors for greater work. We are beginning to study its propagation and methods of reforestation. Little is known about it, and little has been done in the past to grow it. So we are gathering what is known, and we're planting seeds to gain our own experience. It's amazing what I've learned so far, like, I never knew that ebony cannot grow under its mother tree. It dies there. This is why birds, monkeys, elephants and all other forest animals are important.

They take seeds and move them to where they have a chance to grow. People are going to have to do that for the trees unless people stop killing the animals. You can see how it's all inter-related.

Guitar makers are seeing what we're doing with ebony, especially using the ebony that's not totally black, that has streaks of brown or even white in it. After a couple years, many are now actually calling me and saying they want to get in on this. They want to be part of the solution rather than the problem – in this case, the problem being the habit of only using the pure black part of the tree and letting the rest go to waste. I find that very rewarding, as I'm able to share ideas with builders who then begin to change how they build to reflect the reality of the rainforest. I think you'll start seeing more ebony with colorful patterns on fingerboards of guitars other than Taylor over the next few years.

I have limited space in my column so I'll end with this great story. You won't believe it, but it's true. Here you'll see a photo of Henriette posing with ebony seedlings that we grew in our nursery at our factory in Yaoundé. She's very happy about this, as are other Cameroonians. You see, she supplies us with ebony. This woman knows how to rock it! She runs a crew of people from her local villages who prospect and find the trees that become the fin-

gerboards of your guitars, all under our special permits and restrictions.

We needed to contact her recently because the U.S. Embassy wanted to interview her on camera. She works where there's no communication. So here's how it's done. We make a phone call to the town of Bertoua, a six-hour car drive away. The message is written down, and they send out a guy on a moto, a little motorcycle. He rides the moto for two or three hours until he reaches the end of where a moto can go quickly. Then, for the next distance, and it can be up to 100 miles, they send the message out into the forest using jungle drums. Yes, you heard me right. Jungle drums. They beat out the message, and a local person interprets it for her. She answers, and they drum it back to the rider of the moto, who drives back to Bertoua and calls us to say that she got the message and will come in.

When they say the bushes have ears, I never thought of this! It's an amazing world we live in.

— Bob Taylor, President



2015 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 12
(Taylor Guitars Anniversary)

November 26-27
(Thanksgiving Holiday)

Monday, December 21 through Friday, January 1
(Company Vacation)



Balancing Flash with subtlety

Blazing chops may turn heads, but nuanced playing will make a more profound musical statement

By Shawn Persinger

We humans are often drawn to things flashy and bold. We like explosions, from fireworks to Hollywood action films to thunderous E power chords. We like feats of strength, from world record weightlifting to indomitable monster trucks to mighty bends of two whole steps on the G string. And we like speed, from Formula One race cars to Olympic sprinters to a torrent of thirty-second notes across the fretboard. Luckily, most of us also appreciate the finer shades of subtlety: the delicate bouquet of a fine wine, the thin brownish tint of a Rembrandt brush-stroke, and the understated majesty of one of Jeff Beck’s whammy bar sighs. Yet all too often, guitarists focus on the want for more flash in their playing rather than on the beauty of nuance. Why is this? I think the answer is self-evident: because flash looks and sounds cool! It also allows others to believe, “That guy is good.” But is flash good? I think it certainly has its place. But without the balance of nuance, flashy playing runs the risk of coming across as showboating and can either leave listeners feeling fatigued or like something is missing. If so, how can one artfully reconcile the contrasting, yet complementary, expressions of flash and subtlety?

Contrasts in Harmony
I believe the best approach to becoming a fully realized guitarist is to practice a little bit of everything, from flashy to subtle. This goes for genres as well as stylistic and technical specifics. While I do think that there is much to be said for being a specialist, the best of that ilk — B.B. King, blues; Paco de Lucía, flamenco; The Beach Boys, Beach Boys music — all displayed hints of other influences like gospel, classical and jazz, respectively.

You’ll also find that each of the aforementioned artists deftly balances flash and subtlety. For example, B.B. King’s legendary hummingbird vibrato affects only one note at a time, yet it’s one of the flashiest and most recognizable sounds (and visuals) in the history of guitar (it’s also almost impossible to reproduce). Paco de Lucía was known for his blindingly fast and fluid single-note improvisations, but he could also provide thoughtful, rhythmically challenging accompanimental music for flamenco dancers. And while some listeners might perceive the distinctive Beach Boys vocal harmonies as little more than a cliché surf sound, a closer listen reveals some of the most virtuosic performances to be found in the entire vocal repertoire.

Additionally, many of the world’s most notable and shall we say “mature”

musicians have left a legacy that illustrates the inclination, and aspiration, to find strength through the balance of flash and subtlety. One only needs to think of Eric Clapton’s overzealous (though admittedly awesome) playing with Cream contrasted with his understated *Unplugged* performance. Or consider Sting’s early fast and in-your-face performances with The Police compared to his *Into The Labyrinth* recording for voice and lute featuring the music of Renaissance composer John Dowland. But does this just mean the older we get the slower we play? Heck no! Leo Kottke still tears into “Vaseline Machine Gun” in his 60s as fervently as he did when he was in his 20s, but now, by perfecting a balance, the performance is more refined. So, how can you do the same?

Paco de Lucía was known for his blindingly fast and fluid single-note improvisations, but he could also provide thoughtful, rhythmically challenging accompanimental music for flamenco dancers.

Cultivating a Balance
Finding your personal balance may be as basic as feeling comfortable both strumming chords to a Beatles song and playing the solo (I would suggest “I’ve Just Seen a Face” or “And I Love Her” as good places to start for both chords and solo). A more extreme juxtaposition could involve performing a range of subtle and flashy variations on a simple melody. Such an exercise is an excellent way of demonstrating both refined taste and audacious exhibitionism that highlights the benefits of both.

Our musical examples are all variations on “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” — an exercise practiced by such notables as W.A. Mozart and violinist/music instructor Shinichi Suzuki (creator of the Suzuki method of teaching music). The examples are limited to the A section melody, but with some diligence you should be able to figure out the B section on your own. Examples 1 and 2 demonstrate two extremes of subtlety and flash. In example 1 we’ve added simple grace notes (the term alone implies elegance and nuance) to the melody (note that you can play these with slides and/or hammer-ons). Example 2, on the other hand, presents an elaborate variation called a “turn.” A “turn” is frequently performed in both Baroque violin and Irish fiddle music but, for some reason,

has regrettably not found its way into the guitarist’s vocabulary. With the “turn,” we now sound ornamental notes, found above and below our primary melodic note, using a combination of hammer-ons, pull-offs, and slides. Examples 1 and 2 are archetypes of how you can take any idea and make it as easy or intricate as you’d like. Regarding the remaining three variations, I’ll leave readers to decide the balance of subtle to flashy, as I find them all to be relatively challenging when compared to example 1. Example 3 demonstrates the melody using octaves, not unlike the way Wes Montgomery or Django Reinhardt might have played it. Example 4 is an excellent bending exercise that will really test your ability to bend to pitch. I recommend this variation for electric guitar, as

Flash vs. Subtlety

Ex. 1

Ex. 2

Ex. 3

Ex. 4

Ex. 5

Ex. 6

At the very least, developing some diversity provides you with more expressive choices to build dramatic moods and give your playing an arching trajectory it might not otherwise have. It broadens your musical palette and can help you avoid (or escape) a musical rut. I don’t think a musician should ever discount an approach without at least giving it a go. Think of it like taking an unexplored road on a drive you’ve done many times

before. Whether it’s a shortcut that gets you to your destination faster or a scenic route that moves a little slower but is much prettier, each has its advantages, and these unfamiliar ways will keep you alert. And if you don’t like this new thoroughfare, you can always go back to your old one and switch on the cruise control. **W&S**

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)

GUITAR SPOTLIGHT:
THE PRESENTATION SERIES

SPLENDID
BLEND

Richly variegated Macassar ebony replaces cocobolo on our most elaborately appointed series

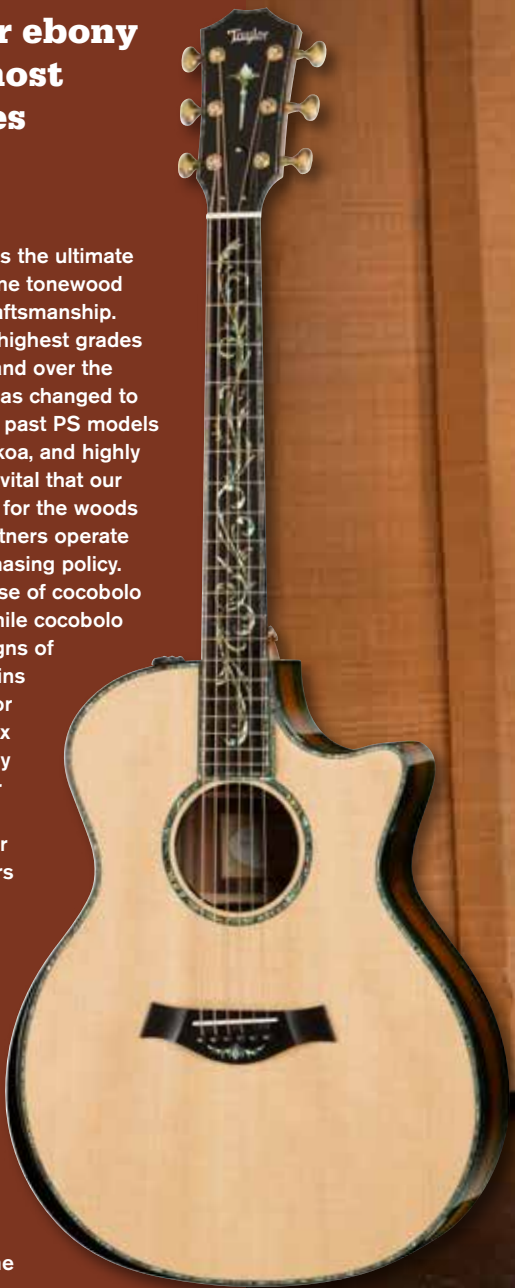
In many ways, our Presentation Series epitomizes the ultimate Taylor acoustic guitar: a convergence of sublime tonewood beauty, detail-rich aesthetics, and supreme craftsmanship. Because the series has traditionally showcased our highest grades of rare and exotic wood, the supply is often limited, and over the years the wood we've featured for backs and sides has changed to reflect availability. Distinguished tonewood alumni of past PS models include Brazilian rosewood, master-grade Hawaiian koa, and highly figured maple. Of course, more than ever before, it's vital that our sourcing efforts support a healthy long-term outlook for the woods we consume, which is why Taylor and our supply partners operate within the guidelines of our responsible timber purchasing policy.

That's also why we chose to transition from the use of cocobolo to Macassar ebony starting in August of this year. While cocobolo isn't considered endangered, we've started to see signs of it becoming more vulnerable to exploitation. (It remains legal to possess and has no existing ban on import or export of the wood. It is listed on the CITES Appendix II as an at-risk species.) Our existing cocobolo supply will be reserved for appointment options through our Custom program.

That brings us to our stunning supply of Macassar ebony, whose cosmetic virtues include luscious layers of chocolate-and-caramel variegation. In addition to Macassar back and sides, models will also feature a matching Macassar backstrap. All other Presentation Series appointments will remain the same.

Tonally, as an ebony species Macassar's density produces a clear, loud and focused sound while also being fairly overtone-heavy. It yields a strong bass and lower mids, clear highs, and, like rosewood, a slightly scooped midrange. The overtone richness will nicely complement slower and softer playing, including fingerstyle, in the way the notes pleasantly linger on the ear, yet Macassar can also handle more aggressive strumming, making it a bit of a tonal chameleon depending on the technique of the player.

Presentation Series model offerings include all five Taylor body styles, plus a 12-Fret Grand Concert and 12-string Grand Symphony. For complete specifications, visit taylorguitars.com.



L-R: Front of a PS14ce; Backs of a PS18e and PS14ce

Ask Bob

Cutting layered wood, nut width, and ebony ethics

I'm very interested in wood, and your explanations are always very precise. So here is my concern: Laminated wood is produced and used in order to save cost and material. It is made out of several thin layers of wood assembled together. How are these layers produced? I imagine that it is not sawn; otherwise there would be even more loss of material.

Christophe Ollivier
France

Good question, Chris, and you're right, if the layers were sawn it would be a disaster in terms of material usage because the sawdust would take away more wood than it leaves. But they're sliced, on a colossal knife that's hard to imagine how big it is. But you've probably seen how paper money is stacked and sliced, so imagine something like that. By doing it this way there is no sawdust, and the yield is 40 slices per inch rather than four pieces per inch for solid wood guitars.

I notice that my 214ce-K DLX has a 1-11/16-inch nut width, while the 314 has a 1-3/4-inch nut width. Why the difference between the models? How should one decide on neck widths — is it more about finger size or playing style?

Gordon Stein

Gordon, I guess a little steel-string guitar history is in order. Back when I first started making guitars in the '70s, the standard, most common width for guitar necks was 1-11/16 inches (43 mm). Nearly all acoustics were that width, and they were considered the wide ones, because there was also a large contingent of 1-5/8-inch (41.2 mm) guitars on the market. All our guitars were 1-11/16-inch. Over the years we started catering more and more to fingerstyle players and making as an option the 1-3/4-inch (44.5 mm), and many players liked that because so many were playing fingerstyle. Eventually we adopted that as our standard width, even though it was considered "wide" by industry stan-

dards. But Taylor guitars are popular and we set trends, and so others started doing that as well. When we made the Baby Taylor, we knew it would be bought by beginners and decided to make what was once the standard, 1-11/16 inches. As the models of layered wood guitars developed, like the 100 Series, 200 Series, and GS Mini, we kept that size, because most guitars in the world still are probably closer to that, being just a little smaller. We didn't want to force people into the wider neck knowing that these series are often bought by people with less playing experience. Some folks look at them as being narrow, but historically speaking, they're actually not.

I recently attended a Taylor Road Show, where I was lucky to hear and purchase a custom all-walnut 12-fret Grand Concert. It's a beautiful, warm-sounding guitar and was exactly the tone I was looking for. Having small hands, I found it to be much easier to fret chords on this [short-scale] guitar versus a longer scale (25.5-inch) guitar. My question concerns the effect of the number of clear frets on the distance between frets and whether a 12-fret or 14-fret on a short-scale guitar would be better with someone like me who has relatively small hands. Do you ever carry short-scale and/or 12-fret for other body sizes, and would the effect be similar (more midrange punch)? Personally, I would love an all-koa (or walnut) Grand Auditorium short-scale with possibly 12 frets, but I'm hesitant for a one-off custom without knowing how the scale length and number of frets would change the tone.

Geoff Yuen
Durham, NC

Geoff, the short-scale is much easier for some to play because of two things: the shorter space between frets, which is very small but perceivable, and the lower string tension. The tension is lower because a shorter string, in essence, needs to be tuned

down to hit the pitch. Those also affect tone in a good way. When the guitar body also joins at the 12th fret, the first fret is closer to you, so the guitar is more compact. It also places the bridge more in the belly of the top, which impacts the tone. You can expect the same family of changes to the tone that you hear in your guitar to carry through to a Grand Auditorium, exactly how you've described them.

A recent ad from Stewart-MacDonald talked about Zero Glide nuts. I can remember that, some years ago, several guitars were equipped with zero frets. This always seemed like a great idea, since the string height with a conventional nut relies on the nut grooves being made very accurately, and a zero fret eliminates that issue. Also, I expect that radical changes in string gauge might require changes to the nut. Although I never play using a capo (I can never remember what key I am in), I have found that the "open" strings when using a capo seem to ring a little brighter than they do without the capo. Also, the action seems slightly better. However, having carved up several guitars over the years with varying results, I am not about to pry the nut out of my lovely 614ce and replace it with a zero fret nut. I have to believe that you folks use a conventional nut for good reasons. I just can't imagine what they could be. Can you tell me why you choose not to use a zero nut system?

John Telling
Sacramento, CA

John, a zero fret makes sense for all the reasons you said. But there's also some tradition to guitar building. I won't make a huge case that a normal nut is much better. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. But the zero fret is at least ugly to many of us guitar makers, and also makes us feel like we're cheating. We like traditional nuts better. That may sound funny coming from the guy who bolts on necks,



Why don't acoustic guitars have adjustable bridges? I see them on electric guitars, and it seems to me that an adjustable bridge on an acoustic would allow for changing the string height to taste simply by loosening the strings and adjusting the bridge accordingly. While on the same topic, locking tuners on acoustics are a seldom sight as well. Is there a specific reason why adjustable bridges and locking tuners on acoustics are uncommon?

Mark Von Till
Green Brook, NJ

Mark, it has to do with sound on the bridge. The best sound is produced with a lightweight saddle fit into a tight slot in a wooden bridge. A metal set of screws and bolts just won't do. As for locking tuners, they were invented for dive-bombing with the whammy bar on an electric guitar. They ended up becoming standard tuners on many electrics after that, but acoustics are a different thing, a different aesthetic, and we don't see the need for more hardware.

but remember, my neck is not different in its appearance or craftsmanship from a traditional dovetail neck. Aesthetics play an important role in our decisions, and a zero nut fails the aesthetic test. That's pretty much the answer, plain and simply put.

more and more of the cakes you are making result in the overall increased use of ebony. The true bottom line is this: The more you promote and use ebony, the more trees you cut.

Peter H.D. McKee
Seattle, WA

I am a great admirer of your guitars. My wife is also a proud owner of your wonderful GS Mini, which I gave her for our 30th wedding anniversary four years ago and which she even lets me play on occasion. Recently, I have read with interest in Wood&Steel of your efforts to address the decimation of the ebony tree worldwide due to many causes, including, importantly, your industry — instrument makers. Your video discussion of this topic was candid in acknowledging the key role the demand for ebony linked to musical instruments has played in this tragic ecological disaster. What I don't understand is how your continued efforts to expand the use of ebony in your instruments fits with your professed desires to somehow preserve the last legal source of ebony, in Cameroon.

Two examples from the summer 2015 edition of Wood&Steel illustrate my concern. In the cover article about the new 900 Series, you are clearly promoting the eye-catching use of more ebony in the "detail-rich curve appeal" of the new ebony armrest and binding. In that same edition, Taylor celebrates the 5-year success of the GS Mini — a new line of 125,000 instruments sold so far with ebony fingerboards. Why isn't your company taking a forceful lead in reducing the overall demand/lust for ebony by strongly promoting alternative woods and synthetics to replace the use of ebony for fingerboards, binding and the like, instead of promoting the allure of the dark, rich "curve appeal" of ebony?

Slowing the decimation of the Cameroon ebony forests by using colored ebony is just a delaying tactic that continues cutting the trees until they are finally gone. Your apparent near-monopoly of this last legal source of ebony makes a lot of economic sense to your company's bottom line, as does, apparently, using more ebony in new lines of instruments. However, it also speaks volumes about what ultimately is driving your efforts in Cameroon. Unfortunately, you can't have your cake and eat it too, especially when

Peter, your question comes from what a clear-minded thinking man would wonder, and I'm glad you asked. I'm happy to explain. You can shoot holes in any one of my answers if you want to not be convinced, but I'll start by saying that I'm passionate about my answers. First and foremost, the ebony is being cut anyway, regardless of me. Much of it illegally. Even the good-thinking NGOs agree that in the absence of a good operator there will be a bad operator. Second, the people who live in the areas where ebony is cut are villagers, they're poor, and they make their daily rice by selling some trees from their forest. It's not a big logging operation; it's a village operation. In my work in Africa I've learned many things. One is that we have little idea from our affluent world what their life is about. I do know now, and I support their ability to make a living. Third, what we're doing specifically is using the ebony that is a by-product of the ebony that's being cut. That's right, the yield is so incredibly low from the "eat-the-heart-throw-way-the-rind" mentality that this has become a huge factor in having to constantly go back into the forest for more trees. At Taylor, we painstakingly fix the ebony, with processes developed in-house, similar to a diamond with its inclusions filled. Well over half our guitars are made from what was once rejected, discarded, burned ebony. One day it could be that 90 percent of our guitars are made that way. We are also teaching other guitar makers to do the same. Some of them have been quite reluctant, but of late, many are now approaching me saying they want to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. That's progress.

We have lowered quotas from when we arrived, taking 20 percent fewer trees and making more guitars. That's a very good trend. We've started learning how to propagate ebony, something that is not known yet in the world because it's hard to do. We have our first seedlings growing now. When, in 2014, we won the U.S. State Department's ACE award (Award for Corporate Excellence), the deciding factor for us receiving it was the work we're doing to use the "bad" and discarded ebony. What's impressive about that is that the State Department both knew and cared about the fate of ebony.

What ebony needs is a good operator and for the world to know of ebony's plight. To walk away from it might make a person feel good that they have nothing to do with the decline of it, but it also is a statement that you have nothing to do with the preservation of it. It's like walking away from a dying man. Ebony is legal, unlike ivory or Brazilian rosewood, so again, if we don't use it, the villagers will still cut those trees. But we are there working with them on all facets for the first time in their lives. We are proactive, and I firmly and strongly believe that to save ebony, we must use ebony. We are the ones who can help, and I can boldly say that there are more people, like you, who know something about it and care now than before we started this project. More and more, because of what we are doing, we see fewer trees needed to make more guitars. And we'll see ebony planted, and we already see Africans, local people, prospering and beginning to care for themselves.

I could write a book, but that's it in a nutshell. I hope you're not sorry you asked. I'm very happy you asked.

I was at a rural sawmill that has been in business for 40 years, and while waiting for some huge old cedar logs to be planked out for some rustic furniture I was making, I figured I would chit-chat with the old boy who runs the place. He told me they get some very nice figured swamp maple and cherry, so I asked how he would determine what angle, or point, on the log to start in order to get the best figure. I was told straight up that it makes no difference whatsoever, and that whichever way they put the log in the figure comes out the same. Is that true? I've always been led to believe that to get the best figure it was crucial that you orient the log properly. I'm no authority on this subject and always thought that flatsawn, quartersawn, veneer peeling, etc. all produced different results.

Edward Placha

Edward, you're right and he's wrong. The figure does show no matter what, but it is quite different figure. For example, a quilted log will present little bubbles of figure if flatsawn, and if quartersawn, the figure will be the shape of sausages. The "fiddleback" figure of flamed maple only comes with quartersawing. If you flatsaw that log there isn't fiddleback, but rather short curls, and we call it "curly." The old boy at the mill is cutting lumber and not

cutting guitar wood, so I don't expect him to key in on the differences, but there are huge differences. I'll bet he knows the difference between a ribeye and sirloin, though, even if another person would tell him you can cut up a cow any way you want.

I just purchased a new 616ce and have to say that this is one of the most incredible guitars I have ever played. Sonically it has such warmth, sustain and clarity, and the build quality is absolutely stellar — not a flaw to be seen! My question is about the "rock maple" neck. What differentiates this type of maple from "big leaf" maple, and could it be used for maple guitar bodies as big leaf maple is used?

Bob S.

Yes, Bob, rock maple, or sugar maple from the East Coast, makes good guitar bodies, but we prefer big leaf maple — better tone, better beauty, better availability, and better potential for regrowth. But big leaf makes lousy necks! We can't have everything, I guess, so we use sugar maple for the necks, as it's more stable in that form, and also available. The difference is that Eastern maple is hard and stable when cut into lumber. The big leaf has a tendency to warp, but in thin pieces is stable. It's lighter in weight and sounds very good. They're just two different trees, each with its own characteristics.

Occasionally I will see a guitar player with the strap of his/her guitar attached up on the head between the tuning keys and nut. For the life of me, I cannot think of any reason this would be beneficial other than habit, or they don't want to drill a hole into the heel of the neck to install a strap pin. Maybe it's easier for the audience to see their name stamped across the strap? And wouldn't this also put unnecessary stress on the guitar's neck? I would never attach a strap onto the head of my 2000 Taylor koa 314ce. (It just turned 15 and you should hear the tone!) Your thoughts?

Galen Jones
Fort Branch, IN

Galen, we do put a strap pin on the heels of our guitars, thinking like you that it's a way better place to hold the strap. But I'll admit that the neck is strong enough to hold the weight of a guitar, with a strap attached to it. Guitars are a lot stronger than you might think. Of course we don't want to abuse them, but they're pretty strong. I'll take a moment to congratulate you on your guitar's 15th birthday. Nice! You've reached a point in the age of your guitar where its tone is changing for the better, and that's a great thing about keeping a guitar for a long, long time!



Got a question for Bob Taylor?

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Performance photos shot at the Festival du Bout du Monde in Brittany, France, August 2014, by Jean-Michel Sotto

American Journey

{ AMERICA CO-FOUNDERS GERRY BECKLEY AND DEWEY BUNNELL REFLECT ON THEIR SCENIC 45-YEAR MUSICAL RIDE }

BY JIM KIRLIN

With their tight-braided vocal arrangements and rich acoustic interplay, the band America is synonymous with the harmony-rich California sound of early '70s rock. While other iconic artists are more closely tied to the storied Laurel Canyon music scene that percolated in the Hollywood Hills from the mid-'60s through the early '70s – a musical melting pot that spawned new hybrid strains of acoustic rock thanks to the likes of Joni Mitchell, Linda Ronstadt, Crosby, Stills & Nash, Neil Young, the Eagles, The Byrds, the Mamas and the Papas, Jackson Browne and plenty more – America also made their way to L.A. in 1971 courtesy of Warner Bros. Records and wasted no time making their mark as well.

Founded by Gerry Beckley, Dewey Bunnell and Dan Peek, the band crafted some of the era's most popular tunes. Some are richly evocative of classic Western landscapes, like the desert imagery of their breakthrough hit "A Horse With No Name," or the idyllic California vibe of "Ventura Highway." Others, like Bunnell's breezy classic "Tin Man," conjure a wistful mood over a bed of major seventh chords, while the buoyant pop hit "Sister Golden Hair" showcases the band's ear for melodic songcraft and love of the Beatles.

Considering the band's name and sound, the irony is that the three bandmates sowed the seeds of their music career in the UK. All three had fathers in the U.S. Air Force, and they met while attending high school near London, where their fathers were stationed in the late 1960s.

In retrospect, the band's rapid ascent is impressive. They graduated high school in 1969, formed in 1970, signed their record deal with Warner's London office in 1971, released their debut album that same year, and a year later staged their own British Invasion, moving to L.A., where they would soon take home a Grammy for Best New Artist of 1972.

"We were fortunate," Bunnell acknowledges. "Timing is everything. Time and place."

America's most commercially successful creative output came during their prolific early years, encapsulated in a six-year run with Warner from 1971 to 1977. That work is collected on the recently released 8-CD box set *America: The Warner Bros. Years, 1971-1977*, a remastered reissue of their first seven studio albums, plus their final live record on the label. Five of the albums were produced by legendary "fifth Beatle" George Martin.

Despite the band's popularity, they took their lumps from rock critics who were quick to disparage their melodic sensibilities and laid-back acoustic vibe as emblematic of a new wave of soft rock that was antithetical to both the folk and rock traditions (the Eagles endured similar vitriol). After Peek left the band in 1977, Beckley and Bunnell carried on, switching labels and continuing to record and tour as America. (Peek renewed his Christian faith and had a few solo hits on the Christian pop charts; he passed away in 2011.)

As Beckley and Bunnell's music shifted into more adult contemporary territory, their ensuing releases failed to match the commercial success of

their earlier period, yet they continued to be musically productive. The band's 2007 release, *Here and Now*, co-produced by Fountains of Wayne's Adam Schlesinger and James Iha of Smashing Pumpkins fame (both unabashed fans of the band), delivered something of a comeback record, refreshing Beckley and Bunnell's street cred as compelling tunesmiths among a younger generation of popular musicians, and returned the band to the music charts. And their passion for performing remains strong – they've averaged roughly 100 shows a year for the past 30.

Now 45 years into their career, Beckley and Bunnell find themselves in a good place, having survived the rollercoaster highs and lows of the music industry, not to mention the trappings of fame and success, with their friendship intact and with a continuing desire to make music together and connect with fans.

We caught up with the two separately in August, in between summer tour dates. Beckley spoke from his home in Los Angeles, while Bunnell chatted from his lake house retreat in Wisconsin. Both reflected on their musical influences, the early days of the band, working with George Martin, their songwriting chemistry, and, of course, their Taylors, which have been a staple of their live shows for 25 years now. They also talked about some recent finds from their music archives, including previously unreleased studio recordings that form the basis of their latest release, *Lost and Found*, plus some rare demos from the early days.

continued

Both of your fathers were in the Air Force and ended up in the UK, but growing up, did you guys move around a lot? Did you grow up in Southern California for the first part of your lives?

Gerry Beckley: I was never in Southern California until we came here professionally in '72. Dewey, during his travels with his family, was stationed at Vandenberg Air Force Base up the California coast. I don't think Dan had ever been stationed here. But in the Air Force or Army upbringing you move every year or two. I was actually born in Texas, but I moved to England when I was a year old.

Did you have a musical background growing up?

GB: I started piano when I was 3, took lessons until I was about 10. I was a [music] reader. I've always played by ear, but it was hard to not read. Then came the Kingston Trio segueing into surf music, and I picked up the guitar. I started playing at about 10 in '62, and then of course, the Beach Boys were there first, but by that time the Beatles came and that kind of locked in a lot of our destinies. I've seen where Tom Petty and other people from that era say it's impossible to overstate the effect of *The Ed Sullivan Show*, tuning in weekly to what group was next. And it wasn't just British Invasion. There were the Byrds and all the great American bands too. It was really a great time.

Dewey Bunnell: I was actually born in England – Yorkshire – and we moved around as most military families do. We lived in Biloxi, Mississippi, on two different occasions because that was a training base, so if my dad had to retrain we'd move back. We lived in Florida, Nebraska, Massachusetts and Long Island, New York, for a bit, and in California. California first took root when I was in the 7th grade. It was '62, surf music really grabbed me, and I remember wanting to play those instrumentals. It was easy single-note stuff – "Walk Don't Run" and Dick Dale and his Del-Tones, the Surfaris and then the Beach Boys. So that was the first time I remember going, wow, this is kind of my music. Kids are playing it. And I wanted to learn more about it. A neighbor had a guitar, and that was the first guitar I picked up and started fiddling around with. And then my dad got me an old used acoustic, and that's what I cut my teeth on. My mom would say, "Play this song," and it was "Sleepwalk," I always remember, just to play single note stuff.

So you both ended up outside London and met in high school.
DB: Our family moved there in '66. I think Gerry came over in '67. We had

our junior and senior years together in high school – senior year was '68-'69 – and during that time obviously people with like interests gravitate. He had a high school band going...we hit it off and formed our own band, and that morphed.

It all came together quickly when you look at the timeline of it all.

DB: It really did. Most of our free time was spent listening to music, going to watch music, fiddling around playing music. Gerry was raised in a family with piano, piano lessons, and some classical music. I always like to think of myself as more of a feral, self-taught musician. I never really had any formal training.

"I was the first guy to have a car, this old Morris Minor. Sometimes we would rehearse in it, and the vocals were pretty magical. We were excited right away."

— Dewey Bunnell

How did being in the UK at that time in your lives affect your perception of whatever was happening musically and culturally?

DB: I remember that we thought we were pretty hip. We'd stayed up with every Beatles recording – Gerry and Dan and I compared notes, everybody was waiting with bated breath for the next Beatles record...then suddenly we were involved in the Byrds, Yardbirds, and the Beach Boys, so there was always another record to listen to. I'll never forget having to have my mother take me down Carney Street and the whole burgeoning London scene. When we got our own land legs as teenagers, 16-17 years old, we would go see shows at the Lyceum Ballroom and places that we ended up playing ourselves as a band. I saw the Jimi Hendrix Experience at the Royal Albert Hall in '69, the year we graduated. That was an eye opener.

You guys played in cover bands. Were you playing in the same bands or different ones?

GB: Not all three together at the same time, but all three of us did play in the same couple of cover bands. Those started to morph into, instead of trying to cover the records, we started to rearrange the songs. If it was a ballad we'd say, OK, let's see how it sounds sped up. I think those were the earliest creative seeds that led to songwriting.

Do you remember the first time you all sang together and realized it was special?

GB: I don't remember the moment or the day, but when Dan graduated in '69 he went off to college for a semester and then came back. In the meantime, that whole singer-songwriter thing had really kicked into gear. James Taylor was actually originally signed to Apple, so that stuff was starting to stick, so we were, in a sense, setting down our electric guitars and picking up acoustics and trying to do that. Then Dan came back, and he'd been doing the same thing. So we just said, hey let's see how it sounds. That was the moment when all three of us started singing together.

What They Play

Both Beckley and Bunnell have played maple Grand Auditorium Taylor models as their primary stage acoustic guitars for years. But when Beckley first started playing Taylors around 1990, the GA didn't yet exist (it debuted in 1994), so he had matching custom 6- and 12-string Jumbo models made, both with a black stain, along with a blonde 6-string.

"I kind of wanted an Everly Brothers style thing," he told us in 2013. "I'm also kind of a purist, and the cutaway wasn't really part of the aesthetic I wanted."

Beckley was an early adopter of the GA upon its arrival, finding the smaller size more physically comfortable and a better fit sonically for their live stage sound, with bass, drums and keyboards in the mix, particularly a maple GA.

"So much of the full sound of a really fine acoustic, when you get on stage, that's the first thing the sound guy is hacking out of there," he says. "That booming lower mid might be ideal if you're in a coffee shop, just you and your guitar, but the minute you have bass and Wurlitzer and Rhodes and a lot of other things that are on that same frequency, it's just really in the way. So I always felt that with maple we were already halfway there. It cuts through."

Beckley's preference for the maple GA also prompted him to lobby Taylor to make a 12-string version, which we eventually did. It gets plenty of stage time.

"Twelve-string was always a pretty signature part of our sound, even if it wasn't the main guitar," he says. "I use it on 'Sister Golden Hair,' sometimes on 'A Horse With No Name,' 'Sandman,' and 'Don't Cross the River.'"

For his acoustic electronics, Beckley is used to the Fishman pickups that were installed in his Taylors for years before the Expression System was offered, so he tends to stick with those, especially for the brighter amplified sound he prefers for the guitars. He says he also prefers the taller volume and tone knobs of the onboard preamp over the more discreet knobs of the ES.

"It's easier for me to grab them," he explains. "I'm constantly messing with changing the volume [on stage]. I play a lot of rhythm to solo, and I always leave a little headroom so that, come the solo, I've got a little space to take it up if need be."

Custom specs for Beckley's guitars include prominent star inlays, an abalone-edged top, and his name inlaid within a scroll at the 15th fret. The star inlays, incidentally, were originally offered as a custom option during Taylor's early days, in response to customers who liked the star inlays in the Gibson J-185 Everly Brothers model.

Beckley also prefers his Taylors without pickguards, even though, as a self-confessed heavy picker, his spruce tops have paid the price (note the pick wear on his guitar on this issue's cover photo). But it's become a point of Taylor pride for him.

"Looking at the history of who's been playing [Taylors] for how many years, I think we're right up there," he says. "That's why I like to show off those worn-through ones that I have, because there's no way to fake that; these have really been played and beaten and battered and fixed."

While Beckley has owned nearly 20 Taylors over the years, Bunnell tends to keep it simple with a pair of black 614e models. Custom specs include abalone top trim and cactus fret marker inlays.

"Gerry is much more of the guitar collector and aficionado," he says. "I like what I play and that's what I do, and I don't really search much further. We had gone through any number of acoustic guitar arrangements over the years, all leading us to Taylor. Obviously the criteria was sound and playability first, but then it was all about durability too, and being able to get these things in and out of venues and buses and things like that. I love the ones I've had. I've been lucky; mine stand up, and I take them up to my hotel room every now and then. I just take two on the road."

so people wouldn't think they were Brits trying to sound American. Dewey recalls some key figures of London's music scene.

DB: There was a guy, Bob Harris, who was, still is, a very influential BBC disc jockey. He had a TV show called *The Old Grey Whistle Test* on the BBC. He championed us, and as soon as that happens in a town like London where everything is concentrated, word-of-mouth is like a wildfire. People had apparently heard, "There's this American band, these teenagers, they've got some cool songs."

We had found two or three really influential mentor/managers who walked us around to offices to play our music. One guy, Jeff Dexter, you see his name in a lot of British chronicles of the time. He was a DJ, scene maker, whatever you want to call him, and he introduced bands on stage at big festivals. He got us exposure on these bills, and we scraped together the money to buy this white panel van and started playing colleges and pubs. I remember we played a couple of cover songs, "Coming in to Los Angeles" by Arlo Guthrie and I think a Bee Gees song, "New York Mining Disaster 1941."

Didn't you open for the Who early on?

DB: Yeah, it was one of our first stage gigs – it was Elton John, who was just breaking, and the Who was the closer. Jeff Dexter got us on the stage opening for Pink Floyd, and I remember opening for Traffic at this college in London. Johnny Winter was there, and he got up on stage and he was saying "C'mon up!" We were these new, fresh-faced kids, and we've got Johnny Winter asking us to get up and jam with Steve Winwood and Dave Mason and everybody. We gracefully declined.

So you guys graduate high school, form the band, and within a year you got a deal with Warner over there.

GB: Yeah, we signed to Warner in the UK. Virtually every major label had a branch in London – it was one of the centers of the industry – but not everything that Warner UK signed necessarily made it out of the UK. [With us] it was only because the first album, and consecutively the single ["A Horse With No Name"], which was actually recorded separately, because they both were big hits in England, that showed up on Burbank's radar, and they said, "Oh, we'll put that out over here. All we need is a commitment. Can they come over and promote it?" We said of course.

But "Horse" wasn't on the original release of the debut album in the U.S., right?

GB: No. The minute we put the album out they said, "What else have you got? Let's get you back in the studio." So, "Horse" was cut separately, they decided it would be a great single, it went to No. 1 in the UK, and when Burbank saw that the album was doing well, they just assumed the single was part of the same project. When the parts that you use to press the vinyl were shipped over to L.A. for pressing, they ran off a hundred thousand before they realized the single wasn't on the album. So, the first pressings that don't have "Horse" on them are considered collector's [items].

Dewey, what was the inspiration for the lyrics of "Horse"?

DB: It was definitely the sights and sounds of the desert, having spent time visiting my uncle and his family in New Mexico and having driven through the Mojave Desert. See, I was the only one of the guys who had lived in California up until we moved there in '72. "Ventura Highway" is the same thing. That would be reminiscing on the actual sun and surf vibes of '62 and '63 when we lived in California. Living in England it's pretty standard gray skies and rain, and that gets old after a while. And it was getting particularly old at that point by '71, having lived there from '66.

Is the correct tuning DEDGBD?

GB: Yeah, it's virtually the only song you'll hear with this tuning, because Dewey and Dan and I were always just messing around. The low E goes down to D, the A goes all the way down to E, and then it's D G B and the high E goes down to D. So, the weird element there is the A coming all the way down to E, but Dewey frets both E strings at the second fret, and he frets the D string at the second fret, so you've got this E E E G B E kind of drone-y [sound]. It's that slapping A string that's taken down a fourth that really is part of the signature sound.

Dewey, how did you come up with the tuning?

DB: We'd been listening to Joni Mitchell a lot and David Crosby at that point. I mean, it can't be underplayed that we were at that point digesting every note of every new release of everything. Now we're into '68, '69, '70 and we were huge fans of Crosby, Still & Nash and Buffalo Springfield. Even the first two Led Zeppelin albums, we loved the acoustic guitars... I remember specifically playing this chord and going, that A string isn't sounding right, and I just started turning the key until I got it down to another E, and I just formed a chord.

It was really in the dark. It goes back to that feral thing. But it created a certain tone or voicing that had that loping [feel].

Going to California

When you moved to L.A. after the first album, were you being managed at that point by David Geffen and Elliot Roberts?

GB: We left our English manager with the success of the first album; we just didn't feel that they were quite up to the task, and both David Geffen and Elliot Roberts had been over to London – Elliot in particular because they were handling Neil Young and Joni. And Elliot says, "You guys ought to come over and join us in L.A." Obviously it didn't take too much arm-twisting.

I don't know to what extent you interacted with the other artists there, but did you feel welcomed, or were you guys these young upstarts who'd kind of come out of nowhere, or at least from over in England, with this hit?

GB: The office was very, very kind. We actually moved into David Geffen's house and lived with him. If you consider that Elliot was managing Neil, and not only were our album and single a hit, but "Horse" took over the No.1 spot from "Heart of Gold" and *Harvest*... [after] all that wonderful Buffalo Springfield work and three solo albums, finally reaching the pinnacle, Neil was bounced from the top after one week by these kids that clearly everybody thought were just kind of sound-alikes. I understand the tensions in the dynamic like that. So Neil was a little bit standoffish. Having said that, I've met him a few times, and he's been incredibly sweet. I'm very close with David Crosby; he's been a friend for decades, and I know Graham very well. We were all in the same office with Don [Henley] and Glenn [Frey], and those guys were kind of struggling trying to get going, too. In fact, I think in '72, the year we won the Grammy for Best New Artist, the other nominees were the Eagles, Loggins & Messina, Harry Chapin and John Prine.

Any good memories of playing music together?

GB: I did a lot of sessions back in those days. I just loved the whole process, so I did a lot of things, but Joe Walsh played the guitar solo on a song ["Green Monkey"] from our third album, and this was before he was an Eagle. We were huge James Gang fans, and that led into [his 1972 solo

album] *Barnstorm*, and then we got to know Joe very well and spent a lot of time together. Then Joe was producing Danny Fogelberg, so I played acoustic on "There's a Place in the World for a Gambler" [from the album *Souvenirs*]. So that kind of stuff was happening quite a bit. Our dear friends the Beach Boys were singing on our records; I was singing on their records; I'm on "Sail on Sailor" and quite a bit of *Holland*. So it was a really great time.

When you had started playing live back in the UK, did you have your equivalent of the Beatles club residency in Hamburg, where you had to hone your live chops to be able to play and sing together on stage?

GB: Well, it was trial by fire, because the majority of our shows were opening. We opened for Cat Stevens on his European tour, and for a group called Family, which were huge in the UK, and so we were doing 30 minutes or so. When we came over to the States

to promote the first album, they put us in a couple of clubs opening for the Everly Brothers. We did a week in DC, and there were lines around the block because "Horse" was the biggest selling record in the country. So everybody comes to see us play 30 minutes, and then they all leave, and there's Phil and Don, as great as they've ever been. In fact, their band had Warren Zevon on keyboards and Waddy Wachtel on guitar, and everybody was just walking out when we were done, which was obviously upsetting to those guys. So the next week we were supposed to do another week together in Boston, and they kind of mysteriously bailed – one of them got ill. So we get up to Boston, and the guy says, "It's OK, you guys will headline," and we said, "I don't think we've got enough minutes," and he says, "It's OK, we've got this comic, this guy in college, he's gonna do 30 minutes ahead of you. His name's Jay Leno."

continued





After the first album you guys were able to self-produce the next couple, which is impressive for being as young as you were. Did you have to fight for that with the label?

GB: I don't remember a big fight about it. I think we basically said, "We got this." The only thing that Elliot and maybe David contributed was, we knew we wanted drums and bass – Dan and I had played the bass on the first album. So we thought, let's get a rhythm section, and we tried to get [drummer Russ Kunkel] and [bassist] Lee Sklar. I'm not sure if they just passed on doing it because we hadn't quite earned the cred, and they were just like the pinnacle – they were doing all of James [Taylor]'s records and Jackson [Browne]'s. They might've just been too busy. So we said, "Who else could we get?" and Elliot said, "Well, we've got [drummer] Hal Blaine and [bassist] Joe Osborne." [Both were part of the legendary L.A. studio session ensemble that came to be known as The Wrecking Crew.] We look them up, and yeah, they'll do! So we had the two of them on the second album, *Homecoming*, and that ended up sell-

ing more than the first one, so we got off to a pretty good start.

How did you come to work with producer George Martin? Was he just on your wish list?

GB: The third album [*Hat Trick*], which we produced, was a much longer project, and I was shouldering a little bit more each time. It was, frankly, a lot of work, so that album took months to do, it had eaten up a bunch of the year, and I was pretty burned [out]. Dan and I agreed to consider getting a producer before diving into this again, because most of us acts were on the one album a year [schedule], and there wasn't much of a window when you're also playing a bazilian concerts. So we basically just gave it some thought and put George at the top of the list, under the [belief] that there's not a chance it would work, but all you can do is ask. We were not unknown at that point. We'd had a number-one album, two platinum albums. And although George was doing a lot of wonderful things, he was looking for something to get his teeth into, and it was just great timing. He said, "The only thing I ask is you come to England. I have a

lovely studio" – AIR Studios, he'd built his own place – "and I just can't be gone three months or so." He looked at the previous schedule and figured this could take a while. So we went to London, and I remember him telling us, "Look, lads, I've held two months. I'm not saying we must be done by then, but let's see how we go," and we were done with the album in 13 days, including overdubs, strings and mixing – the entire *Holiday* album with "Tin Man" and "Lonely People."

Did you come in with the songs fully written and arranged?

GB: They were written and we had rehearsed and arranged them. Geoff [Emerick], the engineer, was the added bonus, and so we'd do a few takes and he'd go, "I think we've got that one, sounds great," and before we knew it we were cutting three or four a day. And at the end of it, George said to us, "This can't possibly be a success. Nothing this easy succeeds." And so it started a seven-album run with George, and followed up with *Hearts*, which had "Sister Golden Hair," another No. 1, George's first big hit outside the Beatles, so it was really a great time.

What stands out in terms of what you learned from working with him over the course of those records?

GB: The thing that comes to the top is focus. When you're young and you're starting to mess with new equipment, and synthesizers are coming into the [mix], the whole notion of, "let's see what our options are" is literally an endless loop. And George would just keep his eye on the [song], and where we were heading with this. It didn't mean that there wasn't immense variety. If you think about the scope of his work with the Beatles, from the string quartet on Eleanor Rigby to those unbelievable backward tapes and collages and things, there was not just one avenue they were going down; they were going down every avenue, but George could, within that, focus on what each song needed. And it was a real wakeup call, a reminder, that I still to this day apply: let's not overcomplicate this. He used to call it "gilding the lily" – you know [imitates Martin's voice], "Let's not gild the lily."

Songwriting Chemistry

Gerry, I wanted to ask about the nature of your collaborative relationship with Dewey over the years. You guys have been writing for 45 years, and presumably it began

with a shared love of similar music. What is it about the chemistry musically? How do you guys connect?

GB: First of all, there is a compatibility between the two of us where we both have certainly contributed equally. I mean, America was *established* with "Horse with No Name," "Ventura Highway," and Dewey's contributions. So, although I by numbers might be more prolific, there's certainly no debate over each of our [contributions], as opposed to a kind of dynamic where we've got to sit there and vote on the quality of each other's material. With

Also, I come from the school of, you've got to write 10 to get 2, so I've always got a bunch of material.... Also, there is some collaboration. I've often helped Dewey with bridges, where I think, this thing maybe needs a little space right here. He's quite open to that kind of structural stuff.

Lyrically, do you feel like you have distinctive points of view?

GB: Completely different avenues. The joke line is Dewey writes the outdoor songs and I write the indoor songs. Like, once, Dewey was coming over and I was trying to sketch a tune...I put

"The joke line is that Dewey writes the outdoor songs and I write the indoor songs."

— Gerry Beckley

some bands, it's basically one guy writing everything. So not only between Dewey and I, but clearly with Dan at the start, with three guys who were contributing, and that particular process we cemented very early I think by following "Horse With No Name" with "I Need You" – not only was it a completely differently styled song, it was a different singer, different writer.... Also, it encouraged each of us to step up to the plate and do our best work, so there was certainly a little bit of competition. Having said that, it's very much a democracy. If Dewey came to me and said, "Y'know, Ger, I don't really hear that song of yours," he would certainly defer to me and me likewise on whatever material. I don't think he would say, "I don't like that one."

Dewey, can you share your take on how lyrics come together for you?

DB: I have always kept a little list of snippets of thoughts or words that go together nicely, or a quote from someone or something or another that I think, I'll go back to that when I put some chords together. My system, my whatever, is to sit strumming – I was strumming this morning – and find a chord progression that I like. Once it locks in, I'll come up with a melody on



L-R: Peek, Beckley and Bunnell at a photo shoot for their second album, *Homecoming*, in 1972. Photo by Henry Diltz

From the Vault: *Lost & Found* + Rarities

America's latest release, *Lost & Found*, culls together an assortment of previously unreleased studio tracks recorded from 2000 to 2011. The material was sourced from the archives of Gerry Beckley's longtime home studio in Los Angeles by friend and musical associate Jeff Larson, a multi-talented singer-songwriter/producer (and multiple Taylor owner) who has worked with Beckley on a number of projects over the years. The project initially began as an overdue cataloging of Beckley's extensive recordings.

"I work constantly," Beckley says, "and I wasn't quite as diligent in backing up and making copies on different hard drives. That got me thinking, we've got to start keeping track of what all this stuff is because in the digital world you can go on forever. And then I went through a divorce and was closing out the studio. So before all the cables were coiled and tied, we thought, we'd better go through and make sure we copied everything."

Beckley says that although the archiving began with hard drives, it covered a variety of recording eras and gear.

"There were boxes of ADAT mixes and DAT tapes, then it goes back to Fostex 16-track, and it led piece by piece all the way down to this actual two-inch reel, where we said, OK, let's see what's really on this analog stuff."

Larson went through everything, resurrecting damaged drives in some cases, transferring data to consolidate it in one place, and then catalogued everything based on criteria like completed songs versus partly finished ones, and Beckley's solo work versus America songs, including a number of sessions that Beckley and Bunnell had started in between releases. That material became the basis for *Lost & Found*. Larson curated choice selections, created a medley, and sent an mp3 to Gerry and Dewey for review.

"I don't think they remembered some of it," Larson says, "so it was a nice rediscovery for them."

Among Larson's loose criteria for the cuts was that they be songs without outside guests or producers, in an effort to capture the essential personality of the band.

"There's a lot to be said for the two guys working together in this environment as in the early days," he says. "I think that comes through on these tracks. It's their songs, their voices, their guitars, piano, etc., and also the production values behind the band."

Beckley recalls the collaborative nature of that period.

"I might build a track and say, 'Dew, you come over, I'll play you this track, you absorb it, you go home. The next time you come over, come back with some lyrics.' That was the vital ingredient of having some of Dewey's work on there. Otherwise it would have just been a collection of my home studio [work]. Jeff realized that we had five complete things with Dewey singing, and then Dewey had a couple of things of his own that he thought, well, if we're going to do this maybe we ought to consider this track. So that's how it came together."

Larson was credited as executive producer, and also handled much of the mixing and editing.

"Jeff started to burn us CDs, and as they came over they were starting to sound more and more like albums," Beckley says. "It would be one of my songs, then something that Dewey sang, and I could see him approaching this like a producer to make a whole listening experience. I think he did a great job."

One of the other serendipitous yields from Larson's archiving efforts was the rediscovery of some vintage America recordings, including demos from the band's early days. These include a two-inch tape reel with the original session recording of "A Horse With No Name" from 1971; alternate versions of "Ventura Highway" featuring different harmony approaches (1971); Gerry's original 4-track demo of "Sister Golden Hair" (1973-74); and other rarities. Larson says there's a good chance the material will be released at some point in the future.



top of that, and once I've got a verse and a chorus – I'm terrible at writing bridges – unless a word or a phrase or a line has popped out during that process, I'll go to my list and...oh yeah, I always wanted to write a song about this, or, oh yeah, that line, I remember; maybe I'll have two rhyming lines that I put on my little digital notepad in my laptop or on my cell phone. And that's the way it works. I'd like to think I was relatively prolific in the '70s, because it seems like there were songs left over that didn't make the cut.

As Gerry put it, you have to write 10 to get 2.

DB: Gerry's really good at that. I have to give him credit; he's always put his shoulder into it. He's always been into the studio itself. He familiarized himself with equipment, the technology, he's worked in Pro Tools, and that's been great because that's helped me. I moved to San Francisco within a year of us all moving to L.A., so I wasn't physically there as much. I would commute from the Bay Area down to the

L.A., because we were based in L.A. from '72 on. Gerry's lived there ever since.

With Gerry, I can bring my pieces down to [his studio], lay down the skeleton, and he might sit there and say, "Here's a good thing," and "let's put this piano part on," and then I could hum or sing a line, and I'd say "Why don't we try that with a sax or some other instrument?" which he could pull up vis-à-vis his samples, and we would start to paint a picture that way. There's a great song called "Ohloololo," which I'd written about a trip to Africa, and Gerry found these great sounds that sounded like the Massai tribesmen when they bang their spears and shields together, and we used that as a percussive device. It was cool. When we are immersed and it really is a meditation, we really click. It's similar to those days when we [sang] in the car and were really taken away by the process.

That's special. You can't take that for granted.

DB: A lot of that is that Gerry and I have been joined at the hip really since high school. We haven't had huge valleys. We've had moments that weren't especially bonding, but we've really always known there was more to it than any kind of bull---- that might have been going on at any time. It was a pretty disruptive period when we were top dogs and a bestseller in '75, and getting accolades, warranted or not, because we were very popular then.

The 8-CD box set from Warner Bros.

The fact that you guys had the success you had as quick as you did, and came out the other side for the most part intact after the ups and downs, is great.

DB: We appreciate that a lot more now. We don't take it for granted that we're still here, that we're still able to play these shows with lots of people showing up. We've reached this plateau, and not in a bad way. We were on a rollercoaster there from I'd say the mid- to late '80s through about the mid- to late '90s, where it could've really gone away, and I think hanging in there and still trying to produce a record here or there... we were on our own a little bit, and had to persevere. Let's face it, we have families and kids and things that are very important to us, but in terms of doing a job, this is what we do, having grown up in the business.

It's great to go through a period of again, maybe not having as much commercial success as your prime years, but to be able to retain the pleasure of playing music together.

DB: And we really do have to work. It's not like the Eagles or some bands whereby it's really just to keep their juices flowing, because they're wealthy, they've got a catalog that is producing. Ours does well, but we need to do those hundred shows a year. If we had the option not to work, I think we still would. I think the fact that we need to do it creates a drive, where we gear up every time, and we look forward to it and the shows... At the end of the night, that's when we come off stage and go, "Yeah, that was a good one; we pulled that one off," and it's moving on to the next.

In the shows that you guys are doing now, besides your longtime fanbase, are you also seeing young faces who are discovering your music?

GB: Yes, more now than ever. I suppose it's cyclical. Years ago we used to tour with the Beach Boys and I would look out and see the audience and the kids of the fans all singing along to all these incredible tunes, and I thought, look, those kids weren't even born when this music came out, yet they know every word. How incredible is that. And now, lo and behold, we've got the same thing. We've got almost three generations – you'll see the whole family sitting there, and they're singing along or playing air drums to "Sister Golden Hair." **W&S**

CHOICE CUTS

A TRIO OF EXOTIC FLORENTINE CUTAWAY

MODELS BRINGS A SHARP FLAIR TO THIS

FALL'S LIMITED EDITIONS By Jim Kirlin

FOR Taylor's design team, surveying our tonewood reserves is like a chef's early morning stroll through the local market in search of fresh inspiration for the day's menu items. Among the appetizing ingredients chosen for this season's limited editions: three rare and alluring woods – flamed mahogany, quilted sapele, and blackheart sassafras – each arousing the senses with exotic looks and satisfying tonal flavors. The tonewoods form the centerpiece of our seasonal medley as a trio of unique Grand Auditorium models, aligned in aesthetic three-part harmony with a dramatic Florentine cutaway and a shared appointment scheme.

Two other featured “dishes” on our seasonal menu showcase the warm, woody overtones of a cedar top paired with different back and side woods: a premium-grade koa Grand Symphony topped with cedar, and a 300 Series rosewood/cedar Grand Auditorium. Read on for more details, and look for these beauties at your local Taylor dealer.

The Florentine Limiteds

514ce-FM LTD

Back/Sides: Flamed Mahogany
Top: Sitka Spruce

514ce-QS LTD

Back/Sides: Quilted Sapele
Top: Sitka Spruce

714ce-S LTD

Back/Sides: Blackheart Sassafras
Top: Sitka Spruce

Taylor master builder Andy Powers says he chose to relate his selections of flamed mahogany, quilted sapele, and blackheart sassafras together as a series because they all shared a comparable degree of visual rarity along with a certain tonal compatibility.

“While each has a unique visual and

sonic quality, the three share similarities in aspects of their personalities,” he elaborates. “The sapele is similar to mahogany in its clarity, although slightly more vibrant with a touch more upper register chime. The blackheart sassafras has balance very much like mahogany and sapele, but with a slightly more present midrange overtone response. Together, the three woods make a unique suite of three instruments that fit in a collection, yet with subtle tonal distinctions.”

Both the flamed figure of the mahogany and quilted figure of the sapele are a rare treat, as both woods are known for their straight-grained growth patterns. The blackheart sassafras was selected from an allotment Taylor sourced from Tasmania and used to craft a series of limiteds last fall – harvested from storm-felled and over-mature old-growth trees on privately owned farmland. As with last year's models, each set of sassafras is visually different from the next, often dramatically so, with a mix of blond, pink, brown and other subtle hues. The unique color spectrum is accented by bold lines caused by fungi that form in the tree as a result of branches that break off during storms, enabling water to drip down within the tree while it grows.

“This particular batch is very heavily colored and variegated,” Andy says. “In fact, sassafras with this sort of blackheart color and figure is nearly impossible to find. I never expect to see this species with this dramatic coloring until a tree happens to become available, which is very rare.”

All three tonewoods were paired with Sitka spruce tops featuring Adirondack spruce CV bracing for a boost of sonic horsepower. A single body style was chosen for all three: a Grand Auditorium, with a sharp Florentine cutaway chosen to give the trio a distinctive family resemblance. The Florentine is a much rarer cutaway style than the Venetian at Taylor due to the time-consuming nature of crafting

one. (For more on this, see our sidebar, “Making the Cut.”) In addition to its eye-catching appeal, Andy notes that the Florentine's scooped contour highlights the upper-register playability of Taylor necks and engages the full sonic palette of the woods chosen for these instruments.

“It really encourages guitarists to explore the articulate and expressive high notes of these guitars,” he says.

Aesthetic Inspiration from Italy

Another shared aesthetic component among the models is the premium appointment package. Details include a new Capstone fretboard inlay motif, which features rosewood outlined in mother-of-pearl, with a similarly rendered rosette. The capstone inspiration, Andy says, came from time spent in Sarzana, Italy, in May for a Taylor event in conjunction with the city's annual Acoustic Guitar Meeting.

“The capstone motif is everywhere and seemingly ancient,” he says. “The streets are ‘paved’ with these little, slightly wedge-shaped rocks that form interlocking arches. You see the motif over doorways and windows as well. I thought it was an interesting shape to build with.”

Andy also related the shape to the heritage of block-style position marker inlays in the guitar world, particularly in archtop guitars.

“I realized that by combining the two traditions of blocks, I could compose a shape that looks modern and fits the guitar's personality, while keeping it well grounded in the classics.”

The guitars feature rosewood binding (including the soundhole) with curly maple top edge trim, a rosewood back strip, an all-gloss body, Gotoh Gold tuners, and Expression System® 2 electronics. The three models include a limited edition guitar label and ship in a Taylor deluxe hardshell case.

continued

L-R: Quilted sapele, blackheart sassafras and flamed mahogany LTDs, featuring a Florentine-style cutaway

Making the Cut

Compared to the rounded Venetian cutaway of Taylor’s standard cutaway models, the sharp Florentine version is considerably more complex and labor-intensive to construct. (This difference was made even more dramatic when the bending process for our Venetian cutaway became largely automated thanks to the use of proprietary sidebending machines fabricated by our tooling team.) For the Florentine, the process begins with a fully assembled non-cutaway body, from which a section of the treble-side upper bout is sliced out using a band saw and vacuum jig. The exposed edges of the scooped-out section are then sanded smooth on a spindle sander (photo 1). From there, several pieces of kerfing (similar to the kerfing strips that line the inside edges of the guitar body where the top and back meet the sides) are carefully fitted and glued along the cut edges to reinforce the area and to provide a solid glue surface for the cutaway piece to eventually be attached (photo 2). An additional strip of mahogany is glued in place vertically at the point, or “horn,” of the cutaway area, between the guitar’s top and back kerfing, to reinforce the side.

Next, the piece of wood designated to form the scooped cutaway – a flat panel that was matched with the sides when the guitar’s back and side sets were initially selected – is manually bent over a heated pipe that has been draped with a wet paper towel (photo 3). (The resulting steam permeates the wood and helps it bend.) Once bent into proper form, the piece is cooled down in a jig to hold the shape. The wood edges that will be mated are cleaned, sanded and dry-fitted, and then the bent cutaway piece is trimmed to proper size. Wood glue is then applied to the kerfing surfaces, and the bent cutaway piece is aligned and glued. A glue-up press and wood caul are used to secure the surfaces together (photo 4). The area will be inspected for proper fit and glue squeeze-out, and any excess glue will be removed. Once the glue has dried, the body will be transferred to our bind and sand department. A stroke sander will be used to remove excess cutaway material from the top and back, and then a belt sander will be used to remove excess material from the sides near the horn and neck joint. The point of the horn will then be sanded to create a flat surface, after which a wood cutaway cap (matched to the back, side and cutaway pieces) is prepped, fitted and glued to the horn to cover the seam. Any excess material will be trimmed, and after the glue dries, the cap will be sanded and properly shaped with a belt sander.



The Capstone inlay motif for the fretboard and rosette features rosewood outlined in mother-of-pearl. Other appointments include rosewood binding with curly maple top trim

314ce-RW LTD

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Western Red Cedar

As the saying goes, sometimes less is more. A rosewood/cedar guitar rewards players who employ a lighter attack, from fingerstylists to light strummers, with a warm and richly musical voice. Compared to a spruce-top guitar, a cedar top reveals itself with a mature, played-in sound right away, and fans of rich overtones will enjoy playing this Grand Auditorium limited edition. Cedar’s midrange bloom provides a wonderful complement to rosewood’s scooped midrange and treble sparkle.

“Cedar lends a strong, woody overtone component to the mix,” Andy says. “Its complex overtone profile is more immediate than spruce. When combined with the bell-like upper overtone character of rosewood, together they impart a really thick flavor to each note, even when played lightly.”

The Grand Auditorium’s responsiveness to both fingerpicking and light to medium strumming makes it a great match for the tone profile of the woods. Players with a relaxed attack can expect an expressive and easily accessible voice. Clean appointments borrow from our standard 300 Series:

black pickguard and binding, Italian acrylic dot inlays, 3-ring rosette, white top purfling, satin-finish back and sides with a gloss top, and Expression System® 2 electronics.

K16ce LTD

Back/Sides: AA-Grade Koa
Top: Western Red Cedar

This 6-string Grand Symphony showcases the honey-brown hues and rich figure of AA-grade koa paired with a cedar top. Darker cedar was intentionally chosen to match koa’s color tones, and a shaded edgeburst artfully wraps the entire guitar in toasted warmth, including the mahogany neck.

The koa/cedar pairing harkens back to some of the Koa Series Grand Auditorium models we crafted in the late ’90s and into the early 2000s, before the Grand Symphony was born. The two woods complement each other well, with cedar’s warm, midrange-centered overtones embellishing koa’s natural midrange focus.

“Koa has the midrange emphasis of mahogany, but with a little more upper register sweetness and chime,” Andy says. “There’s a bit more sugar up there. When you bring together the

cedar and koa, you get this thick and warm midrange, with a sweet undertone.”

The Grand Symphony body brings an expressive dynamic range to the playing experience with the wood pairing, responding well to a lighter touch, while also expanding the overall depth and tonal output.

“The GS has a bit more lung space to support the low-end notes and seems to have a slightly more serious personality,” Andy suggests. “There is a bit more gravity when it speaks.”

An elegant appointment scheme features figured maple binding (body, fretboard, peghead, soundhole and heel cap) with a matching backstrip, adding a creamy counterpoint against the edgeburst treatment. Other details include a fretboard inlay of golden boxwood Split Diamonds, an abalone rosette complemented with abalone dot bridge pins, a lustrous all-gloss body, and Gotoh Gold tuners. Our onboard Expression System 2 pickup will faithfully translate this guitar’s natural overtone warmth and sweetness into a clear and rich amplified sound.

Availability for this model will be extremely limited.

For more details on all limited edition models, including complete specifications, visit taylorguitars.com.



Why “Florentine”?

By many accounts, the origin of the term “Florentine” to identify the sharp cutaway traces back to Gibson mandolins. Andy Powers shared some thoughts based on his research over the years.

“My understanding is that the Florentine designation was Gibson’s way of describing a ‘fancy’ design at the turn of the 20th century. The Florentine art style was filled with curves, scrolls and filigree, with gold-leafed, gilded and inlaid fanciness. The early American mandolins carried this elaborate inlaid style over into the shape. From Gibson, you first saw a mandolin with one scroll or curlicue and three points, with one of the points forming a sharp cutaway. This carried over a few years later into one of the first cutaway guitars – their Style O Artist guitar – which was guitar-shaped in the lower bout, with a scroll and a pointed cutaway on the upper bout. It was known to Gibson during the teens as a Florentine-style guitar body. It was basically a giant mandolin strung like a guitar. Blues legend Big Bill Broonzy was known for playing one. The sharp point remained tied to the Florentine description. Later on, shortly before World War II, select archtop guitars started to receive rounded cutaways. Again, it was Gibson that started describing the round-style cutaway as ‘Venetian’, although they first marketed the feature with the name ‘Premier’. One could point out the Moorish/Gothic-influenced arched window shape prominent in the architecture around Venice and make a case the Florence style has elaborate scrolls and points, and that the Venice style has these arched windows. Eventually, guitar makers adopted the two descriptions as a way to denote the two cutaways.”



VINTAGE FIRE

L-R: Baritone Grand Symphony, 12-Fret Grand Concert, and 12-string Dreadnought 300 Series models

Shaded edgeburst mahogany tops, plus new 12-fret, 12-string and baritone models, infuse our 300 Series special editions with roots-rich character

By Jim Kirlin

As the first stop in our line of all-solid-wood guitars, Taylor's sapele/spruce 300 Series has introduced many players to the finer pleasures of solid-wood acoustic tone. In recent years we've refined the series both aesthetically and sonically to broaden its appeal. In 2013 we added mahogany-top models to coincide with the launch of our 500 Series hog-top expansion. Earlier this year we updated all acoustic/electric 300s to feature our Expression System® 2 pickup. This fall we're at it again with a run of vintage-look special edition models that sport a shaded edgeburst (SEB) mahogany top, featuring three distinctive guitar voices that have never been offered within the series: a Dreadnought 12-string, a Grand Symphony Baritone, and a Grand Concert 12-Fret. Rounding out the collection are cutaway and non-cutaway Grand Concert and Grand Auditorium models, a cutaway Grand Symphony, and a non-cutaway 6-string Dreadnought. Between the "old-soul" aesthetic and modern Taylor craftsmanship, these guitars promise to look, feel and sound great in your hands.

Darkness on the Edge of Brown

Mahogany's heritage as a classic guitar tonewood has a way of informing its aesthetic treatment, especially when displayed front and center as the soundboard. With its dusky, rich-grained complexion, a mahogany top projects an earthy look that is sonically well matched by its meaty, midrange-emphasized voice. On our special edition 300s, the artful hand-application of a shaded edgeburst adds a subtle splash of sepia-hued visual warmth that underscores the natural character of the wood. From there, simple appointments add workmanlike refinement without over-ornamentation. The solid black pickguard plays well with the ebony bridge and fretboard, along with the dark grain accents of the mahogany top. An all-satin finish brings a tastefully muted sheen that highlights the wood grain of the body and neck without overly glossing up the rooty vibe. The satin treatment also enhances the

natural visual cohesion between the mahogany and sapele, especially the well-matched mahogany neck with the sapele back and sides. White purfling around the body and rosette add a crisp visual pop that highlights each model's unique body contours. The end result is an all-around classic look with undeniable stage appeal.

Model Highlights

Double-Course Dreadnought Power

While most Taylor 12-strings feature our Grand Symphony body style, our special edition Dreadnought 360e-SEB blends a traditional body style with a uniquely compelling 12-string sound. The Dreadnought shape produces a robust voice with a powerful lower register, which adds authority to balance the 12-string's naturally shimmering character. The sapele/mahogany wood pairing yields a clear, woody and dry midrange that's especially emphasized with the mahogany top.

"The mahogany top has a unifying effect in the way it compresses the initial attack," says Taylor master builder Andy Powers. "This helps balance the volume across the tonal spectrum. Players can expect an exceptionally clear and powerful 12-string sound with smooth string-to-string balance." Taylor's Expression System® 2 electronics bring all that acoustic detail into a dynamic amplified sound for performance and recording.

Baritone Bravado

Taylor's baritone Grand Symphony guitars produce a husky voice (tuned from B to B) loaded with warmth, low-end richness, midrange growl, and treble presence. The lower register will appeal to singers with a lower vocal range, and the guitar's voice adds a complementary acoustic texture for weaving bass lines with another acoustic guitar in a duo setting. The mahogany top on our 326e Baritone-SEB evens out the dark and woody character of the low end for a pleasantly balanced response across the tonal

spectrum. If you crave a fresh tonal palette to reinvigorate your playing or songwriting, this may make an inspiring addition to your acoustic arsenal. Our natural-sounding Expression System® 2 pickup will capture that rich baritone depth for live settings or recording.

12-Fret Fun

Meet your favorite new fingerpicking dynamo. The non-cutaway 322e 12-Fret-SEB packs a lot of player-friendly features into our comfortably compact Grand Concert body. Between the pairing of sapele with a mahogany top and the location of the bridge as part of the 12-fret design, players can expect plenty of warmth, midrange punch, and impressive projection for a smaller body. The 24-7/8-inch neck makes it easier to fret and bend strings, inviting snappy plucking, while the mahogany top can also hold up to some lively strumming, even with the smaller Grand Concert body size. Players can also count on a nicely focused and balanced tone across the frequency spectrum, making it a viable option for both solo and ensemble playing, and with the ES2 pickup, gigging and recording as well. Unique aesthetic touches on this model include a slotted headstock and small diamond fretboard inlays rather than the dots found on the other special edition models.

Additional special edition 300 Series models include:

Grand Concert:
322-SEB, 322e-SEB, 322ce-SEB

Grand Auditorium:
324-SEB, 324e-SEB, 324ce-SEB

Grand Symphony:
326ce-SEB

Dreadnought:
320-SEB, 320e-SEB

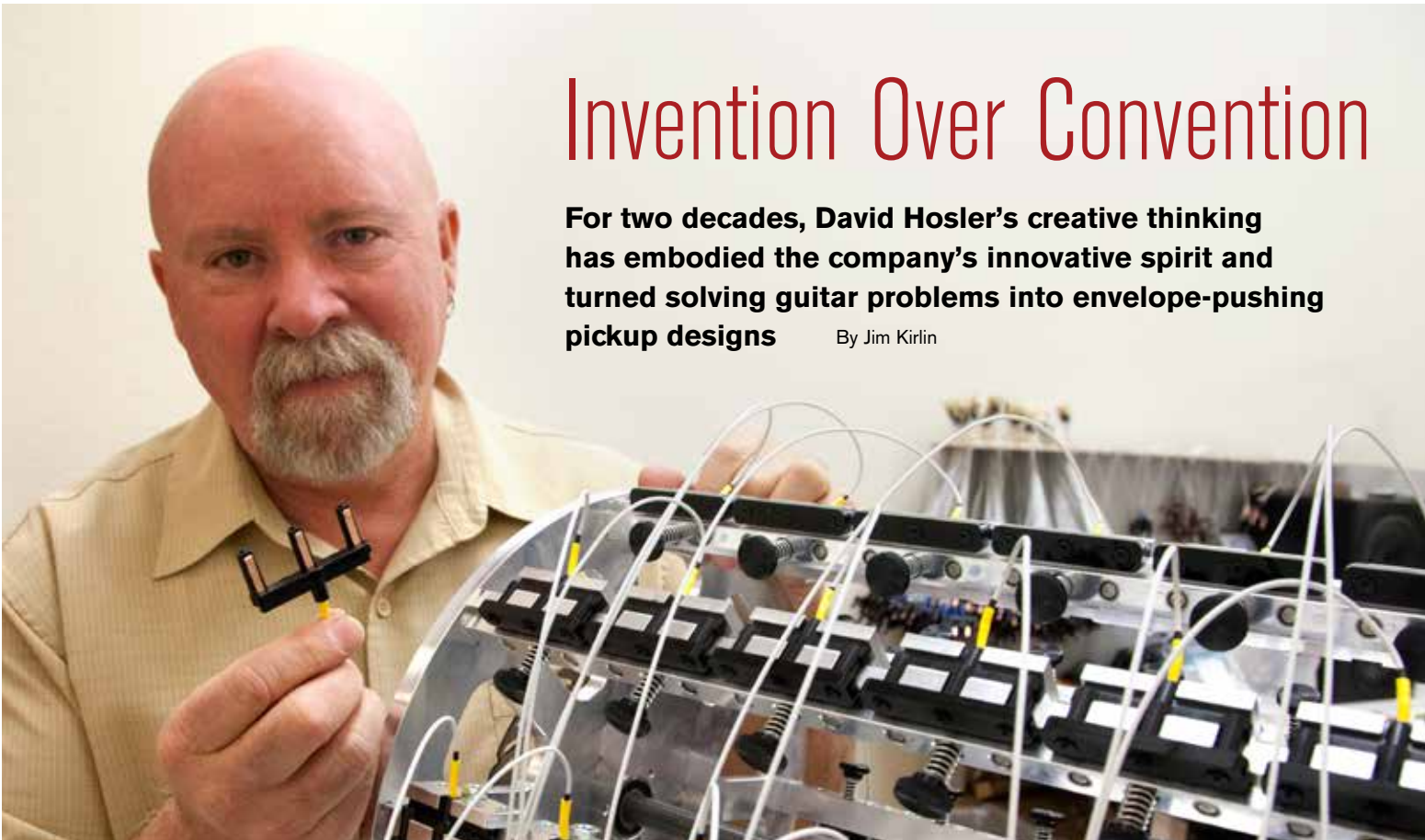
For model availability near you, check with your local authorized Taylor dealer. For more photos and complete specifications, visit taylorguitars.com.



326ce-SEB

Invention Over Convention

For two decades, David Hosler's creative thinking has embodied the company's innovative spirit and turned solving guitar problems into envelope-pushing pickup designs By Jim Kirlin



Hydroplane racer. Circus trapeze artist. Stunt man. Underwater archeologist. It sounds like the resume of the “Most Interesting Man in the World” character from the popular ad campaign for Dos Equis beer, but David Hosler brought his own manly mix of job skills to Taylor’s Repair department when he arrived in 1996. Luckily, he also brought an extensive musical background. Hosler was a seasoned guitar player and live sound engineer who’d toured with a number of bands in the ’80s and ’90s. He had also owned a guitar shop in South Carolina, where he built and serviced guitars, including Taylor warranty repairs, for over a decade.

At Taylor, Hosler found a place to thrive, thanks to Bob Taylor and an innovation-minded culture that was in the midst of a growth period. Over a 19-year tenure that ended with his retirement from the company in June, he synthesized his experiences as a player, builder, soundman and repair technician into a variety of roles that have helped propel Taylor forward on several fronts. Ultimately, he carved out a special place as an envelope-pushing problem solver on Taylor’s product development team, perhaps best known among Taylor players for spearheading the design of our proprietary Expression System® pickups.

“David is a great problem seer and fixer, a combination you rarely find in a

single individual,” says David Judd, a 23-year Taylor veteran and a longtime member of our product development team who has worked as closely with Hosler as anyone at Taylor over the years and become a good friend along the way. “I think a large part of our jobs here is problem-solving, and since neither of us were good students in school, we came up with ideas that were outside the box.”

Hosler remembers being outside plenty of boxes growing up in Sarasota, Florida.

“In the ’60s I was a troubled kid,” he says. “I got arrested in 7th grade for auto theft because I got in with a group of guys. Then when drugs came through Florida, that was the end of it all. I took my first LSD in 7th grade and just kind of went from there.”

But Hosler was also a gifted athlete who enjoyed sports. His father was a record-setting hydroplane racer, so he followed suit and started racing competitively when he was 12.

“They just told everybody I was 14 so I could compete,” he recalls.

He also competed as a gymnast, and when trying out for the Junior Olympics, his trainer also encouraged him to try out to become a trapeze artist for the Sailor Circus in Sarasota, a youth circus founded by performers from the renowned Ringling Bros. circus company.

“Willie Edleston, who was one of the main [trapeze] flyers with the Ringling show back in the ’40s and ’50s, somehow got me to try out,” Hosler says. “Being the uncommitted person I was, I didn’t show up a couple of times. Then when I did, he just gave me hell. It was what good coaches did. They didn’t give you hell like, ‘Go away,’ but rather, ‘Are you gonna straighten out?’ And I needed it really bad.”

Having the right mentor figures along the way proved to be an important and recurring theme in Hosler’s development. One was Jarl “Doc” Malwin, a big, charismatic Norwegian 20 years Hosler’s senior who was a pioneering river scuba diver.

“He was one of the early divers back in the ’50s,” Hosler says. “Back then, no one did what they did. These guys pioneered stuff when the first aqua-lungs came out and when Jacques Cousteau was there; they were almost the Les Pauls of that genre.”

Malwin and several others had explored Florida’s rivers and discovered hundreds of ancient artifacts. They formed the Florida Indian Foundation to promote archeological research. Malwin introduced Hosler to blackwater river diving.

“These rivers are black with tannic acid,” he says. “You can’t see a thing. It’s like going to a swamp and diving in.”

And then swimming with alligators and snakes.

Hosler remembers his first diving excursion with Malwin in the Steinhatchee River in northern Florida.

“I’ve decided that ‘Steinhatchee’ is Indian for ‘You’re just gonna die here,’” he laughs. Malwin helped him overcome his fear, and Hosler took the plunge, leading to many subsequent diving excursions with him, swimming with car-battery-powered lights to cut through the inky murk. While he’s seen gators, he’s never been attacked. His worst encounter was almost drowning while being pursued by a big, territorial water moccasin.

In his blackwater diving experiences, Hosler retrieved numerous artifacts that had never been found in the area before – mastodon bones and remnants of other extinct animals like a giant tortoise the size of a VW Beetle and a glyptodon, a giant armadillo-like animal. The many discoveries he made, and the lengthy conversations he enjoyed with Malwin during their drives to different rivers, about everything from diving to physics to life, helped Hosler understand, among other things, the importance of confronting one’s fears.

“When you finally get the courage to not be afraid to do something because you might swim up on an alligator – it’s gonna happen, and it’s not fun – you realize that in facing your fear you actu-

ally can do things that you’re pretty much held in bondage from otherwise not doing because you’re afraid,” he says. “Doc got to the root of the things that make us fearful in life, and even more than that, he was always one of these guys who said, anything that’s worth doing is worth doing badly.”

It’s a trait that Hosler recognized in Bob Taylor when he joined the company.

“Bob is so great at what he does because he’s not afraid of failing, because he figures he’ll just keep working at it and working at it until it works,” Hosler says. “Or he’ll say, ‘OK, I learned a lot from that that will help me with the next thing.’ When you have a chance to work with Bob, one of the things he does so well is empower you to uncover things as though there were no rules in the world.”

At a Taylor farewell luncheon held in his honor in June, Hosler reflected on how his diving experiences had informed his approach to R&D and pickup design at Taylor.

“It’s just the idea that if you want to make new discoveries, you often have to look where other people haven’t looked,” he says. “I think a lot of the time we follow a course of doing things a certain way without even considering that there are other ways of doing them.”

He relates it to the work that led to Taylor’s original Expression System pickup and preamp.

“When we first started, I contacted everybody I could find who had ever made a pickup and asked them the same questions: Why did you do what you did? Why did you choose to use piezo crystals? And the predominant thing I found was, first, the lack of real information about how guitars work; also, the materials were not available to do anything else. So the approach became entrenched. It helped me realize that if we have new materials, and now we have more information, maybe there’s another path that’s better.”

Hosler found another intellectual mentor in brilliant audio designer Rupert Neve, whose recording consoles are revered in the music industry and with whom he worked closely on the development of the ES.

He and I just connected,” Hosler says. “Everything he taught me I just absorbed.”

Reflecting on his product development work at Taylor over the years, Hosler says he’s probably proudest of the Expression System 2 design, whose key innovative twist – the repositioning of piezo sensors behind the guitar’s saddle rather than beneath it – was sparked by a memory of putting up tents back in his circus days. (So that circus experience actually *did* come in handy).

“It had been 50 years of everybody doing it in a way that was less effective,” he says. “But right now, we’re installing almost 400 a day and they just balance [so easily]. It makes you feel like you’ve learned how to make a car that gets 80 miles to the gallon. But I only had the idea and prototyped it to the point that it worked. It was really Matt [Guzzetta] and David Judd and a team that figured out how to turn the idea into something that could work and then how to build the stuff to make it work.”

“Dave’s a very inquisitive guy,” says Guzzetta, Taylor’s longtime industrial design guru (now semi-retired), and clearly a kindred spirit in terms of developing innovative solutions to refine the guitar-making process. “He never quits, and he’s not afraid to venture into unknown territories.”

Hosler’s magnetic pickup work for the original ES laid the foundation for Taylor’s subsequent electric guitar designs, first with the T5 and then the T3 and SolidBody. He has especially fond memories of the way the T5 was brought to market and the positive reception among dealers and customers.

“No one expected that guitar to be as popular as it was right out of the gate,” he says. “I’ll never forget watching that all happen, and the way different departments within the company came together. It was two years before we even met demand.”

Over the years, Hosler has been instrumental in implementing change in other ways at Taylor. He managed our Repair and Final Assembly departments when Taylor’s patented NT neck design was put into production in 1999, and helped revamp the workflow for the neck assembly process. While serving as VP of Customer Service, Repair and Quality Control, Hosler was deployed to Europe in 2008 to set up Taylor repair and service centers in four countries while Fender was handling our European distribution. A couple of years later he moved to Amsterdam to establish our European headquarters, creating the infrastructure for Taylor to take on its own distribution, including warehousing, sales, and a factory service center equipped to provide the full range of Taylor repairs offered at our factory headquarters in El Cajon.

After nearly 20 years at Taylor, Hosler feels like this is the right time for him to move on to other creative endeavors. He notes that our Electronics department is in great shape with 12-year Taylor veteran Trenton Blizzard, a brilliant pickup and preamp designer, managing things.

“I love Taylor,” Hosler says. “It just feels like the right time to let other people do their thing and for me to find the next thing I’m supposed to do.”

And he has. When we spoke, Hosler

was a few days away from moving back to his home state of Florida with his wife Tami and two dogs. In fact, by now he’ll already have set up a small business in St. Petersburg. It’s a combination guitar repair shop – naturally, it’s an authorized Taylor service center – and small music gear gallery/cooperative called Seven C Music (www.sevencmusic.com). The cooperative component of the business will bring together seven small-scale, independent craftsmen, selected by Hosler, who make unique guitars, amps or pedals, but whose work might languish in a traditional music store. Hosler sees the coop arrangement as an opportunity to provide a better environment in which to showcase young and talented industrial artists. He’s also happy to lend a bit of mentoring guidance along the way as others have in his life.

“It gives me purpose,” he says. “It gets me around these really bright, talented guys, who think different from me, and that’s awesome. I can help them. I know people in the industry. I can get materials.”

And if they ever want to learn to fly on a trapeze or race hydroplanes or go blackwater diving, they’ll know just the guy to ask. **W&S**



Clockwise from top down: Hosler and a circus colleague perform the “French Trap” on the trapeze; piloting a hydroplane; in a Florida blackwater river with part of a mastodon jawbone; with the T3/B shortly before its release; holding the coveted TEC award from the Mix Foundation for the design of the Expression System with Rupert Neve; circa 2000, when he managed the Final Assembly and Repair departments; **Right:** With David Judd; **Opposite page:** With an Expression System 2 pickup element

Hosler Riffs

Random musings from David Hosler on what he has learned throughout his career, gleaned from conversation in June of 2015:

There are people who are good at gathering information but bad at coming to the right conclusions. It’s good to have people with the ability to take information and say, “Maybe that’s *not* the reason.”

I believe there’s a difference between knowledge and skill. Skill is acquired; you learn how to do something. I remember it was like this with guitars when I first started working on them. Everything felt so clumsy, and yet I was reading some things and trying things, and then one day I just started knowing what to do.

Mentoring requires the most difficult of tasks, which is to put up with people who don’t know what you know, and you think they should.

To be a good leader you have to be willing to be inconvenienced. Most people don’t realize why Bob chose that office over there. He was going to take this one. But then he said, “No, I want to be by the door where people walk by so they can walk in and inconvenience me. Because how am I going to do what I do for people if I’m not accessible?”

You have tons of information hanging on hooks that seems completely disconnected but can potentially build itself into a mosaic. That’s the best way I can describe it – that in my mind, I’m constantly picking things up and I’m hanging them. It’s all there. I know Bob does this too. And I think this is something that gets missed in our culture, in our world: You get disciplines of things so compartmentalized that people never really see how they’re connected to other things, and for greater value.

I got interested in a concept a while ago called information cascade. You could call it following the herd. There’s a great study about why people get caught in the things they do, and it talks about voluntary and involuntary use of info. The best example is, you decide you’re going to eat at a restaurant where you’ve never been before. So you research all these places and finally decide on one, and when you pull up in your car, another restaurant over here is full, but the one where you are, that you did all this research on, doesn’t have anybody there. So now you start questioning your judgment. This is the pivot of risk and reward. You have to decide whether you’re willing to follow everything you know and go into this place where there are no cars or go over there. The thing is, if you go to the place that’s empty, the next person who pulls in now realizes there’s another car there....





HOW DIFFERENT PICK ATTRIBUTES INFLUENCE ACOUSTIC TONE

By Andy Powers

Ed. Note: If you're hip to the recent wave of tone-enhancing guitar developments here at Taylor, most notably our revoiced 600, 800 and 900 Series, you know that Taylor master builder Andy Powers has carefully considered virtually every material ingredient of a guitar in his redesign efforts. Another key contributor to a guitar's sound, of course, is the technique of you the player. And in between you and your guitar may be another variable: a pick. Not surprisingly, Andy has some insights on this subject. In fact, his own experimentation has led Taylor to partner with our friends at Dunlop to offer some new pick options (available through TaylorWare) that Andy feels will serve players well.

We asked Andy to share his thoughts on the key physical attributes that differentiate picks, and how they can influence a guitar's tonal response. In the end, his observations are meant to help you arrive at the sound you want, but he admits that for some, his pick "nerdery" might be more technical detail that you need. If you enjoy exploring the nuances of tone, you're likely to find his guiding thoughts helpful. If not, that's fine too. But if nothing else, you might find it fun to experiment with different picks to find out if you can feel or hear a difference. The good news is that picks are inexpensive, so spending just a few bucks might put some inspiring new tonal flavors at your fingertips.

As guitar players, it's easy to become fixated on the objects of our musical affection. We swoon over beautiful curves and appointments. Our hands caress a smooth, inviting neck. We reach for a pick. But wait. Are you really going to pour your soul into those strings using any old piece of plastic? Trees hundreds of years old were felled and transformed into a beautiful instrument, with careful thought given toward creating the most musically dynamic instrument possible. That instrument and your play-

ing deserve a carefully considered pick. Picks have been used on string instruments for millennia. Nearly every culture whose music includes plucked string instruments use plectra of some sort. From the long and slender picks used by oud players, to the vaguely triangular bachi picks used by Japanese shamisen players, to the familiar teardrop shape favored by guitar players, the pick is a vital part of string instrument playing. For players who use one, the pick is the actual connection: the point where musical expression transfers from the player's articulation hand to the instrument through the strings. Indeed, picks are important. But what makes them different from one another? To a degree, guitar picks mostly look the same, but then again, so do most acoustic guitars. Subtle distinctions in shape, thickness and material all matter in significant ways, as each variable influences how a string responds to the player's attack, much like the ways a guitar's shape, design and materials influence its sound. Let's dissect the key variables that differentiate picks: the shape, the striking surface, the rigidity and the material they are made from.

Shape
The shape of the pick determines how much overtone dampening occurs during the pick stroke. Along the length of a vibrating guitar string, there are sub-vibrations, or overtones, in addition to the fundamental or simple note the player articulates. The higher the pitch of the overtone, the shorter the length of string these individual wave motions occupy. At very high frequencies, these vibrations are very short in physical length – to the extent that a pick with a wide or round striking area will dampen and diminish their presence from the sound we hear. This overtone dampening results in a dark or warmer, deeper sound. On the other hand, a sharply pointed pick will contribute a very bright sound, as the slender striking point will dampen very few high-frequency string overtones. Often, once players clue into this, they learn to manipulate their pick tone by rotating their pick in their fingers to coax different sounds from

either the wider or more acutely pointed areas of the pick's perimeter.

Striking Surface
The shape of the pick's actual striking surface, or its edge profile, is a subtle extension of the pick's profile. This edge profile might be squared off perpendicular to the face of the pick; it might be rounded over, or beveled to a knife-like taper. A pick is typically held at a variety of angles and rarely strikes with its face perfectly parallel to the string. This edge profile will wear with use, and the texture that develops will slowly alter how easily the pick slides and releases off the string, as well as how the overtone dampening is affected. As the edge of the pick wears in, it will gradually become broader than when it was new. This slow widening increases the overtone dampening and darkens its tone. If the pick had a sharp, pointed profile to begin with, this will quickly wear away, making a significantly darker sound. The texture that develops with use is typically rougher than a newly polished or tumbled surface. Wound guitar strings in particular act like files, grinding away at the pick's striking edge. A roughened surface will drag against the string during the pick stroke, grabbing the string and pulling it along with the pick, introducing some resistance and additional pick noise. A rough pick edge will translate into a more audible pre-note pick noise. This isn't necessarily a bad thing – the resistance can be a benefit to playing styles where the player is seeking extra sonic space in front of each note. To hear stellar examples of pre-note pick noise, try listening to Eric Clapton's playing on John Mayall's Bluebreakers record or some of Biréli Lagrène's fantastic gypsy jazz playing. Conversely, a pick with a very smooth edge profile will glide off the string and reduce drag, which will translate into precise note definition and a fast, responsive feel in the player's hand.

Rigidity
The thickness, or rigidity, of the pick is an important variable in the pick equation. Thin and flexible picks act like shock absorbers. As the player's hand

goes to impart its energy into the string, the pick flexes as it is pushed past the stiff string. At a certain point, the pick releases and snaps past the string. This flexing and snapping action absorbs some energy and tends to even out the player's attack. In this case, the string's response depends more on the flexing characteristic of the pick rather than how forcefully the player drives the pick past the string. For this reason, a stiffer pick will always offer the player's hand more dynamic range than a flexible one. Besides reducing dynamic range, this flexing action takes time. Not much, but it takes time for the pick to bend and snap past the string. As a result, rapid articulation is greatly facilitated by a more rigid pick. Lest they get a bad reputation, flexible picks have a place in the musical universe. Because of their tendency to absorb energy and even out the string's response, flexible picks can be a great asset when playing a rhythm part where an even, controlled string response is desired.

Material
Finally, the material the pick is made from imparts its own influence into these physical factors: how smoothly the pick glides from the string; the texture of the striking surface both when new and as the material wears; and how the string overtones are dampened by the softness or hardness of the material. The weight of the pick's material also provides feedback to the player in a tactile way as the pick is swung past the string, contributing its

own inertia into the complex alchemy of a player's articulation hand in motion. Picks were traditionally made from the shell of the long endangered hawksbill sea turtle. Synthetic materials have been in common use for decades, two of the most common being celluloid and nylon. In reality, nearly any hard and long-wearing material can work, with each material displaying unique characteristics in how the pick addresses the string before the note is allowed to sound, as well as how the pick will wear.

Pick Recommendations
With these parameters in mind, it becomes clear that there is no one definitive pick to choose for every player and guitar. The perfect pick should blend the shape, edge, rigidity and material characteristics in a way that complements your articulation hand and instrument, along with your repertoire.

For a wide variety of acoustic guitar playing styles, most players tend to prefer the classic teardrop shape, recognizable the world over as the distinctive guitar pick shape. This outline provides both a smaller point for brighter sounds and two more broadly rounded corners for imparting warmer sounds. Extra thickness is a big asset for most musical circumstances, as the dynamic range helps draw the most from the guitar's voice.

We here at Taylor are thrilled to partner with our friends at Dunlop to offer some of our favorite acoustic guitar picks.



Ultex
Ultex® picks are formed from a dynamic and responsive-sounding, long-wearing material. The thinner gauges are more flexible depending on the player's finger pressure and grip, which tends to even out the attack and string volume, making them a good match for strumming chords where even volume is beneficial, or for players who enjoy the feel of a pick that evens out their string attack. The thicker gauges allow for more dynamic range and are more reflective of the player's right-hand finger pressure, offering great touch sensitivity and a direct connection to the strings.

The tumbled and carefully formed edge profile of these picks has a smooth release off the string, creating a well-defined note.

Primetone
Primetone™ picks are made with a similarly responsive, long-wearing material. These picks have formed edge profiles that have been carefully smoothed off to simulate the wear pattern that forms on a well broken-in pick, but with a highly polished texture. The result is a pick that glides quickly and definitively off of the string, making for a clear and fast feel with wonderfully intact string overtones. The raised grip ensures a sure hold and a positive player connection.

Experiment to Find Your Fit
Each player and each instrument is a unique individual, as is the music drawn from them. With that in mind, experimentation is a great way to find your fit in a pick. We've combined six of our favorite Dunlop picks from the Ultex and Primetone series into a variety pack offered through TaylorWare so each player can discover what works best for their style and instrument. You can also purchase individual packages of a single type and gauge. One final thought: If for some reason you find the acoustic tone lacking on a guitar you currently have, the solution might be as simple as switching to a different pick. For example, if a guitar sounds too dark for your taste, a brighter sounding pick might do the trick. Remember, a pick provides the tie that binds us to those guitar strings. As such, we should choose a great one. **W&S**

PICK & CHOOSE

Pick variables and how they impact tone

Pick Shape

Rounder Striking Area

- More overtone dampening
- Dark, warmer, deeper sound

More Pointed Shape

- Less dampening of high frequency overtones
- Brighter sound

Striking Surface

Smooth Edge Profile

- Less overtone dampening
- More precise note definition and a faster response

Roughened/Worn Surface

- More overtone dampening
- Darker sound
- More resistance and additional pick noise
- Extra sonic space in front of a note

Rigidity

Thin/Flexible

- Absorbs energy; evens out the player's attack
- Consistent response for rhythmic playing

Thicker/Stiffer

- Faster articulation
- Greater dynamic range

Material

- Most are made of celluloid or nylon for long wear
- Harder materials produce less dampening
- Weight of material affects both stroke and sound

Soundings



Double Dream Come True

Thirteen-year-old **U2** fan Brian Hartman is too young to even *have* a bucket list, but getting to play on stage with the iconic Irish band would no doubt be on it. After receiving front row tickets for Christmas, the Massachusetts native, who's also a developing guitar player, attended his first U2 show in Boston in July at the TD Garden with his family. He knew the band was inviting audience members on-stage to join them each night for their hits "Desire" and "Angel of Harlem," so he came prepared. "I had learned 'Desire,' Hartman shares, "but my dad said they were pulling people up on stage for 'Angel of Harlem' too, so he taught me the song." Hartman also brought a sign that said "I PLAY GUITAR."

His chance came halfway through the show when Bono leaned over the side of the stage and said, "You play guitar? Come on, young man. Can you play 'Angel of Harlem'?" After climbing on stage, Hartman was handed The Edge's Grand Orchestra **718e** and

asked by Bono to take it in the key of C. He began to strum the first few chords to the delight of the crowd. Hartman says he wasn't nervous during the performance. "I was too focused on the band," he explains. "I didn't even notice the people." At the end of the song, as he stood there dazed in the afterglow of the moment, Bono told him, "I might have to take that back, young man," motioning to the guitar. "Actually, I'm not taking that back," he added. "It's for you." Hartman's jaw dropped as the crowd roared.

"I was not expecting to get the guitar at all," he shared with us a couple of days later. "I'm so happy with it and play it all the time."

Hartman left that night with the guitar but without a case, so when we heard his story, we made sure he received one. He says he plans to enjoy his once-in-a-lifetime gift and play it a lot.

"Hopefully, someday I'll be playing my own music at the Garden."



Top: Brian Hartman performing with Bono and the Edge; **Above:** Hartman learns the guitar is his to keep (photos by John Gillooly); **Above right:** Lukas Nelson and Bob Weir (photo by Jay Blakesberg); **Right (L-R):** She Rocks Showcase performers Pearl, Bryce Hitchcock, Katie Garibaldi, Taylor Tote, and Chelsea and Grace Constable

Backstage with Bob

San Francisco-based photographer **Jay Blakesberg** has shot some of the biggest names in music over the years. In May he was backstage at the Sweetwater Music Hall in Mill Valley, California, for a special concert to benefit Music Heals International, featuring **Lukas Nelson** and an array of musical friends, including Grateful Dead co-founder **Bob Weir**. While hanging in the green room, Blakesberg snapped a shot of Nelson and Weir, who had his Taylor **714ce** on hand. In fact, Weir actually was one of the early, unofficial beta testers for the Expression System® 2 in 2013 and became a fan of the pickup. Taylor pickup developer David Hosler (see his profile on page 24) met Weir at a NAMM Show years ago and they struck up a friendship based on their love of guitars and tone.

"Bob is really into audio quality," Hosler says. "He has the Myer Sound Constellation acoustic system [a state-of-the-art sound system for venues] installed his place. We saw each other a few times and it just led to asking him to try the ES2."

According to Weir's guitar tech, he's been enjoying the 714ce and has used it for a number of live gigs.



She Rocks Taylor Showcase in Nashville

After the opening day of the 2015 Summer NAMM Show in Nashville on July 9, the She Rocks Showcase filled the music venue The Listening Room. Sponsored by Taylor Guitars and hosted by the **Women in Music Network**, the event presented singer-songwriter **Bryce Hitchcock**, soul singer **Pearl**, and guitar duo the **Constable Sisters** (featuring Chelsea and her 13-year-old sister, Grace), whose smoking set included covers that ranged from Django Reinhardt to Dire Straits ("Sultans of Swing"). (Check out their videos on YouTube; you won't be disappointed.) They were followed by singer-songwriters **Katie Garibaldi** and **Taylor Tote**. Videos of each performance are available at: YouTube.com/thewimn



Acoustic Co-Pilots

A warm acoustic current flows through the recent self-titled release from **The River Pilots**, an Americana duo comprised of singer-songwriters **Robert Natt** and **Zach Wiley**. Based in Roanoke, Virginia and Raleigh, North Carolina, respectively, the two bonded a few years back through shared musical tastes that favor a melodic acoustic sound, sweet vocal harmonies, and tastefully distilled arrangements. Their resulting musical collaboration manages to shine with tonal richness while also embracing the simplicity of a good melody.

"Simple music can have a very powerful emotional feel," says Wiley, who contributed piano, keys, organ, drums, guitar and vocals to the project. "Pair the simplicity of a 1-4-5 progression with a sweet, simple, catchy melody and you have a song worth singing that runs deeper than anything musically."

Natt and Wiley used a cedar-top **714ce** and a **414ce** throughout the record (both were purchased from Taylor dealer Fret Mill Music in Roanoke). Natt says that as a writer and arranger, he takes a minimalist approach.

"I'm really drawn to great tone," he says. "I wanted this record to have



L-R: Robert Natt, Zach Wiley

huge, beautiful guitar sounds. We gave a lot of attention to very rich chord voicings. We try to keep melodies straightforward, but build lush, modern chords."

"The beauty," Wiley adds, "comes in finding the musical layers to move a simple song forward. Then the studio becomes an empty canvas."

The duo's interest in rich, warm tones led them to use some vintage analog recording gear in the studio. To mike his acoustic parts, Natt went with a Sony C-37A, and they used API preamps with an impressive musical pedigree.

"They were salvaged from the Studio B console at Sunset Sound in

Tools of the Trade

Robert Natt and Zach Wiley talk about recording with their Taylors

What do you like sonically about your Taylors? Do you feel like the 714ce and 414ce have unique nuances in their acoustic personalities, and do you find yourselves favoring either for certain things?

Robert: There are definitely key distinctions between the two. I own the 714ce and Zach owns the 414ce, but we both used them interchangeably on a lot of our recordings. We wrote most of the songs on our record with these two guitars. I play a lot of fingerstyle, so I love the cedar top on the 714ce. It has a beautiful, warm tone and a perfect string balance. I use light gauge Elixir Nanoweb Phosphor Bronze strings with it. With my playing style, it's important for each note to have its own voice and not get lost in a sea of chords. It's like a perfectly dialed-in compressor without any loss in tone. The 414ce definitely has a brighter vibe with the spruce top. We used it to add some sparkle and sometimes paired it with a darker guitar for an added dimension. It's a bit punchier and can take heavier strumming without overdriving the top.

Zach: My 414ce tends to lean toward the bright and chimy tone that is great for strummy rhythm parts throughout the record, as is Robert's 714ce, although that guitar has less treble and a bit more body.

There's a lot of fluid fingerpicking throughout the record. Is there anything distinctive about your picking style or playing approach on the record? Are you strictly fingerstyle guys, or do you also use a pick?

Robert: I play a mix of fingerstyle and picking on the record. As far as fingerstyle approach is concerned, I'm totally obsessive about it. I used to geek out on James Taylor's technique as a teenager. I also studied classical guitar for a while and that helped my right-hand technique. I use the pads of my fingers in combination with natural fingernails. The pad gives each note plenty of body, and the nail provides the attack. I file my nails to a rounded shape and use

successive grits to achieve a glass-like edge that gives a really smooth release on each string. That's the real tone secret! There's really no substitute. For picking or strumming parts, I use a Dunlop .73 pick and a light to moderate attack. String balance is critical for me, so I don't like to dig in too hard.

On "In Time (Our Day is Coming Soon)," I actually just used the side

parts and interwoven fingerstyle parts that worked so well with them. I probably brought 10 guitars, but the Taylors were just so versatile.

Aside from the tone, my favorite thing about Taylor guitars is playability. It's so rare to find guitars that sound so good and are consistently playable all the way up the neck. I play with a lot of capos and partial capos, so maintaining proper intona-



of my thumb without any fingernail. While we were recording the album, Zach wrote the initial parts to that song and came up with a great part on a nylon-string guitar. While we rehearsed in the studio, I added the strumming part, capo'd high on the 714ce with a very light attack. It's a perfect combination.

Zach: Writing pretty much the entire record on our Taylors gave us a lot of time to really home in on our different parts, which became a very distinct and prominent part of sound on the record. When it comes to fingerpicking, neither of us has ever used picks unless it's a strumming rhythm part.

How were the Taylors to record? I'm curious what studio mikes you used. Your website had a photo of what looked like a Sony C-37A. Is that unit an older piece of gear? Also, did you blend the Expression System in as another signal source or just stick with the mikes to get as warm an analog sound as possible?

Robert: The Taylors were great in the studio! We did a lot of doubled

Calendar

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

We're well into a new season of Taylor Road Shows, which bring our tandem of sales experts and product specialists to authorized dealers to share the latest from the Taylor factory. Our crew will share helpful information on choosing the right guitar based on body style and tonewood options, featuring guitar demos with models from the 2015 Taylor line. As always, we'll have a fresh assortment of inspiring custom guitars to show off, too. We've also put together a "Find Your Fit" guide for the Road Shows that you can take home with you. The shows are lively and fun, and we love to meet fellow guitar enthusiasts and answer questions.

In addition to Road Shows, our Find Your Fit events take things a step further by giving you a chance to schedule a one-on-one personal consultation with Taylor experts to help you choose the right guitar for your playing style and needs.

Below you'll find our latest Taylor event listings. We hope to see you!

North American Road Shows



Taylor product specialist Wayne Johnson during a Road Show at The Guitar Bar in Santa Barbara, California in September

Winnipeg, MB Canada Quest Musique Fri., Oct. 16, 7 p.m. (204) 231-1677	Springfield, NJ Sam Ash Music - Springfield Tue., Oct. 20, 6:30 p.m. (973) 376-5161	Lewisville, TX Guitar Center - Lewisville Thu., Oct. 22, 6:30 p.m. (972) 459-1864
San Diego, CA The Blue Guitar Mon., Oct. 19, 7 p.m. (619) 283-2700	Longview, TX Mundt Music - Longview Tue., Oct. 20, 6:30 p.m. (903) 758-8872	Lynchburg, VA Point Source Audio Mon., Oct. 26, 6:30 p.m. (434) 237-9091
Philadelphia, PA Sam Ash Music - Franklin Mills Mon., Oct. 19, 6:30 p.m. (215) 612-1339	Westminster, CA Sam Ash Music - Westminster Mon., Oct. 20, 6:30 p.m. (714) 889-2122	St. Louis, MO Guitar Center - Crestwood Mon., Oct. 26, 6:30 p.m. (314) 918-7660
Toronto, ON, Canada Steve's Music Mon., Oct. 19, 7 p.m. (416) 593-8888	Sacramento, CA Skip's Music Wed., Oct. 21, 6:30 p.m. (916) 484-7575	Springfield, MA Falcetti Music Mon., Oct. 26, 6:30 p.m. (413) 543-1002
Burlington, ON, Canada Long & McQuade Tue., Oct. 20, 7 p.m. (905) 319-3330	Mesquite, TX Guitar Center - Mesquite Wed., Oct. 21, 6:30 p.m. (972) 279-1607	Clifton Park, NY Parkway Music Tue., Oct. 27, 6:30 p.m. (518) 383-0300

Ottawa, ON Canada Lauzon Music Thu., Oct. 22, 7 p.m. (613) 725-1116	Ellisville, MO Fazio's Music Tue., Oct. 27, 6:30 p.m. (636) 227-3573	Olympia, WA Music 6000 Tue., Nov. 10, 7 p.m. (360) 786-6000
Auburn, CA Encore Music Thu., Oct. 22, 7 p.m. (530) 889-0514	Sterling, VA Melodee Music Tue., Oct. 27, 7:30 p.m. (703) 450-4667	Lafayette, LA Lafayette Music Wed., Nov. 11, 6:30 p.m. (337) 984-3700
White Plains, NY Sam Ash Music - White Plains Thu., Oct. 22, 6:30 p.m. (914) 949-8448	Falls Church, VA Guitar Center - Falls Church Wed., Oct. 28, 6:30 p.m. (703) 533-8500	Tukwila, WA Guitar Center Southcenter Wed., Nov. 11, 6:30 p.m. (206) 243-9077
Concord, NH Strings and Things Wed., Oct. 28, 6:30 p.m. (603) 228-1971	Heath, OH Guitar Guys Wed., Nov. 11, 7 p.m. (740) 522-0277	Greenfield Park, QC Canada Steve's Music Wed., Nov. 18, 7 p.m. (450) 912-2216
Rolla, MO Merle's Music Wed., Oct. 28, 6:30 p.m. (573) 341-3020	Houston, TX Great Southern Music Thu., Nov. 12, 6:30 p.m. (281) 550-4545	North Wales, PA George's Music Thu., Nov. 19, 6:30 p.m. (215) 412-4400
Catonsville, MD Appalachian Bluegrass Thu., Oct. 29, 6:30 p.m. (410) 744-1144	Portland, OR Portland Music Company Thu., Nov. 12, 7 p.m. (503) 228-8437	Dover, NH Ear Craft Music Thu., Nov. 19, 6:30 p.m. (603) 749-3138
Collinsville, IL AAA Swing City Music Thu., Oct. 29, 6:30 p.m. (618) 345-6700	Fraser, MI Huber & Breese Music Thu., Nov. 12, 6:30 p.m. (586) 294-3950	Montreal, QC, Canada Musique Diplomate Thu., Nov. 19, 7 p.m. (514) 274-5413
Lexington, MA The Music Emporium Thu., Oct. 29, 6:30 p.m. (781) 860-0049	Keizer, OR Uptown Music Fri., Nov. 13, 7 p.m. (503) 393-4437	
Winnipeg, MB Canada Quest Musique Fri., Oct. 16, 7 p.m. (204) 231-1677	Carlisle, PA JW Music Mon., Nov. 16, 7 p.m. (717) 258-6765	Winnipeg, MB, Canada Quest Musique Sat., Oct. 17, 12 p.m. – 6 p.m. (204) 231-1677
San Diego, CA The Blue Guitar Mon., Oct. 19, 7 p.m. (619) 283-2700	Boardman, OH Guitar Center - Youngstown Mon., Nov. 9, 6:30 p.m. (330) 629-7588	Sterling, VA Melodee Music Tue., Oct. 27, 2 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (703) 450-4667
Philadelphia, PA Sam Ash Music - Franklin Mills Mon., Oct. 19, 6:30 p.m. (215) 612-1339	Seattle, WA Dusty Strings Mon., Nov. 9, 7 p.m. (206) 634-1662	Catonsville, MD Appalachian Bluegrass Thu., Oct. 29, 2015 2 p.m. – 6 p.m. (410) 744-1144
Toronto, ON, Canada Steve's Music Mon., Oct. 19, 7 p.m. (416) 593-8888	Monroe, LA Matt's Music Tue., Nov. 10, 6:30 p.m. (318) 387-3628	Houston, TX Fuller's Guitar Sat., Nov. 7, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. (713) 880-2188
Burlington, ON, Canada Long & McQuade Tue., Oct. 20, 7 p.m. (905) 319-3330	Lyndhurst, OH Sam Ash Music - Lyndhurst Tue., Nov. 10, 6:30 p.m. (440) 446-0850	Burlington, WA Hugo Helmer Music Sat., Nov. 7, 12 p.m. – 6 p.m. (360) 757-0270

Seasonal Tips

Don't Let Your Guitar Get Parched This Fall

The arrival of fall brings colder temperatures to many regions. This means many of you will be running an indoor heater in your home (or store) throughout the fall and winter months. Remember that the more you heat your home, the lower the indoor humidity will drop, which in turn means your guitars will be more susceptible to drying out. That's why it's important to monitor the humidity level in your home. Use a digital hygrometer, as they provide the most accurate readings, and you'll probably need to use a guitar humidifier of some kind to maintain a healthy humidity level for your guitar (45-55 percent is ideal).

One product our Service department recommends is the D'Addario Two-Way Humidification System® (available through TaylorWare), which automates the humidity control process, making it easy to maintain proper humidification for your guitar in its case. The moisture-filled packets have a leak-proof, water vapor-permeable membrane that provides two-way humidity control, allowing them to either release or absorb moisture to maintain a constant relative humidity (RH) level of 45-50 percent. When you take your guitar out of its case to play it, be sure to close the lid to preserve the humidified environment.

If you notice your guitar top sinking, or your action getting low and buzzy, or fret ends that feel like they protrude slightly as your fretting hand glides up and down the neck, it's an indication that your guitar is dry and needs more moisture.

Remember, if you allow your guitar to dry out, it will take longer (and possibly require a more intensive humidification process) to restore it to a healthy humidity level.

to a healthy humidity level.

To give you a visual idea of how extremely dry conditions can impact a guitar, take a look at the two photos shown here. Taylor repair expert Rob Magargal, who currently serves as our Service Network Manager and trains our authorized service technicians around the world, intentionally dried out and then rehydrated a 314ce as part of a training project. We photographed the guitar in its different states, lighting the shots in a dramatic way that accentuates how much the back of the guitar can physically change when it gets dry. In the photo of the dry guitar, the back is concave – the straight edge only comes in contact with the back at the outer edges, and the space in between reveals how much the back has sunk due to dryness. In the photo of the rehydrated guitar, the shape is convex, with the straight edge only contacting the back in the center, showing the proper arch that the guitar back should have. It's important to note that a dry guitar is in danger far before it displays the extreme symptoms of the dry guitar shown.

Rob Magargal offers one other bit of humidity control advice relating to using a digital hygrometer. Most units have a "Min/Max" button that shows the fluctuation range of the humidity levels. That can be an important reading to monitor.

"A person might open the guitar case or check their room and see the current reading of, say, 43 percent, but the lowest humidity could have been 25 percent," he explains. "That is a true sign they need to use a humidifier to make sure the guitar doesn't get damaged slowly over winter. When combined, 43 and 25 percent translates into a much lower average humidity. Without checking the Min/Max readings, people might get a false sense that everything is fine."

If you have questions about humidity care for your guitar, visit taylorguitars.com/support or feel free to call our Service department toll-free in North America at 1-800-943-6782. Taylor owners in other countries will find additional contact information listed on the website.



Extremely dry guitar



Rehydrated guitar

Wadsworth, OH
Larry's Music Center
Sat., Nov. 7, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.
(330) 334-4433

Westminster, MD
Coffey Music
Tue., Nov. 10, 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
(410) 848-5003

La Plata, MD
Island Music
Wed., Nov. 11, 3 p.m. – 8 p.m.
(301) 392-3960

Portland, OR
Portland Music Company
Sat., Nov. 14, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
(503) 228-8437

Tucson, AZ
Rainbow Guitars
Fri., Dec. 4, 12 p.m. – 5 p.m.
(520) 325-3376

Phoenix, AZ
Bizarre Guitars
Sat., Dec. 5, 12 p.m. – 5 p.m.
(608) 248-9297

Rochester, NY
House of Guitars
Sat., Dec. 5, 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.
(585) 544-3500

Eugene, OR
McKenzie River Music
Fri., Dec. 11, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
(541) 343-9482

Bend, OR
Music Makers
Sat., Dec. 12, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
(541) 382-3245

Taylor Guitars Takeover Weekend

Addison, TX
Tone Shop Guitars
(972) 661-TONE (8663)

• **Road Show**
Thu., Nov. 5, 6:30 p.m.

• **Open House**
Fri., Nov. 6, 3 p.m. – 7 p.m.

• **Find Your Fit & Trade-Up Event**
Sat., Nov. 7, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.



Same as it Ever Was

Modern methods aren't always as removed from the past as they might seem

I'm often bewildered by the variety of seemingly unrelated tasks that go into modern instrument making. In the course of an average day as a guitar maker, there will be conversations about finishes cured with ultraviolet light, lasers to cut wood, the metallurgy behind a specific cutting tool, kilns for drying and seasoning wood, and electronic methods of analyzing the quality of work or evaluating

a completed instrument. Tools and machines need to be built, working methods need refinement, and material needs procurement. Visitors to our shop here at Taylor leave wide-eyed at the modernity of our instrument production, having witnessed robotically assisted polishing and computer-guided neck shaping. Having formerly worked as a solo craftsman with tools handed down

from past ages, I try to see through the sophisticated trappings of the modern era to bring into focus the real picture of what instrument making is. Whether a craftsman uses tools from the 21st, 20th or 19th centuries, the craft remains a complex alchemy of seemingly disparate processes, which find common ground in the form of an instrument. Moreover, I'm fascinated to watch how current technology builds

upon the foundation of wisdom and values held by the craftspeople of previous generations, rather than challenging or opposing it. I was explaining this idea to a guest recently as he watched our automated side benders shape a pair of carefully bookmatched wooden sides into their elegantly curved form. The gentleman stood there in disbelief, watching this tool do its work, while I explained how the process was exactly the same whether I used a hot pipe to hand-bend the sides or an automated machine to slowly direct the sides around a heated form to set the fibers of the wood into a new shape. The two tools are certainly different in complexity. From the wood's perspective, however, the two tools are the same. The wood gets hot, sinuous curves are gradually introduced, and the wood fibers are allowed to cool, setting the shape and forming the outline we love so much. One tool allows infinite flexibility, while the other eliminates inconsistency. For this reason, I bend sides for the instrument prototypes I design using a hot pipe. Once a design is settled on, we make a more complex tool to do that job without variation.

I was taught by an older craftsman that a good craftsman uses the tools he has to do exemplary work. A *great* craftsman uses the *most appropriate* tools to do exemplary work. In reality, this ideal usually translates into great craftsmen becoming tool makers. As a tangent to my guitar-making life, I became fascinated at an inappropriately early age with building and maintaining tools. In the course of building an instrument, I'd discover the need to make a particular cut or profile on a piece of wood. I'd stop working on the instrument for a while and build a hand plane specifically for the task. Other times I might replace the bearings on a powered machine or make some other careful alteration in order to better perform a job. In these ways, seemingly mundane activities such as oiling a rotating part on a machine or sharpening my chisels became joyfully integral parts of the guitar-building process.

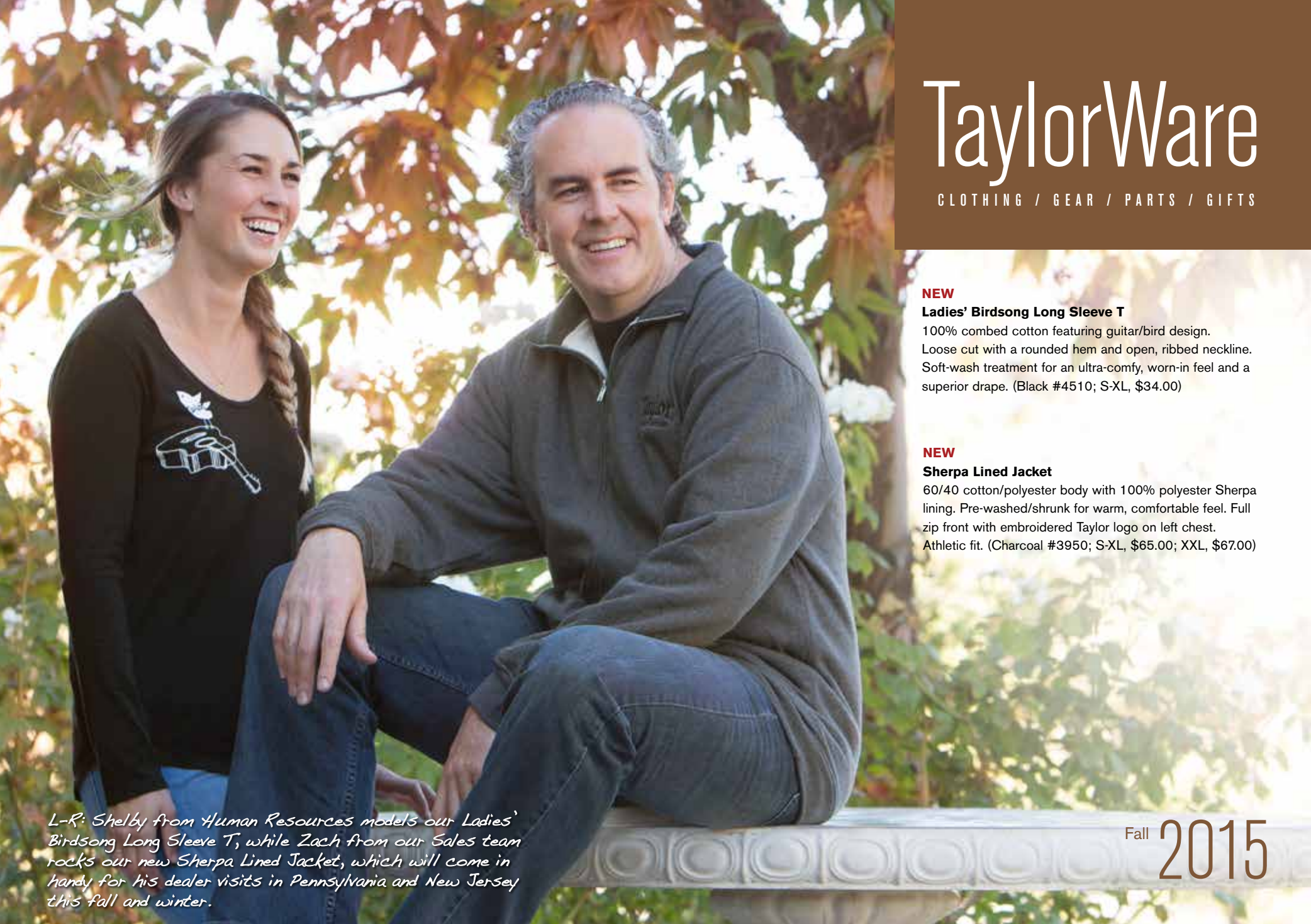
Like toolmaking, finishing the instrument is another vital component of the process. At Taylor, we employ ultraviolet light to dry the finishes we apply to our instruments. This seems very modern, until I remind myself that Stradivari and generations of other instrument makers essentially did the same thing by hanging their instruments in the sunlight to dry. Without a doubt, if craftsmen of Stradivari and Amati's caliber could keep dust from the cobblestone streets off their wet varnish by drying the finish in a dust-free area, they certainly would have

chosen to do that. Along similar lines, sending a text message for rapid communication seems very modern, until I remind myself I have essentially just sent the 21st century equivalent of a telegram.

These lessons from generations of past artisans continue to teach us. Over the last two decades, I've learned about properly conditioning wood. When a tree is felled, it contains a lot of water. The water will come out, and the tree will shrink. A good craftsman understands this, and in most circumstances, allows the water to come out before transforming the wood into an object of desire. Otherwise the craftsman will turn the tree into a piece of work, and when the water evacuates, the wood will shrink, ruining both the work and the wood. In ages past, removing the water meant rough-sawing boards from the tree, and then stacking them under a cover for years to allow summer's warmth and winter's coolness to slowly tease out moisture from the wood, one molecule at a time. Over generations, craftspeople have developed ovens to help speed the process along. Currently, despite the myriad of options we employ to remove this water from freshly fallen trees, we are considering using a cover, summer's heat, and winter's mild coolness to slowly draw the water out of our wood before we build it into instruments. Here in Southern California, we find ourselves geographically positioned on the western edge of a large, hot desert and just inland of a large, cool ocean. Our climate is ideal for using light and wind to prepare this wood. This seems almost laughably old-fashioned in our modern times, yet from the perspective of a craftsman, it seems like the most appropriate tool to use for the job. The parameters of the task remain the same as they always have been, so it seems logical that a tool that has worked well for ages would remain appropriate now.

So it is that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Guitar making remains a traditional craft with us here at Taylor, standing among the ranks of craftspeople from ages past, and offering our knowledge and ability to future craftspeople who take up the saw and chisel. We share in celebrating the intrinsic beauty of special woods like those species we've formed into this season's limited edition instruments. We are thrilled to continue learning, and privileged to share our ability and efforts through the instruments we make.

— Andy Powers, Taylor Master Builder



L-R: Shelby from Human Resources models our Ladies' Birdsong Long Sleeve T, while Zach from our Sales team rocks our new Sherpa Lined Jacket, which will come in handy for his dealer visits in Pennsylvania and New Jersey this fall and winter.



NEW
Case Label Hoody
Standard fit. 50/46/4 poly/cotton/rayon.
(Black #2817; S-XL, \$42.00; XXL, \$44.00)



NEW
Taylor Long Sleeve Logo T
Fashion fit. 100% cotton.
(Black #2250; S-XL, \$30.00; XXL, \$32.00)



Men's Long Sleeve Chambray Shirt
Slim fit. 80/20 cotton/poly.
(#3500; M-XL, \$49.00; XXL, \$51.00)



Men's Fleece Jacket
Standard fit. 60/40 cotton/poly.
(#2896; S-XL, \$64.00; XXL, \$66.00)

TaylorWare

CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS

NEW
Ladies' Birdsong Long Sleeve T
100% combed cotton featuring guitar/bird design. Loose cut with a rounded hem and open, ribbed neckline. Soft-wash treatment for an ultra-comfy, worn-in feel and a superior drape. (Black #4510; S-XL, \$34.00)

NEW
Sherpa Lined Jacket
60/40 cotton/polyester body with 100% polyester Sherpa lining. Pre-washed/shrunk for warm, comfortable feel. Full zip front with embroidered Taylor logo on left chest. Athletic fit. (Charcoal #3950; S-XL, \$65.00; XXL, \$67.00)

Caps

NEW
Taylor Trucker Cap
Plastic snap adjustable
backstrap. (Black #00388,
Olive #00389; \$20.00)

Peghead Patch Cap
Cap sizes:
S/M (#00165): 22-3/8",
57cm, size 7-1/8
L/XL (#00166): 23-1/2",
60cm, size 7-1/2
(Gray, \$25.00)

Men's Cap
One size fits all.
(Black #00378; \$25.00)

NEW
Contrast Cap
Snap back, flat bill. One size fits all.
(Charcoal #00381; \$25.00)



NEW
Moto T
Lightweight 100% cotton.
Fashion Fit. (Black #1571;
S-XL, \$24.00; XXL-XXXL,
\$26.00)

NEW
Taylor Hot Rod T
100% preshrunk cotton.
Standard fit. (Light Gray
#1560; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL-
XXXL, \$26.00)

*L-R: David, a supervisor in our Body department, astride a sweet ride in
our Hot Rod T, as Philip from our Finish department looks on in our
new Moto T.*



Men's Factory Issue T
Fashion fit. 60/40 cotton/poly.
(Olive #1740; S-XL, \$28.00; XXL, \$30.00)



NEW
Taylor Two Color Logo T
Standard fit. 100% cotton.
(Brown #1660; S-XL, \$20.00;
XXL-XXXL, \$22.00)



NEW
Men's La Guitarra T
Slim fit. 60/40 cotton/poly.
(Navy #1485; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL, \$26.00)



Cross Guitars T
Fashion fit. 100% cotton.
(Black #1535; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL-XXXL, \$26.00)



NEW
Taylor Guitar Straps
Three new premium
leather guitar strap
designs join our collection
this fall: Badge, Guitar
Basketweave, and Wave
Appliqué, plus new suede
straps in fresh colors.
See them all at our online
TaylorWare store.

Glassware



1



2



3



4



5

NEW
1) Tumbler
12 oz. Porcelain/Stainless.
(#70004, \$18.00)

3) Etched Pub Glass
20 oz. (#70010, \$10.00)

NEW
2) Water Bottle
24 oz. (#70016, \$16.00)

4) Taylor Etched Peghead Mug
15 oz. Ceramic. (Black #70005, \$15.00)

5) Taylor Mug
15 oz. Ceramic. (Brown with cream interior,
#70006, \$10.00)

Gift Ideas



Taylor Messenger Bag
Adjustable canvas/web strap.
(Brown #61168, \$69.00)



Taylor Bar Stool
30" high.
(Black #70200,
\$99.00)

NEW
24" high.
(Brown #70202,
\$99.00)



Guitar Stand
(Sapele/Mahogany #70100,
\$70.00; assembly required)



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



**Black Composite Travel
Guitar Stand**
Accommodates all Taylor models.
(#70180, \$39.00)



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

NEW
Ultex® Picks
Six picks per pack by gauge
(#80794, .73 mm, #80795, 1.0 mm
or #80796 1.14 mm; \$5.00).

NEW
Primetone Picks™
Three picks per pack by gauge.
(#80797, .88 mm, #80798, 1.0 mm
or #80799 1.3 mm; \$8.50).

NEW
Variety Pack (shown)
Six assorted picks per pack, featuring one of
each gauge. Ultex (.73 mm, 1.0 mm, 1.14 mm)
and Primetone (.88 mm, 1.0 mm, 1.3 mm).
(#80790; \$10.00)



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Wood&Steel

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Pro Players

The sweeping electric/acoustic appeal of the T5z has inspired us to roll out a pair of limited-release T5z Pro models this fall, each sporting a handsome hardwood top. The T5z Pro-RW LTD will seduce Indian rosewood lovers, bringing the wood's dark, rich hues front and center, with a matching shaded finish on the sapele body and neck. The T5z Pro-QM LTD substitutes quilted maple for the curly maple normally used on T5z Pro models, bringing extra complexity to the wood's shimmering figure. A clear gloss finish highlights the subtle variations in golden color as the light reflects off the figure in different ways. Both models are loaded with sonic flavors thanks to the T5z's three-pickup setup, featuring an acoustic body sensor, concealed neck humbucker, and visible bridge humbucker, plus five-way switching and onboard tone controls. Contact your local dealer for availability, as quantities are limited.