

# Wood & Steel

## Inside the Expression System 2

How the piezo pickup was reborn

**Spring Limiteds**  
Baritone Dreadnought 320e / Full-Gloss 400s

**Larry Breedlove**  
Shaping the Taylor aesthetic

**The New 150e**  
12-string Dreadnought fun

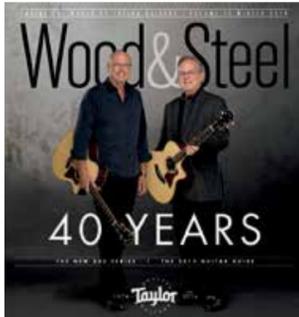
**JOHNNYSWIM**  
Making beautiful music together

**The Grand Concert  
Turns 30**

**800 Series Raves**  
Reviews, awards & more

QUALITY  
**Taylor**  
GUITARS

# Letters



## Empowered by Song

I saw your full-page ad in *Guitar Player* magazine regarding Nancy, her stuttering problem, and the salvation offered by the guitar. I am writing to you because my experience was IDENTICAL to hers. I stuttered severely. I attended a private school, and I'm sure you know how mean kids can be to people who are different or have problems. Freshman year I had to take a course in public speaking. It was a nightmare. But one day we had to speak about our favorite hobby. I brought my guitar to class. I had been playing for about a year at the time. As soon as I touched the guitar I stopped stuttering completely. My words flowed like water through a stream without hesitation or the slightest hint of a stammer. After the class was over and all the other kids had left, my teacher called me back into the classroom. He smiled at me and said, "You should have a guitar in your hands at all times."

Well, I have been playing for 51 years now. I have performed in public innumerable times and had my first guitar students when I was 17 years old. About 12 years ago, I dropped out of the business world and made my living teaching guitar for seven years. I must admit that I have never owned a Taylor guitar, but know that you folks make a nice instrument. If you interact with Nancy, give her my regards.

**Fred Castellano**

*Ed. Note: You can read Nancy's story and others from our current ad campaign, "Step forward. MUSIC IS WAITING." at [taylorguitars.com/community/step-forward](http://taylorguitars.com/community/step-forward)*

## Double Duty

Your reply to the question about capos for the 8-string baritone guitar (winter 2014 *Wood&Steel*) reminded

me that one of the most valuable tips I ever got was provided by a wino who was busking at a local market! He was playing a 12-string, and even though he smelled like a distillery, he sounded pretty good. He had TWO capos on the same fret, and I asked him why. He said he learned the trick years ago – the only reliable way to fret the smaller diameter string in any string pair is to use two capos on the same fret. My Shubb capo had come closest to working well for 12-string guitar (as your answer pointed out), but the suggestion for two capos immediately sounded right. I gave him a significant donation, more for the advice than the busking, and immediately tried the idea at home. Perfect, with any type of capo! This is now the way I always capo my 856ce because it works every time.

**Bill Brewer  
Vancouver, BC**

## Five Will Get You Fifteen – and a Song

I practiced for five minutes today. Sort of. I had maybe 15 minutes before I had to leave for work, and more discouraging than the short amount of time for music was my mental state – my mind and mood weren't up to music because I had to leave so soon. But I recalled Shawn Persinger's article "Five Minutes a Day" in the fall 2013 issue of *Wood&Steel*, which encourages musicians to set a goal of five minutes a day for practice. So I got out my GS Mini, and within a couple minutes a new tune had fallen out of the strings. I knew if I went to work without writing it down it would be gone forever, so I got out manuscript paper and notated the tune, and all too quickly I heard the clock chime, announcing that five had turned into 15. I don't know yet if my new tune is a keeper, but it was worth it just to keep me involved before leaving for work. Thanks, Shawn.

**John Whitacre  
Canton, OH**

## Picking Through the Rubble

I was a resident of Washington, Illinois, on November 17 of last year when our town was struck by an F-4 tornado. The tornado destroyed or damaged nearly 1,000 homes in our small community in Central Illinois. You may have heard about the storm on the national news that weekend. Our home was in the direct path of the storm, and was completely demolished by the

tornado. My wife and I were home with our 7-month-old baby when the tornado passed over us – we were hiding safely in the basement. We emerged in shock after the tornado had passed, and found nothing but a large pile of debris where our house used to stand. We left our property as soon as we could to seek shelter and stayed the night with nearby relatives.

I returned to my property the following morning, hoping to recover as much as we could. Most of our belongings were either damaged beyond repair or could not be found. However, much to my surprise and satisfaction, my father-in-law discovered my Taylor guitar case lying under a pile of debris under what used to be our garage. The case was dirty, and the leather casing had suffered a few scratches, but otherwise it was in remarkable shape. I opened the case to find my 314ce perfectly preserved! The guitar looked and sounded as beautiful as it did the last time I played it before the tornado!

Playing guitar music has always been a sort of therapy for me. I particularly enjoy practicing fingerstyle guitar, primarily the music of Leo Kottke. With everything my family and I have been through, this form of musical therapy has been important now more than ever. I wanted to share this story with

## Mountain Music

Last summer we toured through Europe searching for the right guitar. We found the perfect guitar for us in Amsterdam: the [First Edition] 818e, 1 of 100. We were so crazy about that particular guitar that we even flew from Switzerland to Amsterdam twice just because of it. We make spiritual music, and in our concerts transformation happens. People experience deep bliss and peace. Our Taylor helps us create that very profound sound and divine ambience. Recently we shot the video for our track "Shambhu Shamkara" in the Swiss mountains, and lots of pictures also were taken.

**Prem Paras  
Music producer in Bollywood and spiritual musician**



you because I felt it was a tremendous testament to the quality of your product and a great reminder of how important music and guitar playing is in our lives.

**Karl Fandel**

## GS Mini – Honorary Scout

I have been an adult leader in the Boy Scouts for 14 years and have played my guitars, including my 314ce, for many years at campouts and meetings. Last summer, I took a crew of 12 to the Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico, for a rugged 12-day, 65-mile hike in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Naturally, I wanted a great-sounding guitar for me and the other pickers in my crew to play on this trek, but I was at a loss on how to make this happen between 6,700- and 11,700-foot elevations in all sorts of weather while wearing a 50-pound backpack!

That was until I discovered a mahogany-topped GS Mini at Tringas Music in Pensacola, Florida. I was amazed by the volume, clarity and fullness of sound that this little guitar produces, and when I saw the closed-cell foam case that is included with it, I saw the way to my dream.

With the case's shoulder straps tight, I was able mount it securely to my pack and access the Mini with the

unbuckling of a single pack strap. With the case's straps loosened, I put my three-liter hydration bag in the zippered pocket, and I had the perfect musical day-hike pack. The Mini and I shared "Rocky Mountain High" at 9,600 feet and "Time in a Bottle" atop the Tooth of Time peak at 9,400 feet. In its case, the Mini came through the mountain climates of heat, cold, rain, hail, humidity and dryness with very minimal drift in pitch and maintained perfect playability and intonation throughout!

Thanks for adding such a great-sounding, light, durable and affordable guitar to your impressive live line of acoustic guitars. Many folks in my crew and the hundreds we encountered at Philmont thought I was crazy to bring a full-sound guitar on such a rugged adventure, but the Mini and I proved that with Taylor Guitars, there's a way.

**Tom Skinner**

## Full Service

I would like to compliment your Taylor authorized repair contact Pat DiBurro in Exeter, New Hampshire. I was referred to him by other luthiers here in North Carolina. My Taylor 810 (purchased new in 1992) was severely damaged by Delta Airlines last January. The soundboard was cracked, and there were multiple splits and cracks on the neck and sides. Mr. DiBurro was quick to call me early (after seeing just photos) [to explain] what the damage appeared to be. When he received my guitar he immediately called, gave me his assessment, and forwarded a precise, easy-to-understand invoice so I could get my claim underway with the airlines. Throughout the repair process, Pat emailed his photos of the repair in progress to show me what he was doing. It was gratifying to see that his personal interest in not only the quality repair he provides but also customer attention. I received my guitar a week ago, and it looks and plays wonderfully. I want you to know that Mr. DiBurro's professionalism, skill and customer relations are of the highest caliber.

**Mike McCartney  
Cape Carteret, NC**

**We'd like to hear from you**

Send your e-mails to:  
[pr@taylorguitars.com](mailto:pr@taylorguitars.com)

[www.taylorguitars.com](http://www.taylorguitars.com)

Wood&Steel

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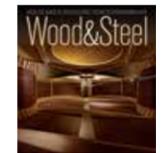
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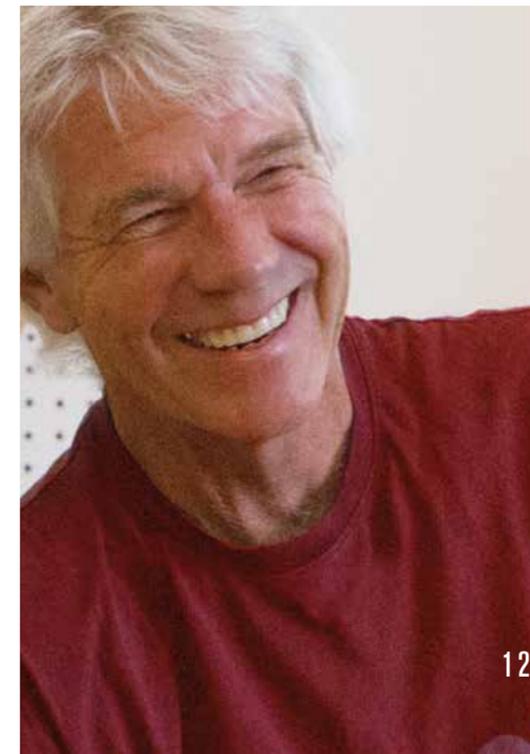
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COVER PHOTO:  
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## KURT'S CORNER

### The Grand Concert Turns 30

In addition to being Taylor Guitars' 40th anniversary year, 2014 also marks the 30th anniversary of our Grand Concert body shape, and the 20th anniversary of our Grand Auditorium. It's hard to imagine Taylor Guitars today without these two body shapes. Both shapes are closely identified with the Taylor brand and have provided the foundation for many popular Taylor guitar models. It's also hard to imagine the guitar world or popular music without these iconic Taylor guitars, as they've had such a huge impact.

The Grand Concert body shape came about during the early '80s. Prior to designing it, we had just the two shapes that we inherited when Bob and I bought the American Dream: the Dreadnought and the Jumbo. I had heard from the folks at McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica that they felt there was demand for a smaller body shape, a guitar with a more balanced sound that would be more responsive to a lighter attack than a larger guitar. At the NAMM Show in early 1983 we met fingerstyle guitarist Chris Proctor, who expressed his interest in finding a guitar builder who could build a guitar ideally suited for his fingerstyle needs.

As Chris put it, "I began to design, in my mind, the ideal fingerstyle instrument's characteristics – balanced, clear tone with lots of sustain and a singing treble voice, a smaller body, a cutaway, a wider neck, good action all the way

to the top of the fingerboard, and a dependable, repairable instrument that could survive the rigors of the road. I decided to find a guitar partner who could create this instrument for me."

The guitar market was quite a bit smaller in the early 1980s. This was probably the low point for the guitar industry in terms of production and sales. We had just come off the disco craze of the late '70s, which featured prerecorded music, not live bands. This was closely followed by the technological advent of the synthesizer, pushing guitar music further into the back-ground. Guitar music was not popular, and guitar sales suffered. There was a very narrow range of guitar builders for Chris to approach back then, and Taylor was an upstart.

But Chris represented a new generation and breed of guitar players, and had just won the Walnut Valley National Finger Style Guitar Championship in 1982. We wanted to work with him. When Chris came to San Diego to perform, several of us met at a restaurant and sketched out designs on a napkin with the new shape based roughly on Tim Luranc's old Martin 000, but with a wider neck and cutaway.

As Bob recalls, "We designed it with Chris as a very interested player in the whole process. He loved small guitars with clarity and ease of play, along with precise notes and action. The design was my first departure from

The American Dream shapes and the precursor to what would be the styling of the Grand Auditorium some 10 years later. Of course, I didn't know that then. It was just supposed to be small, clear and precise. That's what I went for, and Chris really seemed to like it as it developed. So did others."

We introduced the Grand Concert at the 1984 Winter NAMM Show. As we offered new models across our line based on the Grand Concert shape, sales grew, and it became a very popular guitar for us. Fingerstyle guitar was growing in popularity, and the Grand Concert was the perfect guitar for this style of playing. The vast majority of Grand Concert guitars we made were ordered with a cutaway and an onboard pickup. This became the go-to guitar for many players, and this style helped define the modern acoustic guitar.

For many players, their first exposure to our guitars was through the Grand Concert, and many artists began playing Taylors as a result. It opened many doors for us in sales, as we were making a guitar for the next generation of players. Ten years later it led to the development of the Grand Auditorium, Taylor's bestselling guitar shape, which I'll detail in the next issue of *Wood&Steel*.

– Kurt Listug, CEO

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## BOBSPEAK

### A Fond Farewell

Even though this issue features an article about our own Larry Breedlove as he prepares to retire, I still feel compelled to write about Larry here. Taylor Guitars has been a pretty home-grown business from the start. Our guitars are original in the sense that I never studied other guitars before making mine. Our people are original, mostly made up of neighborhood folks who've come here and learned on the job. We learned all we know about this business together, right here.

As you'll read in the article, Larry grew up here and found his way into our little shop because he could shape wood with a file, not because he was a luthier. But he became a luthier, and a good one at that. Working with Larry for the past 30 years or so has been a pleasure for me. We've enjoyed a friendly, easily defined relationship and have collaborated on nearly every Taylor guitar model you've ever seen.

Larry understood the difference between good work and great work from the very beginning. That made it easy for me. I'll try to share with you what I mean. If I look at a curve or down a guitar neck and say to someone, "Do you see where it deviates just a little bit right about a third of the way?" and they answer, "No," then what am I supposed to do? But if they always say yes and we see it together, then we have the makings of being able to talk about elusive things

such as design. If I say, "You know, Larry, I think it needs just a bit more oomph right there," he'll say, "Yeah, me too, I know what you mean."

But that example is just the design part. In the actual building part of the process, Larry's work was to a very high standard. He naturally understood how things should look when they're built properly. However, I'll confess that I sat in one of his beautifully carved rocking chairs once and broke it! Boy, I felt bad. Then we discussed that maybe it leaned a little more toward form than function, and he made his chairs a little sturdier afterward. I'm not sure which one of us was more embarrassed, so I think we just didn't talk about it!

I'll give you a peek into Larry's personnel file. Yes, I do his review each year. It goes something like this: Larry writes, "I supervise people who are mostly smarter than me, but I try to do a good job." Then I write, "They're smarter than me, too, and we're lucky that way."

Thus it is with Larry. He's quiet and sufficiently confident. He's respected in all corners of our business. He lets others do the talking, and he's good at listening. If you work here and you see Larry walking up, you usually smile at the thought that he's coming to talk to you and that you might learn something by the time the conversation is done. Don't get me wrong, he doesn't have all the answers, but he never accuses you of doing poorly, either.

My office at Taylor Guitars is in the building where we design and build prototype guitars and tools. It's a 10-by-10-foot office and sits next to Larry's. He gets the window. When our colleague Jenelle is away from her reception desk in the lobby, we both often have to greet visitors when they arrive. We have no shield from the outside world. I talk to him by saying in a loud voice, "Hey Larry, you there?" and he'll say back, "Yeah, I'm here," and then we talk, in my office or his. You can imagine that I'm going to miss that a lot.

Be careful what you wish for, because early on I wished that we could build a successful company where a person could find a legitimate career building guitars. Well, we did, and people are starting to retire now, and Larry is not the first. Consequently, I've worked with many people for 30 years or more, and now they're starting to leave. You do get attached to each other when you build a company from nothing, and I'm attached to Larry. I congratulate Larry for a job well done. He played a good round here at Taylor Guitars and helped us become who we are today, and I appreciate that a lot. Larry, we'll all miss you, but nobody more than me.

– Bob Taylor, President

## Editor's Note

### Good Chemistry

Having good chemistry with others is often cited as a key to collaborative success. Sports fans point to an elite team's chemistry as a crucial bond that fuels their winning ways, or bemoan the lack of chemistry on an abundantly talented roster that inexplicably underachieves. Chemistry can transform cast-offs into contenders, strangers into soul mates, and random encounters into lifelong friendships. It can decide whether on-screen co-stars sizzle or fizzle together. It sparks the creative magic at the heart of a great band. And it supplies the inspiration when we pick up our favorite guitar.

The theme of chemistry resonates strongly in this issue. As Bob Taylor reflects in his column and in our profile of longtime Taylor luthier Larry Breedlove, the way his guitar-making approach meshed with Larry's aesthetic sensibility formed the basis for an incredibly fruitful design dynamic here at Taylor for three decades. In our conversation with Abner Ramirez from the breakout Americana act JOHNNYSWIM, Ramirez talks about his chemistry in meeting Amanda Sudano, the woman who would become both his wife and musical collaborator, and the happiness they feel in sharing their journey together. Even our cover story on the development of the Expression System 2 can be distilled down to the "chemistry" of good design: the importance of functional compatibility between pickup technology and an acoustic guitar.

At times chemistry can seem random or defy conventions, but that's part of what makes it special. In the right environment it can be cultivated, but there are no guarantees. If we're lucky, it becomes a staple of our lives through the relationships and activities we pursue. Fortunately for those of us who love our Taylors, Bob found it with Kurt, with Larry, and most recently, with Andy Powers. It's become an important part of our creative culture, and promises to continually inspire us forward.

Happy retirement, Larry, and thanks for sharing your talents with Taylor and the guitar world. Your positive impact will be felt by many for years to come.

– Jim Kirlin

### 2014 Taylor Factory Tours & Vacation Dates

A free, guided tour of the Taylor Guitars factory is given every Monday through Friday at 1 p.m. (excluding holidays). No advance reservations are necessary. Simply check-in at the reception desk in our Visitor Center, located in the lobby of our main building, before 1 p.m. We ask that large groups (more than 10) call us in advance at (619) 258-1207.

While not physically demanding, the tour does include a fair amount of walking. Due to the technical nature, the tour may not be suitable for small children. The tour lasts approximately one hour and 15 minutes and departs from the main building at 1980 Gillespie Way in El Cajon, California.

Please take note of the weekday exceptions below. For more information, including directions to the factory, please visit [taylorguitars.com/contact](http://taylorguitars.com/contact).

We look forward to seeing you!

### Factory Closures

**Monday, May 26**  
(Memorial Day)

**October 13**  
(Taylor Guitars Anniversary)

**Monday, June 30 - Friday, July 4**  
(Independence Day/Company Vacation)

**November 27-28**  
(Thanksgiving Holiday)

**Monday, September 1**  
(Labor Day)

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

## CUTTING DIAMONDS

JOHNNYSWIM'S ABNER RAMIREZ TALKS ABOUT TRANSFORMING LOSS INTO A GEM OF A RECORD WITH HIS WIFE AMANDA

By Jim Kirlin



PHOTO BY JEREMY COWART

## “WE WERE MADE TO DO THIS TOGETHER,” PROFESSES ABNER RAMIREZ, ONE-HALF OF THE SCINTILLATING HUSBAND-AND-WIFE DUO JOHNNYSWIM.

He is referring to his partner in life and music, Amanda Sudano-Ramirez, and it's unlikely that anyone exposed to their songs would disagree. Their music resonates with transcendent chemistry, most palpably in the effortless dance of their soaring, soulful voices together. Even so, Abner makes a point of emphasizing that music will always play second fiddle to their relationship.

“I still don't care about the music as much as I care about her,” he says. “It's all been a ploy to make out,” he adds with a laugh.

Abner's gregarious personality is in full bloom as we talk by phone on an afternoon in late March. He's at home in Los Angeles for a few days as he and

Amanda ready the release of their new album, *Diamonds*, their full-length debut on Big Picnic Records, at the end of April. They've been dialing up the promo push leading up to the release and mixing in shows along the way, including a few at South by Southwest earlier in March, an appearance on Letterman a few days after we speak, followed by a month and a half on the road. A day earlier they shot a music video for the album's first single, the spunky acoustic folk-rocker “Home,” in which Abner used his “favorite” new guitar, an 812e 12-Fret.

“I was bragging about it to everybody,” he beams.

*Diamonds* was recorded in Nashville,

their former home and a place where they still spend a lot of time, at the home studio of multiple Grammy-winning engineer Gary Paczosa (Alison Krauss, Dolly Parton), with Abner as producer. The record reveals a well-groomed collection of Americana-rooted songs, spanning a range of moods but linked by exquisite melodies and uplifting emotional energy. These are songs that are felt as much as they are heard. Abner and Amanda performed several of the new tunes on the Taylor stage at the Winter NAMM Show back in January, and they connected well with the crowd.

Their career has been rising on a steady arc over the last 18 months. Last year their music enjoyed a nice run on AAA radio on the strength of their EP *Heart Beats*, and the folks at VH1 liked them so much that they launched their You Oughta Know + campaign to feature their music. They've performed on *A Prairie Home Companion* and the late night talk shows, entertained crowds at festivals like Bonneroo, and bolstered their international following on the strength of a UK tour with Ameri-

cana faves Old Crow Medicine Show. Their appearance with Daryl Hall and his band on a recent episode of *Live From Daryl's House* left Hall rabidly singing their praises.

The release of *Diamonds* may well give JOHNNYSWIM the broader exposure they deserve. The album's song cycle is packed with a gripping blend of rich vocal interplay, catchy choruses and emotive depth, from the anthemic rush of the title track to the folksy exuberance of “Home” to the wailing cinematic swell of the closer, “Over.” Hearing Abner reflect on their approach to their craft and their career, one can't help but feel that all the pieces are falling into place. They seem to possess the right mix of talent, passion, determination and industry smarts, with a grounded perspective that keeps them from taking themselves too seriously. Abner points out that they made a point of leaving a few imperfections on the record that make it feel real.

“One of the things I wanted people to experience on the album was to get a bit of our personalities,” he elaborates. “And we're not cool. We're not this slick

sultry couple. We're goofy, we kind of wear our mistakes on our sleeves as much as our triumphs.”

They met in Nashville in 2005, although both knew of each other through mutual friends. Amanda had gone to high school and college in Nashville, and then moved to New York, where she did some modeling work and pursued music for a couple of years before moving back. When she met Abner, he was languishing in a bad record deal he'd signed at 18 that was rapidly souring his drive to make a career out of music.

“I was still playing shows because I loved it and was going to sing until the day I died,” he says, “but I wasn't going to bother to try to make a career out of it anymore because I'd had such a bad experience. I really didn't know that there could be any other kind of experience.”

Amanda came to one of Abner's solo shows, and they struck up a conversation afterward. He shared his thoughts about bailing on a music career.

“She said, ‘That's stupid, we should write together,’” he recalls. “And with

her being the most beautiful girl in the world, I said, ‘Yeah, we should definitely get together and write. I'll bring the champagne,’” he laughs.

And the rest is chemistry.

Music is in Amanda's blood — she's the daughter of legendary singer Donna Summer and musician/producer/arranger Bruce Sudano. Abner also grew up surrounded by music. His father was a pastor who loved to sing, and his mother was a choir director and piano player. His parents emigrated to the U.S. from their native Cuba in 1980 with nothing but the clothes on their backs, during Cuba's turbulent Mariel boatlift, which brought a mass exodus of Cubans to Florida during a six-month period.

“It was a bit of a hot mess because Castro emptied insane asylums and prisons and dumped them onto the boats of Americans coming to get their Cuban families, so there was madness in the streets of Miami when they got here,” Abner says.

Growing up in Jacksonville, Florida, Abner was allowed to take karate lessons if he also took music lessons, and his mother encouraged him to play violin. He went to high school at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Jacksonville, where he majored in violin, started playing guitar, and fell in love with songwriting.

“It opened up the floodgates,” he says. “I'll be giving back to that school as long as I live, because it solidified in me that I wanted to spend my life pouring into the arts and having the arts pour into me.”

Abner and Amanda released their first EP in 2008, married in 2009, and have found their profound connection to be an abundant wellspring for their musical creativity. Because their relationship and musical collaboration have been so intertwined since the beginning, Abner says a sense of honesty informs their approach to songwriting.

“Honesty is kind of a big word in songwriting,” he explains. “It can mean a million different things, but there's a sense of being genuine to yourself, of pursuing the love of music and the love of creativity more than the pursuit of career. That's always the check and balance for us. If we're ever pursuing career more than the craft, then we've personally begun to fail ourselves.”

As a husband-and-wife songwriting duo, they often get asked about the nature of their writing process. He says the inspiration for a song can come from a variety of places, but that it always starts with a feeling.

“Either we'll watch a movie and be super inspired, or hear a song and be inspired by the melody and lyrical content, or we'll have a conversation and

there'll be a line [where we think] that could be a song,” he says. “The beauty of music is that you get to encapsulate in a tone, in a scientific sound, an emotion or a moment. I remember the first time I heard Tommy Emmanuel play, I wanted to write 20 songs just because of the way the guitar sounded. I remember we watched the movie *La Vie en Rose* [about the life of Edith Piaf] and we had to write songs.”

Much of the material that would end up on *Diamonds*, Abner says, came in the wake of tragic circumstances. Within an 11-month period, Amanda lost her mother and grandmother, and Abner lost his father.

“The writing of these songs was marked mostly by the *need* to write them, whether [the mood] was tragic, heartbroken, joyful, triumphant,” he says. “It was going to affect more than our songwriting if they didn't get out. This record was definitely marked by music being our remedy.”

If loss is a touchstone theme for the record, the emotional range of the songs is broad and richly life-affirming. The radiant glow of “Live While We're Young,” written with Josiah Bell, is an appreciation for living life to the fullest. The infectious “A Million Years” builds to a propulsive rhythm and hooky refrain. “Home” is a stripped-down, foot-stomping blast of acoustic boom-chuck reverie. “You and I” rides a four-on-the-floor dance beat and buoyant groove as Amanda and Abner testify to love's powerful pull.

Abner says that with *Diamonds* as their first full-length release together, it gave them an opportunity to present the songs as an album-length journey.

“We wanted to give the most honest representation of ourselves, and that for us was writing for the sake of the album,” he explains. “The sequence is really important to us. The heart behind the songs is really everything to us.”

Abner's favorite song on the record is the closing track, “Over.” Ostensibly a breakup song, it transforms from Amanda's beautifully aching opening vocal over a stark piano figure to a wailing, atmospheric close, encapsulating the different waves of emotion that accompanied their period of loss. Abner talks about using the theme of loss as a broader songwriting canvas.

“A buddy of ours, Britten Newbill, who we wrote probably nine of the 12 songs with, had gone through this kind of epic breakup, and we used that as a lot of the fodder for firing these songs,” he shares. “The interesting thing about being a songwriter is that loss is loss, period, whether it's somebody passing away, a breakup in a relationship, even with family — they don't have to die for

### ABNER'S TAYLORS

Abner has played Taylor acoustics most of his career. He shared his thoughts on them, including the newest addition to the family, his 812e 12-Fret.

#### On his 314ce:

As part of my first record deal, my signing bonus was a Taylor 314ce. I was ready. I'd never had my own guitar. I signed my life away because I'd had this old guitar that someone had let me borrow. I got the 314ce when I was 18, and it was my only guitar for 11 years. I never had a backup guitar.

#### On his 324e:

I love a guitar that's not flashy or shiny. I like less polish. I feel like it affects the tone — like you get 10 years of tone in five years time when you have less polish on it. And I typically love dark colors. I love mids and good warm tones. I like high tones that can cut through when I want to, but I love living in those warm tones. And my 324e was exactly that. I remember Tim [Godwin in Artist Relations] asking me what I wanted, and I said something that I could really dig into and that could still keep its tone together. On a lot of guitars, when I dig in, the brights take over; the EQ almost changes. It enhances different things at different volumes. When I would dig in on my 314 it got tinny — thin and bright. But my 324, with the mahogany top, I can eat the guitar alive and it stays warm.

#### On his new 812e 12-Fret:

Whatever you guys did on this new 800 Series is bananas. The 324 is my workhorse because I can rip into it. But this 812 is artwork. I love the small body, and the 12-fret is so sweet. I love the no-cutaway because it's more traditional, and I don't solo. I like playing a good riff every now and then, but I won't be ripping up on the 16th fret on my Taylor. I love that it has the old school, classical headstock. I love the hardware. The rosewood pickguard was off the top for me.

I can dig in and it still carries the bottom end. I like doing stuff in what I call a fake drop D, with two capos. We have a lot of songs in F because we found that it works really well for both of our voices, so I use a full capo across the first fret, and then I've got a cut capo upside down at the third [fret]...where I can play a C shape but up in the key of D and get that drop-D sound, but I'm playing in F. I guess it's a D2 or something. One thing that shocked me with that guitar is that on the songs I play that way — “Adelina,” “Paris in June,” “Live While We're Young” — I can lay into that E string and have it really carry some tone while I have a moving melody up top.

you to lose them. There are times when people grow apart. The almost magical part of being a songwriter is that you can take loss in one sense and use it to write about loss in another sense. So, “Over” is written as a breakup song, but in it we pour our emotions as writers of loss in a bunch of other elements in life. So, if the whole album takes you through the journey of our loss of those 11 months, even Amanda's mom said it before she passed, that we can be better through the difficult times. No pressure, no diamonds, and that's really

what the whole record is about: the pressure that it takes to make something beautiful, and the tragedy that it takes to really experience true triumph. The passion and the emotion of loss are best heard in this song. The way we've experienced loss, it can feel small at times, it can feel so personal, so one-on-one, and then there are times where it feels like the whole world can explode like a Jerry Bruckheimer film, y'know? That's where it kind of goes production-wise.” **W&S**  
www.johnnyswim.com



Performing on the Taylor stage at Winter NAMM

# STAGE PRESENCE

A brawny baritone Dreadnought and all-gloss 400s come alive with the help of our new Expression System 2 pickup



The recent debut of our new Expression System® 2 pickup was undeniably on the minds of our product development team as they designed this year's spring limited edition collection. Since the ES2 is a standard feature starting with the 500 Series this year, the team turned their focus to a run of special 300 and 400 Series models that come equipped with the pickup. Our 400s are a frequent choice among working musicians looking for a reliable performance tool, and the easy plug-and-play nature of the pickup will no doubt be music to their (and their audience's) ears. For the 300 Series, the team took a more singular approach, honing in on a bold and compelling new voice, a rumbling mahogany-top baritone Dreadnought. Read on for more details, and look for them at your local Taylor dealer.

## 400 Series

**Models:** 410ce-SLTD, 412ce-SLTD, 414ce-SLTD, 416ce-SLTD, 456ce-SLTD  
**Back/Sides:** Ovangkol  
**Top:** Sitka spruce

From time to time we like to upgrade an existing Taylor guitar series with premium features not normally available. Such was the case with our popular ovangkol/spruce 400 Series, which we outfitted with our new Expression System 2 pickup.

"A lot of the 400s we sell are used for gigging," Andy Powers says. "One of the great things about the ES2 is that it works well in just about every amplified environment. If you're playing clubs or bar gigs, you might only get a quick line check instead of a full sound check. With the ES2, you can simply plug it in and have a really strong chance of sounding good."



Another value-added upgrade is a beautiful gloss finish for the ovangkol back and sides, which showcases ovangkol's rich variegation. Other subtle aesthetic enhancements include abalone dot fretboard inlays and bridge pins, along with gold Taylor tuners to complement ovangkol's honeyed hues.

Choose from four body styles – Dreadnought, Grand Concert, Grand Auditorium and Grand Symphony – plus a 12-string GS. All feature a Venetian cutaway, come with a 2014 Spring Limited label, and include a Taylor deluxe hardshell case.

## 300 Series

**Model:** 320e-Baritone SLTD  
**Back/Sides:** Sapele  
**Top:** Mahogany

Since Taylor's baritone guitars now live within the more flexible parameters of our Custom program, our development team felt inspired to craft a small-batch baritone with a fresh tone profile for players to explore. They began by choosing a Dreadnought body rather than the Grand Symphony normally associated with the baritone, and selected a 300 Series wood pairing of sapele back and sides with a mahogany top. The result, the 320e-Baritone SLTD, boasts a deep, husky voice (tuned to B) with loads of warmth, mid-range growl, and low-end richness. The wide waist of the Dreadnought helps deliver a strong low end, which dovetails nicely with the baritone's lower frequencies. The hardwood mahogany top produces a natural compression effect, which helps maintain a uniformity of character across the tonal spectrum.

"The guitar has a certain looseness that's really great when you hit that low B," says Taylor luthier Andy Powers. "With the leveling effect of the mahogany top, all that dark, woody, warm character on the low end ends up spreading out more evenly."

Although a baritone isn't likely to be a primary guitar for most players, the 320e's blend of low-end rumble and punchy articulation makes it a distinctive voice on its own and adds complementary texture together with another guitar. It's a great option for weaving bass lines together with another acoustic guitar in a duo gig or on a recording project.

With the addition of Taylor's Expression System 2 pickup, that deep, rich baritone character translates into a clear amplified sound. An all-satin finish and black pickguard evoke a fittingly dark and earthy aesthetic to match its tonal personality. The 320e-Baritone SLTD comes with a 2014 Spring Limited label inside the guitar and includes a Taylor deluxe hardshell case. **W&S**



**Above:** A gloss finish highlights ovangkol's variegation; **Below:** A mahogany top and all-satin finish give the 320e-Baritone SLTD an earthy, vintage vibe; **Left:** The 400s feature abalone dot bridge pins and the ES2 pickup; **Opposite page (L-R):** 456ce-SLTD, 416ce-SLTD



# Ask Bob

## Hygrometer accuracy, saddle compensation, and pickguard silhouettes

I've found that different hygrometers will give different readings for the same room. How can I baseline any given device to provide an accurate reading?

Anson Haugsjaa

That's a good question, Anson, and the answer is simple. Use two or more hygrometers. I realize that this isn't exactly an answer to your question, but baselining your hygrometers is difficult, expensive, and in some cases, non-adjustable. So, this is what I recommend. Buy only digital hygrometers. Those that cost \$15-\$25 work very well. Buy three and put them all in the same room. Yes, they will all read differently, but probably within a percent or two of each other. That's about as accurate as you can get with any hygrometer, and certainly accurate enough. So if they read 46-44-49 percent, you can assume you're about in the middle of those readings, and that's close enough. But if they read 29-44-48 percent, you'd know the really low one is just wrong and probably a bad hygrometer. But what if you only had one – the one that read 29 percent? Bad news.

Anyway, this approach is far cheaper and more effective than buying expensive hygrometers and expensive equipment to baseline them. Also, I'm serious about getting the digital versions. Don't buy the pretty, nautical-themed hygrometers with a needle that look like a barometer. They don't work. Seriously.

I recently purchased a 12-string, and during my search I must have played every brand I could find in Sydney, Australia. In the end I concluded that the only guitar my six-string-familiar hand could manage was the Taylor. Is there something that Taylor does to 12-string nuts that makes them so much more user-friendly? Are they cut in a way that is different from others?

Dennis Gearside  
Leumeah, NSW Australia

Dennis, the whole guitar is different. The arches in the body, the neck itself and how it attaches, the angle of the neck, the shape of the neck, and the nut, like you say. We spend a lot of time getting all those parts right, and the end result is that they're easy to play. It's just part of what we do.

I have a 414ce and an NS24ce-LTD. I was recently changing the nylon strings on the NS24ce and noticed that the saddle is compensated on the A (fifth) string, as compared to the B (second) string on the steel-string guitar. Why the difference?

David

Well, one is nylon and the other steel, and the strings are totally different and stretch in different ways. It's the strings that need the compensation to allow for the stretch that occurs while pushing them from their resting position to their fretted position, and each string stretches differently. On a steel-string acoustic guitar, the B string is really the largest, strongest string. Although the wound strings appear larger, the solid core wire running through them is actually smaller than the plain B string. The string's strength and intonation point is mostly determined by its core wire. Nylon strings have a sort of cord in under the wrapping and stretch altogether differently.

In the most recent issue of *Wood&Steel*, Vol. 78/Winter 2014, I read with interest the article on finish thickness and "the thickness reduction making the guitars louder and more responsive." As an owner of a Big Baby that continues to amaze me with its volume and sustain, I can strongly support your findings in my own experience. However, in my search for a new guitar, possibly a 322e, I noticed that the satin thickness would be 5 mils compared to the 2 mils on my current instrument. If you are able to get gloss down to 3.5 mils, would

it not follow that satin-finish, solid-wood guitars would benefit from the same process?

Lee Strakbein

Yes, Lee, all solid wood guitars would benefit. But remember that your Big Baby is an economy guitar, and one thing we do to help keep the price low is apply a very, very simple finish. There's really hardly any material there! Ironically, it sounds better, but you also pay a price by not achieving that "high-end" look that buyers want on more expensive guitars. Achieving this on the 800s was a real accomplishment because it is not only thin but also as nicely crafted and perfectly done as the normal version found on nearly all high-quality guitars. Eventually we will work our way into other models with the techniques, but right now it would be too much for us to try to accomplish, to be honest.

I am an owner of six Taylor guitars, and I love all of them. Does a clear gloss coat have any effect on the resistance to humidity levels? I now live in Reno, and we see lots of different extreme weather conditions – high humidity at times, but usually very low humidity levels. I have noticed that some of my guitars that have clear gloss finishes seem to do better with the changing humidity levels. Also, do certain types of woods have a greater resistance to humidity?

Gary  
Reno, NV

Gary, bottom line: No, the finish does not protect the guitar from humidity changes. Let me explain. First, the finish is only on one side. The inside isn't finished. Second, a coat of finish does not stop vapor, which is what humidity is. It can stop water, but not vapor. Think about your painted door. Even with thick paint the door swells in the rain and sticks, and then shrinks in the dryness and moves freely. That's some seriously thick paint on that door compared to your guitar. As far as how



When will the 2014 856ce be available, and will it share the same makeover as the other 800 Series guitars? I'm looking to replace my 1965 D12-20 with something a little more user-friendly.

Bob Minke

It's available now, Bob, with the full makeover. On this guitar the bracing remains the same as before. We were not looking to change the nature of its tone, but it does get everything else like the whole cosmetic package, thinner finish, and protein glues, so in effect its tone has been enhanced a lot from just those changes. Check it out; I think you'll like it.

my hands on one. I like the look, and if the sound is right, I want one. Why did the 810 go away from the three-piece back?

Terry Scholze  
Riverside, IL

We've always used them interchangeably, Terry. We never made a model expressly with a three-piece back. When the wood is wide we make two-piece, and when it's narrow we make three-piece. There are so many wood cutters now who specialize in guitar

woods that we rarely see narrow wood for three-piece backs anymore. When we do, it's usually more often with maple and koa than rosewood.

to the 200 or 100 Series? I ask because I can't imagine buying another brand of acoustic, and I can't justify spending the money on a 300, 400 or 500 Series guitar that I would only use for a couple songs.

Eric J. Guenther, M. Ed

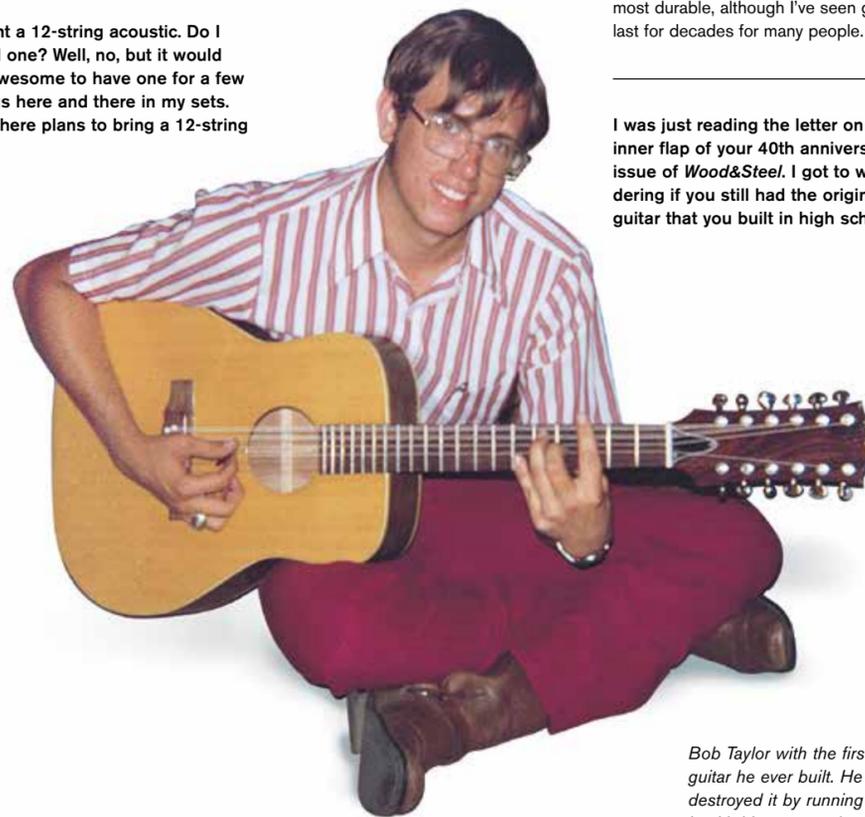
What do you mean, "Well, no"?! Of course you do! And as luck would have it, we now make a 150e, which is a 12-string in the 100 Series and very affordable and very good, too. [Ed. note: See page 26.] We made it because a lot of people are like you; they want one but only for a few songs, and they can't justify a huge expense. I think you'll like this one.

I like the looks of an acoustic guitar without a pickguard, but my GS5 had a pickguard when I bought it used. Can I remove the pickguard without damage? If not, I can live with it. It's just that I like the aesthetics of guitars with no pickguard. I love my GS5.

Charles Nix

Yes, you can, Charles. But I'd have a certified Taylor repair person do it. Our

I want a 12-string acoustic. Do I need one? Well, no, but it would be awesome to have one for a few songs here and there in my sets. Are there plans to bring a 12-string



Bob Taylor with the first guitar he ever built. He later destroyed it by running over it with his motorcycle.

service department can direct you to where. But keep in mind that there will be a silhouette once it's removed. The wood under it will be brand-new-white, while the wood around it is darkened from exposure to light. Eventually it will all turn the same color, but not for a year or two...or three. If that sounds bad to you, then I'd suggest leaving it on.

I'm a proud owner of a 714ce, 814ce, K14, and most recently, a beautifully flamed 614ce. How do I keep all that pretty gold on those tuners looking shiny and new? I use a premium guitar polish on the wood, but what do I do for the tuners?

John Stratz

I'd get one of those microfiber polishing cloths (we sell them) and wipe all your hand oils and fluids off the tuners each time you use them, if you really want to put in the effort. Some people have very corrosive body oils and sometimes can't own gold tuners of any make, but if you wipe them down like this, you stand the best chance. Most people don't have to do much of anything, and the tuners stay nice. Still, chrome is the most durable, although I've seen gold last for decades for many people.

I was just reading the letter on the inner flap of your 40th anniversary issue of *Wood&Steel*. I got to wondering if you still had the original guitar that you built in high school,



Sinker redwood top

or if you have ever published pictures of the first guitar?

Kevin Bybee

Kevin, I do have a guitar that I made in high school. It was a proud accomplishment at 17 years old. But as I started gaining experience and selling guitars I was a little embarrassed by it and two others I built. Being young and impetuous I destroyed two of them. The third one wasn't around on that day so it escaped the same fate, and I'm glad it did. It's nice to have it now; I've regained my pride in it.

Occasionally I see Taylor produce guitars from "sinker" wood that has been recovered from the bottom of a river. Visually, the mineral deposits make for the most beautiful guitars I've ever seen in my life. The high contrast stripes are simply stunning. I wonder how being submerged underwater for so long affects tone. I would guess the water might help break down/decompose some of the cellular structures, making for a more broken-in final product. Suspending reality for a second, if you had two similar pieces of wood that lived their lives on land and underwater, what kind of characteristics would we find different in the sinker wood?

Chris Frederick  
Powell, OH

### Got a question for Bob Taylor?

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

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



# DESIGN HARMONY

**With his eye for refined simplicity, Bob Taylor's longtime design partner, Larry Breedlove, has made an indelible impact on Taylor's modern guitar aesthetic**

By Jim Kirlin

## “WHEN

people look at a Taylor guitar, they're seeing as much Larry as they are Bob Taylor,” declares Bob himself, paying tribute to the symbiotic creative relationship he and Larry Breedlove have enjoyed since Larry's arrival in 1983. From the early years of helping to design tools to drawing and refining the elegant lines that have come to define the Taylor aesthetic, Larry has been the guitar-making yang to Bob's yin, the Lennon to his McCartney, the artistic complement to Bob's engineering mind.

“We have a good chemistry for doing this,” Bob says. “It's been a calm, collected, easygoing relationship.”

Larry might be the gold standard for easygoing. In conversation, he's as laid-back as they come, projecting the mellow aura of a world-wise Southern California surfer/zen master. With his even-keeled manner, an ever-ready smile, and quiet self-assurance, his presence seems to bring an overall calming effect to a room.

“Larry is one of the most naturally creative and gifted people I've been around, but he's really humble about it,” says veteran product designer David Hosler, who has worked closely with him and become a good friend over the years. “He has the sort of gracious personality that makes people want to be around him.”

While Larry has contributed many tangible guitar designs to the company over the years – the distinctive bridge profile, countless inlays, color-stained guitars, the Grand Symphony body shape, our contoured armrest, just to scratch the surface – his creative influence at Taylor, says Bob, has been even more pervasive than any list would show.

“Larry helped define my sense of aesthetic, and at the same time adapted to my sense of aesthetic,” Bob explains. “I think we come from a similar genetic seed stock in terms of how we want something to look, and we have both been able to somehow internalize it in a similar way, which helps, because, how do you describe a shape? We've worked together all this time with a similar ability to talk at a meaningful or logical level about guitar design.”

After a long and productive tenure at Taylor, Larry will be retiring in June. As he was winding down his involvement with the product development team, he took some time to reflect on his life, career and creative philosophy.

“This has never been my goal, to be doing what I do,” Larry reveals with a hint of his photogenic smile, his voice so mellow that at times it comes across as a murmur. He's being candid, but there's no trace of bitterness or regret in his words. “When I went to work for Bob, I thought, this won't last long. And Bob knew that he was hiring me for as long as he got me, and that was fine.”

His first love was art, sculpture in particular, and he thought he'd end up teaching, which he did for a while. But like a lot of restless artistic explorers, his life and career path have taken spontaneous twists and turns. He grew up in Spring Valley, California, located in San

Diego's East County area, not far from the original Lemon Grove location of Taylor Guitars. Larry was the youngest of three boys, all of whom were artistically gifted.

“We were always the kids who could draw,” he remembers. His father was an electrical engineer. Larry muses that it was his dad's life's ambition to create an engineer out of one of his sons.

“The joke has always been that my mom gave him three sons, but she gave him three *artists*,” he laughs. “For Christmas I'd get these science kits – how to build a radio and all that. He gave up after a while. But all three of us were good at painting and drawing. My oldest brother Kirk went into architecture, Kim was the real painter and the best of us, and I was more of a sculpture and ceramics person.”

Kim took art classes from the parents of another future luthier, Jim Goodall.

“Jim's parents were fabulous painters,” Larry says. “We all knew each other. He and I played on the same little league team coached by my dad. Jim is an amazing painter himself.”

Larry remembers the family constantly making things around the house, thanks to his dad.

“He was always constructing things – the picnic table, a barbecue surround, he even built a swimming pool. We'd get in the car and go collect rocks, and then back at home he dug a big hole and lined it with the rocks. He



**Above:** Larry kicks back at his work bench in Taylor's original Lemon Grove shop in the mid-1980s; **Opposite page:** In Taylor's design studio with Bob in April

took a barrel and turned it into a filter system. The next thing you know we had ourselves a pool!”

Along the way, Larry took up surfing and made friends in a junior high school church youth group with a kid named Tim Luranc, who would influence his career path more than once. They'd often surf and occasionally shape boards together.

Some of Larry's early artistic inspiration took form as a result of a college internship his oldest brother had with notable San Diego architect Sim Bruce Richards, whose homes often incorporated the work of artist/architect Jim Hubbell and ceramist Rhoda Lopez. Larry was drawn to the organic, architectural style of their art. When he enrolled at a local college he became immersed in ceramics. He later worked part-time at Lopez's studio.

“I loved working with clay,” he says. “I got pretty good on the potter's wheel and really enjoyed hand-building. The whole experience of firing clay just fit my mold perfectly. I'm into all those kinds of elements.”

That eventually led to an instructional position at his former high school, where he helped turn its basic ceramics class into a high-fire program.

Around the same time, his surfing buddy Tim was working at a nearby guitar-making co-op called the American Dream. Occasionally Larry would come by. He remembers when Bob Taylor started working there.

“He stuck out because he was

sudden I'm cutting all this walnut and maple and other woods, and there are pieces lying around. I thought I could make stuff out of that, and that's when I started making furniture.”

While working for Deering, Larry completed his B.A. in art with an emphasis on sculpture at San Diego State University, and started to incorporate wood and clay together into his sculptures. In the late '70s he felt the need for a change of scenery to do some soul-searching – he'd been through a relationship breakup and was still coming to terms with the death of his oldest brother Kirk in a car accident several years earlier. He left San Diego for the Pacific Northwest, where he lived for about a year and a half.

“I had a '66 VW bus that I parked on the property of a friend who lived in the San Juan Islands [off the coast of Washington state] and lived out of for three or four months,” he says. “I helped him work on one of the homes he was building, and then worked at Sunriver Resort right on the Deschutes River near Bend [Oregon] running canoe float trips and renting out small fishing boats.”

When he returned to San Diego, Larry worked for Geoff Stelling (now operating separately from Greg Deering), but decided he wanted to teach art at the college level and enrolled at San Diego State on a part-time basis to get his master's degree. Because he wanted to continue working with wood, he entered the school's furniture design program, where he flourished. Meanwhile, a slow period in the banjo business led Stelling to lay off some employees, including Larry.

In 1983 Tim started working for Bob Taylor, and Larry came aboard soon afterward and carved necks.

“When I first started working there I think we were making 11 guitars a week, and that went down to maybe seven a week at one point where it was just six of us,” Larry recalls. “It was great, though, because Bob let me go to classes, and I'd come back and finish my work at night.”

Larry says his affinity for organic design, which was rooted in his love of sculpting, informed both his approach to furniture design as a grad student and his design aesthetic for guitars. He notes the parallels between Bob's quest to create greater efficiency in the guitar-making process and his own design evolution, which was showcased in a series of pieces he created as part of his graduate school thesis and exhibition.

“Everything I had been doing was really labor-intensive and time-

sudden I'm cutting all this walnut and maple and other woods, and there are pieces lying around. I thought I could make stuff out of that, and that's when I started making furniture.”

While working for Deering, Larry completed his B.A. in art with an emphasis on sculpture at San Diego State University, and started to incorporate wood and clay together into his sculptures. In the late '70s he felt the need for a change of scenery to do some soul-searching – he'd been through a relationship breakup and was still coming to terms with the death of his oldest brother Kirk in a car accident several years earlier. He left San Diego for the Pacific Northwest, where he lived for about a year and a half.

“I had a '66 VW bus that I parked on the property of a friend who lived in the San Juan Islands [off the coast of Washington state] and lived out of for three or four months,” he says. “I helped him work on one of the homes he was building, and then worked at Sunriver Resort right on the Deschutes River near Bend [Oregon] running canoe float trips and renting out small fishing boats.”

When he returned to San Diego, Larry worked for Geoff Stelling (now operating separately from Greg Deering), but decided he wanted to teach art at the college level and enrolled at San Diego State on a part-time basis to get his master's degree. Because he wanted to continue working with wood, he entered the school's furniture design program, where he flourished. Meanwhile, a slow period in the banjo business led Stelling to lay off some employees, including Larry.

In 1983 Tim started working for Bob Taylor, and Larry came aboard soon afterward and carved necks.

“When I first started working there I think we were making 11 guitars a week, and that went down to maybe seven a week at one point where it was just six of us,” Larry recalls. “It was great, though, because Bob let me go to classes, and I'd come back and finish my work at night.”

Larry says his affinity for organic design, which was rooted in his love of sculpting, informed both his approach to furniture design as a grad student and his design aesthetic for guitars. He notes the parallels between Bob's quest to create greater efficiency in the guitar-making process and his own design evolution, which was showcased in a series of pieces he created as part of his graduate school thesis and exhibition.

“Everything I had been doing was really labor-intensive and time-

consuming," he recalls. "I was really into chairs, and instead of using traditional furniture construction, it was a block lamination process, where you build up a chair and then come back and carve the whole shape out of it. I loved it; I was carving all these cool lines, but my whole thesis was based on going from spending countless hours on projects to how fast I could get the concept down and get it done. It could have come a little bit from being around Bob and trying to figure out how fast you can do something and not jeopardize the idea."

### The Birth of the Artist Series

The mid-1980s were lean years for the acoustic guitar industry as a whole. A growing proliferation of synth-pop and electric guitar-fueled arena rock and hair metal, bolstered by the colorful visual theatrics of the music video era, had largely relegated the acoustic guitar to the margins of mainstream music. From his furniture design pursuits, Larry had gotten interested in some color-treatment techniques that were being used on wood and decided to experiment on guitars.

"I had attended a workshop by a guy who paints furniture, and he used this technique where he would hand-cut lines and do bleaching and use water colors and paint up to the lines to create these fascinating designs in the wood," he remembers. "It just turned out that McCabe's [a music store and Taylor dealer in Santa Monica, California] called and asked if there was anything unique that we wanted to try on a guitar, and I told Bob I wanted to try that technique. I think I actually stained the guitar with watercolor and discovered that the spruce top doesn't take stain very well by itself, so I had to prime it with Gesso – it's like a white-wash that artists use on canvases. I would rub it into the spruce so it would accept the stain, and we got the color of the tops to be as good as they were. So we did one and McCabe's liked it."

That led to another painted guitar – a purple maple/spruce Jumbo 12-string with a Florentine cutaway made for Prince, which featured multicolored flames around the soundhole.

"I was just messing around and might have used some oil paints on that one," Larry says. "Using an X-Acto and the French Curves I would just draw it out and get it cut and paint right up to it!"

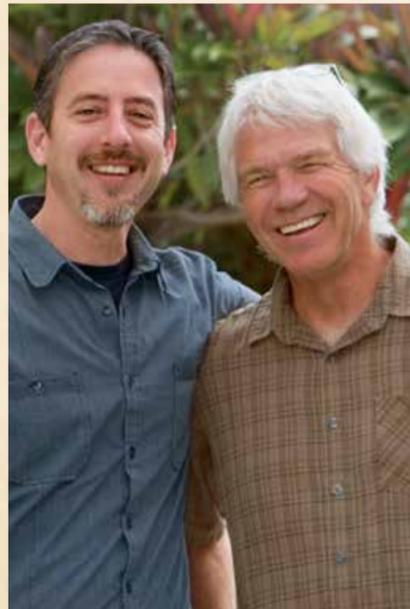
The guitar first appeared in Prince and the Revolution's 1985 music video for "Raspberry Beret," getting plenty of airtime in the hands of guitar player Wendy Melvoin. Prince also played the guitar in a video for the song "4 The Tears in Your Eyes," which aired during the worldwide concert broadcast of Live Aid in 1985. Even though Prince had insisted that the guitar be made without the Taylor name on the headstock, Taylor's PR person at the time made sure the guitar magazines knew it was a Taylor. That led to a blue guitar that attracted considerable attention within the industry. Soon, calls were coming in from other artists interested in stage-friendly colored acoustics and custom inlay work, including Kenny Loggins, who ordered a blue Jumbo 12-string, Jeff Cook from Alabama, who ordered a green Dreadnought for a Christmas album, and Billy Idol guitarist Steve Stevens, who ordered a black Jumbo with an atomic energy inlay scheme. The colors and inlays would soon become standardized as part of Taylor's Artist Series, and become a catalyst for boosting Taylor's profile in the guitar world.

For his part, Larry looks back on some of those early hand-painted guitars with a bemused mix of pride and embarrassment at the novelty appeal of the guitars.

### Ed Granero on Larry as a Mentor

"There's something about Larry," reflects Ed Granero, Taylor's Vice President of Product Development. "People gravitate to him, and he's able to quietly affect them in great ways."

Ed should know because it happened to him. Not long after he started at Taylor back in 1997, he found himself spending afternoons gluing up tops and backs in a shared space with Larry. The two struck up a friendship, bonding over the fact that both had studied furniture design in college. It wasn't long before Ed had progressed to building bodies and then overseeing their production, and as Larry recalls, he was a sponge for learning with natural initiative and a lot of leadership potential. Larry proved to be a strong mentor, as Ed attests.



"Along with Bob, I consider him to be one of the greatest influences of my career," he says. "He does great things, but he doesn't really announce it – and I respect that a lot."

Ed and Larry would work more closely together during the transition in production to Taylor's NT neck, since Larry was a neck and body expert who was on the design team, and Ed was enlisted to analyze the process and oversee quality assurance. Larry recommended him to become part of the product development team, and the two have worked together on the team ever since. They even carpooled to work for a while, giving them extra time to talk about life and work. We asked Ed to share some thoughts about the impact that Larry has had on him personally and others at Taylor over the years.

**There was a while when I was drawing inlays** for some commemorative models with Larry, and what he taught me and others is to go too far with it, because you won't know if you've gotten there until you've gone

too far. You might think, that looks good, and then he'll come by and add some other line, and you go, whoa, that's so much better. That's because he's free enough and not so protective of the work. He's able to just let go – just keep going.

**Another one of Larry's gifts is a knack for simplicity** – stripping away all the unnecessary crap. He did it with fixturing and tooling. People might think of Larry with the design and inlays or the shapes of things, but he's also had a big impact on making fixtures and tooling up our production line by helping us to look at things more simply, not overcomplicating it, because that's really easy to do, especially with young engineers who come here. I did it when I first came here. Over time you learn that, ultimately, that won't work in a production setting. The simpler you can make something, the more rock solid it is. Larry's really good at looking at something and saying, "We don't need to add all that other stuff; let's just do this."

**If you look at some of the coolest things that Larry's made**, they're actually little tools, jigs, fixtures or templates that he's built for the custom shop. Not for production, just for his own personal workbench. I remember going, "Man, he's got some cool stuff that he's made to help him do whatever process on the guitar."

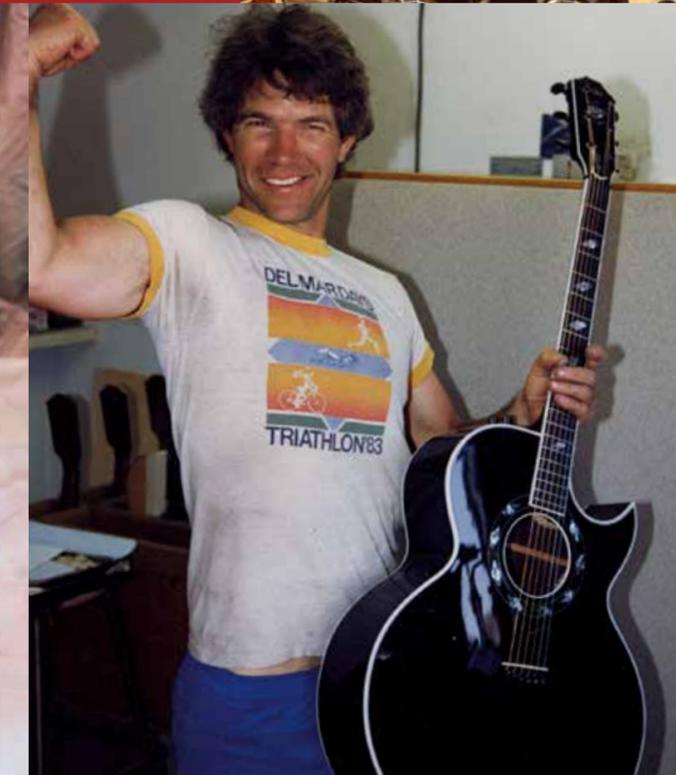
**People have ordered custom guitars from us** and requested custom inlay work, like a rhinoceros or a sunset. They usually have some idea of what they want, but then Larry refines the idea, and they end up with a Larry Breedlove work of art on their wall, and maybe they don't even realize it. He spent so much time with those little things, stripping away the complication of it and really presenting the important elements. I've always admired that, especially with inlay work. And inlay is so difficult because it's not just a painting; it has to work with the negative space.

**Larry is the voice of reason, he's the voice of encouragement**...he's the voice that people will go to and listen to, and he knows how to get the best out of someone, like technical people who come in knowing engineering. He knows how to soften them up. He knows how to take that raw engineering talent and apply common sense, some art to it, because there's the technical side, and then there's the softer art side, and then there's the reality of everyday production. He also knows how important it is to listen to folks who actually do the job every day and apply what they're saying to your designs here. That's where he and I have been really in line. So, he does a good job of mentoring folks in that sense, because he's a doer. He hasn't just been a designer sitting behind a drafting table. He's actually done the whole thing.

**A couple of years ago we were at the NAMM Show**, and someone came up to Larry and said something about him being a titan of the industry. I remember being with him and feeling like a little puppy dog because he was just walking around, and everybody knew him, and I'm thinking, wow, I get to know Larry every day.



**Clockwise from top left:** Larry (front row, second from left) with his little league baseball team, coached by his dad. Future guitar maker Jim Goodall is in the second row, second from right; (L-R): A well-coiffed Terry Myers with Larry and one of the electric guitars they built together in early 1989; Larry (seated left) with Kurt, Bob and the Taylor crew circa 1991; posing during his triathlon days with a black custom Jumbo made for Steve Stevens featuring atomic symbol inlays; double-neck version of Richie Sambora's all-koa signature guitar; one of Larry's custom chairs, featuring a seat, back and armrests of myrtlewood and painted with Fender's standard cream color; mom and the Breedlove boys (L-R: Kirk, Larry, Kim) enjoy their home-made pool in 1955



Purple  
12-string  
Jumbo made  
for Prince

"It definitely opened doors for us," he says. "I remember when we did the very first one thinking, this is kind of cool – wouldn't it be neat if we could do another one – and the next thing you know people *did* want another one, and we were like, oh crap, now what do we do?"

The Artist Series did give birth to a decidedly more iconic design from Larry: Taylor's modern bridge.

"I came in one day and that bridge was designed," recalls Bob Taylor. "And every time we made a guitar with that bridge it sounded better, so we decided to put it on all our guitars."

Larry took on more custom inlay design work during this period. In addition to color finishes on guitars, he began to work with modern inlay materials like ColorCore to expand his palette of color options. An early example of that was a custom fretboard inlay he designed for Edie Brickell, based on drawings in the liner notes of one of her albums. He would often redraw the artwork provided by an artist. One of his favorite custom designs was a peghead inlay for a guitar for Laurence Juber, which was based on a tattoo of a peacock on his wife's ankle.

"I saw Laurence a couple of years ago and he told me that's still his favorite guitar," Larry says. "The cool thing is seeing how delicate you can get. Along with it being great design to begin with, what made that one work was how fine some of the parts were."

Taylor's acquisition of computer-controlled mills and lasers would eventually make Larry's artwork much easier to produce.

## Working with Bob

As Larry reflects on his creative relationship with Bob over the years, he emphasizes that he has always considered Bob the guitar maker.

"He's really the passionate guitar person," Larry insists. "I'm just a guy who likes to make cool things, and guitar making happened to fit into that really well for me. Everything about the craft of designing and putting small pieces together into a cumulative result is incredibly compelling, and doing it well, that's what's important to me. I think for the most part Bob trusted my common sense and [knew] that my decisions were based not just on emotion but on sound reasoning."

Bob agrees.

"What I appreciate most about my work with Larry over the years is that it's never been hard," he says. "Even when it's hard work, it's never hard because we're happy to chase the design, and most of that is Larry."

Bob says that when it comes to collaborative design, the best results come from a safe creative environment, where neither person feels defensive.

"I've always felt like I've been in a safe place with Larry," he adds. "We both want it to be good, and we know we're going to make tooling for it. That means the design has to be right, and we're both willing to accept that. We can't just get tired of it and start this massive amount of work, and then have it not be right. I think we both understand that down deep, and I also think we both kind of speak to each other on the same level."

Bob feels that as a designer, Larry has a knack for refined simplicity.

"We learned how to make simple silhouettes of shapes be pretty because of the architecture of the curve," he says. "I think a problem that some designers run into is when they stop before it's done, or keep going after it's done and mess it up."

## Taking a Break

In 1990, Larry decided that he needed to leave Taylor.

"It had less to do with what I was doing than what I *wasn't* doing," he explains. "And what I wasn't doing was what I thought was my art. I'd gotten my graduate degree, and I was sitting on this portfolio of work that meant something to me. I wanted to find out what I could do with this stuff."

He decided to return to the Pacific Northwest, where he showed his furniture work to architects.

"The typical response was, 'You make nice stuff, but it's not complete,'" he recalls. "It's kind of like a guy who comes in showing a guitar he made and says, 'I'm ready to start a guitar company.' No, you're not. You may be able to make a nice guitar, but you don't have your act together yet."

As Larry pondered how to proceed, Bob reminded him that he could always make guitars on the side to stay afloat financially. Larry sketched out some design ideas that were radically different from the Taylor aesthetic, including an acoustic body based on an electric guitar design he'd created with Taylor employee Terry Myers. (It would be the

basis for the Breedlove CM guitar.) He also sketched an unusual two-piece bridge design.

"It was really just a doodle concept," he says. "It was all based on the concept of one part holding the strings, and the other part holding the saddle."

Bob even helped Larry build some of the tooling for his new guitar designs. Larry says his original idea was to make a guitar a week. But the plan grew into something bigger when he agreed to go into business with Steve Henderson, a Taylor employee with whom Larry had built some furniture on the side.

"Immediately it went from me out on my own making a few guitars here and there to now I'm a company," Larry recalls. "And Steve was married and had a family. I hadn't even decided yet where I was going to move, but it had to be somewhere they would be happy."

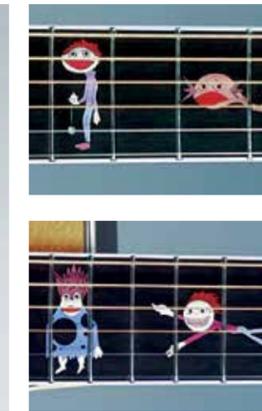
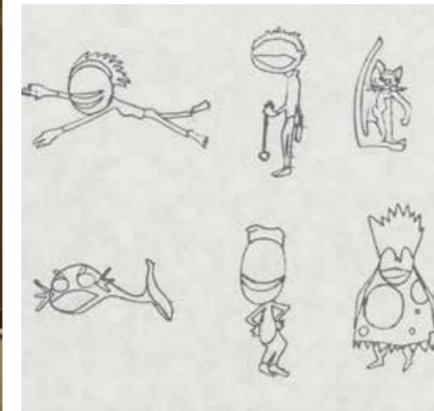
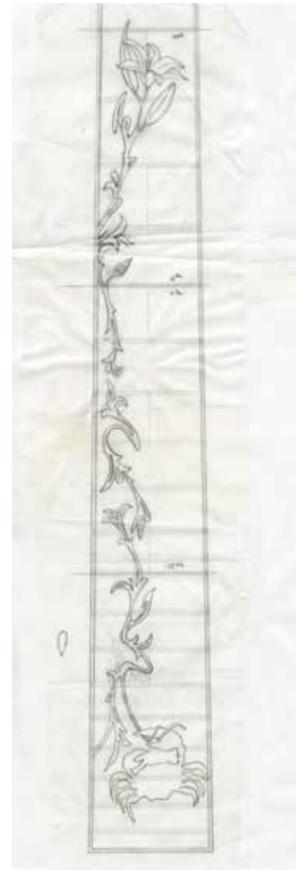
They decided to set up shop as Breedlove Guitars in Bend, Oregon. Bob Taylor would lend his support in another substantial way: He outsourced Taylor's repair and service work to them, a temporary solution for both. It lightened the burden of in-house service for Bob, and helped Larry and Steve pay the bills and establish themselves.

"The first couple of years were pretty hard," Larry remembers. "Luckily we had the repair service. That got our foot in the door with dealers, too. So it was easy to get a small dealership network going."

Between repairing Taylors and building Breedloves, Larry was consumed with the business. He and Steve asked

## David Hosler on Larry Breedlove

We've tossed around the term "applied creativity" here for a while. Larry has been a wonderful example of that. He can take his creativity and put it into the form that's necessary for the moment. Around here, great things don't necessarily come from pure engineers or from pure artists. When those skill sets are combined either within a team or within individuals, you end up with Taylor Guitars, and Larry brought both skill sets in a very unique way. Larry's may be more in the artistic vein, but he also understands tools and applies these ideas well. There's not really a course that's taught on how to be this person. You either are that way or you're not. If you are, and if someone like Bob Taylor gives you the opportunity, you flourish, like Larry has.



Bob to take the repair service back, focused on their production, and hired a few employees. Terry Myers joined them, and eventually, Larry's brother Kim began the process of relocating his family from Virginia to also join the company. Although the guitars were well received within the industry, Larry wasn't happy with the way things had progressed.

"I loved Bend," he says, "but things had become everything I didn't want. We had five employees, and I hadn't made a single piece of art during my time up there. My relationship with Steve had deteriorated. I don't begrudge doing any of it, but the bummer was that by the time Kim had sold his house and moved out, I was about ready to leave."

Larry had also reconnected with a former interest – and eventual wife – Karen, in San Diego, which gave him a compelling reason to return. He moved back and rejoined Taylor in 1994, along with Terry Myers (who'd returned earlier), and says he's glad that he did. While Larry had been gone, Bob had designed a new body shape, the Grand Auditorium, to celebrate Taylor's 20th anniversary. Although Larry wasn't at

Taylor during that time, his aesthetic sensibility had made an impact on Bob, and it crystallized with the GA design.

"The GA was the first guitar that I designed where I consciously remember that I'd hit my design sense," Bob says. "It took me 20 years to come up with what I felt a beautiful guitar looks like."

One of the projects Larry undertook upon his return was to refine the lines of the other Taylor body shapes, especially the inherited shapes like the Dreadnought and Jumbo, to create a family resemblance among them all. By that time, the laser had become a useful tool for prototyping.

"We'd make these kind of 'paper doll' models," Bob remembers. "Larry would glue a neck onto a piece of plywood that had the purflings etched into it, the bridge, the soundhole cut out, a rosette in, a pickguard on. It would be the size and the shape of a guitar so it was a real thing, not just a drawing. He'd put them in my office, and I would train myself to notice what I thought about it when I wasn't thinking about it. That impression right there is probably what drove Larry to make 40 versions of every shape we did. So Larry would do

all this stuff at my request, and we'd talk about it. To find out if it was big enough we'd have to make it bigger and bigger until we knew it was too big."

Asked what he's proudest of at Taylor, Larry says he thinks less of specific designs or accomplishments, and more in terms of the resilient mentality that enabled the company to overcome its many hurdles and growing pains and achieve success.

"Bob and Kurt had been struggling to find their place for nine years when I came aboard, and it seems like starting in 1984 and '85 there was this sudden burst that projected us to the point where we immediately outgrew our shop in Lemon Grove," he says. "Then the demands on us were huge, and we found ways to meet them. To be part of that process, going from something that small to where we are now, is just phenomenal. We aren't just another guitar company. And whatever my contribution in there, design-wise or not, or just the mentality of the company, is really fulfilling."

Larry says he's been flattered by the respect he's been given throughout the industry for his accomplishments over the years.

"I'd like to think of myself as someone who understands everything that it takes to come up with a good design, then make it production-friendly, get it out the door, and make an impact on the market," he says. "A couple of people have mentioned my name in having that type of vision, and it all comes from working with Bob."

For his part, Bob feels a deep kinship with Larry as a fellow builder who had the right temperament to help the company establish itself.

"We were content to be guitar builders, and it was hard to be a guitar builder then," he says. "We cut wood, we went home covered in sawdust every day for years on end. But what was nice was that the first core group had somehow figured out this was our lot in life."

Bob says he knows he'll feel sad when Larry leaves, but he's happy that Larry has been able to develop a successful career building guitars at Taylor.

"It's pretty cool that Larry can enjoy a legitimate retirement from guitar building," he says. "That's actually one of the things that I wanted to happen when I was twenty-something years old, poorer than church mice, eating tomato soup

for 17 cents a can every day, thinking, I need to figure out how you can make a living doing this. I wanted to make guitar building a profession that provided income to people, because it doesn't automatically do that. I'm thrilled about that, and I'm thrilled for Larry. He's such a huge part of the history of Taylor up to this point. As far as the guitars go, right up there at the hugest. It's a very short list of the super contributors. I feel he was my guitar-building partner."

Larry and his wife Karen will both be retiring at the same time. They recently purchased a house in the San Juan Islands and are looking forward to living there full-time with their three dogs and seven parrots. Karen plans to pursue her painting and photography, and looks forward to raising chickens for eggs; Larry says he's excited about getting his art studio set up once he settles in.

"I've gotten back on the potter's wheel, and I love it," he says. "Between that and building some furniture, I've got stuff to do."

Just don't expect him to build any guitars on the side this time around.

W&S

**Right:** Taylor's colored maple/spruce Artist Series; **Far right:** Contoured armrest designed by Larry for Taylor's Presentation Series and custom models

### Opposite page:

From sketch to inlay (clockwise from far left): Custom design for a customer who asked for a vine incorporating a white lily for his daughter and a Cancer crab (zodiac sign) for himself; parrot design; forklift motif for Taylor's pallet guitar, crafted with wood from a shipping pallet; figures for a custom guitar made for Edie Brickell, based on her album artwork





# FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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Taylor's breakthrough Expression System 2 pickup  
liberates the piezo and unlocks a dynamic  
new dimension of amplified acoustic tone

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By Jim Kirlin

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Last issue we introduced Taylor's new Expression System® 2 (ES2) acoustic pickup as one of many new tone-enhancing components of our redesigned 800 Series. The ES2's breakthrough design – now officially patented – literally turned the piezo pickup on its side, relocating it from its traditional position beneath a guitar's saddle to behind it in order to better capture the energy of a guitar's strings and wood components. The 800s were a fitting place to debut the pickup, says lead developer David Hosler.

"I don't think any other pickup would be able to show off those tonal refinements in an amplified setting," Hosler says.

Beyond the 800s, the ES2 represents an exciting new electronics platform for the amplification of other Taylor acoustic models moving forward. The pickup is currently being installed as the standard acoustic electronics package on Taylor 500 Series models and up, along with our 2014 Spring Limited Editions (see page 8). It's also an option through our custom program. Eventually it will be added to other acoustic/electric models in the Taylor line.

As promised, this issue we bring you a closer look into its development. We'll highlight its standout characteristics, reveal the R&D that went into its design and in-house production, and share feedback from artists, sound engineers and others who have had a chance to experience the ES2 in a real-world setting.

*continued on next page*

Let's start with a simple truth:

Amplifying an acoustic guitar isn't easy. For one thing, an acoustic guitar body by design already is an amplifier, so any pickup is essentially trying to amplify an amplifier. And as Taylor Master Luthier Andy Powers explained in last issue's story on the 800 Series, a guitar is a complex network of vibrating parts.

For several decades now, the leading pickup technologies used to amplify acoustic guitars for live performance, aside from playing into a microphone, have been piezo and magnetic systems, which might include an internal microphone or a surface-mounted piezo contact sensor. A piezo pickup incorporates piezoelectric crystals that generate voltage in response to changes in pressure. (The word piezo derives from the Greek word *piezein*, meaning to press or squeeze.) The usual location for piezos has been under the saddle in order to capture the saddle's movement in response to the strings. While piezo pickups were widely adopted in the 1970s and onward, the knock on them has been their tendency to have a bright, thin and harsh character, which often requires the use of preamp EQ conditioning to warm up the tone. Piezos can also be difficult to balance to get a linear response, as almost any guitar technician will attest. As a former repair technician himself, David Hosler remembers supervising Taylor's Final Assembly department back in the late 1990s and the daily challenges of installing under-saddle piezo pickups.

"Balancing those pickups was driving us nuts," he recalls. "It made it really hard to get guitars out the door."

Magnetic pickups capture vibration — usually incorporating a guitar's steel strings — through a magnetic field. When Taylor first began researching pickup technology to explore the possibility of developing its own pickup system back around 2000, Hosler chose a magnetic platform — largely to escape the shortcomings of piezo pickups — and pursued an onboard system that could capture a guitar's richness and detail in a way similar to a studio-grade microphone. Hosler and Taylor's development team reached out to outside experts to better understand how a guitar's soundboard moves, measuring that movement using sophisticated laser imaging. He ended up working closely with pro audio design legend Rupert Neve, and the eventual result was the groundbreaking Expression System, an integrated pickup that incorporated magnetic body and string sensors and a studio-grade preamp to produce as natural and transparent an amplified tone as possible, in a warm, high-fidelity package.



Taylor's David Hosler with a new 816e, which features the ES2. "It should never be about the pickup," he says. "It's really meant to be invisible so the guitar is the star."

"The ES gave us a lot of advantages," Hosler says, "mostly because it's a dynamic system, which means it actually works with the guitar itself."

Since its debut in 2003, the ES, like our guitars, has continued to evolve in order to better serve the needs of players in different playing scenarios. Hosler says the initial germ of the idea for the ES2 came a few years ago, when he was in Amsterdam working to get Taylor's repair center fully established at our European headquarters.

He was looking at the saddle on a guitar, and for some reason it triggered a memory of working for the circus when he was a young man.

"We used to put the tent up all the time," he explains. "The tent would be flat on the ground, and after driving the tent stakes in we would pull it up by applying tension to the support poles. I started thinking about what really happens when I put tension on the pole. The pole doesn't go down because it's anchored. It rocks back and forth. I hap-

pened to be looking at the saddle on a guitar and thought, if that's true, and if there's a wave travelling up and down the string, then the saddle isn't bouncing; it's rocking. If that's the case, we should be able to move the pickup from under the saddle to behind it, and we should have more output energy."

Since he didn't have all the tools he needed to test his theory in Amsterdam, Hosler called David Judd, a veteran of Taylor's product development team, back at the Taylor factory in El Cajon.

"I asked him to rout a slot right behind the saddle and take a pickup, turn it sideways, and shove it down in there and see what happens," Hosler says. "All of a sudden we had twice the output, and it balanced perfectly. Actually, the first prototype went in one of Jason Mraz's guitars, and it stayed in there for almost a year and a half."

When Hosler returned to the States, he did more testing. He went back and looked at laser images of soundboard movement from some of the original ES research and conducted additional research on string vibration, which confirmed that the saddle not only wasn't bouncing up and down, but it was over-compressing the piezo, effectively locking it down under 60 pounds of string tension.

More laser imaging followed, this time focusing specifically on the saddle's movement. It was able to measure its back-and-forth rocking motion.

"That was important, Hosler says. "Rupert [Neve] used to say to me all the time, 'David, you may have a theory, but to measure is to know.' Now we know what the saddle actually does."

In his office, Hosler pulls up one of the imaging videos on his computer to illustrate his point. The video shows the results of an A string being plucked.

"Notice how the A string is moving the saddle over here," he says. "What's interesting is the fact that the saddle isn't moving just in one place." He opens another video file that shows the effect of an open G string's vibration. "The entire saddle is moving." Another video confirms that there is very little vertical movement from the saddle, aside from the whole top moving. It begged the question of why an under-saddle piezo ever worked in the first place.

"We figured out that the sound of a typical under-saddle pickup was actually coming from it shearing back and forth with the saddle movement," Hosler says. "We realized that if you can keep the crystals relaxed they'll respond more naturally, in a more linear way."

I ask Hosler why he thinks this discovery hadn't previously been made given how long piezo pickups have been around. He offers two thoughts.

"As Bob Taylor has said around the factory, people ground corn on a wheel flat on the ground for a thousand years until one day someone said, 'Why don't we stand it up?' and it rolled," Hosler says. "As to why that thought occurs... in my case I was thinking about circus stuff," he laughs.

His second thought underscores Taylor's integrated approach to pickup design.

"We think of these things because we're guitar makers first," he says. "Not

all pickup manufacturers are seasoned guitar builders. So they're trying to figure out some way to make something that works and that a guitar manufacturer will put on a guitar. We don't think like that. I've been studying and building guitars a lot longer than I've been studying and building pickups. Our honest advantage in a lot of these things is exactly that: We think, how does this guitar actually work? How do the strings work? How do these things happen?"

Hosler shared his research with Bob Taylor, who greenlighted the next phase of development: the design of a behind-the-saddle pickup assembly. Hosler enlisted Taylor's longtime industrial design guru, Matt Guzzetta (profiled in our fall 2012 issue), whose involvement would be his last major design project before retiring. Together, they worked to design a mechanism to hold the piezo crystals in place directly behind the saddle, enabling them to lightly contact it, with the top of the unit flush with the top of the bridge. Because the saddle moves as a whole, Hosler says, it wasn't necessary to have an individual piezo sensor for each string. A three-pronged assembly holds three sensors, each of which is positioned between a different pair of strings (E/A - D/G - B/E). One of the patented design elements is a mechanism that allows for adjustment of the pressure of each sensor against the saddle. Three Allen screws located on

the pickup, which are visible between the saddle and the bridge pins, enable the calibration of the pressure. Loosening the screws tilts the sensors away from the saddle, decreasing the pressure and diminishing the amplified output. The pickup pressures are factory set when the unit is installed. Hosler says no additional adjustment should be necessary unless the saddle is being moved or replaced.

### A Dynamic Approach

Although the ES2's piezo sensors aren't magnetic like the original Expression System and use the saddle as a source point instead of the soundboard and neck, Hosler says the way they work is similar.

"Like the original ES, this system is completely dynamic," he explains. "If anything, this pickup is probably better from a pure function and theory point of view because it really is capturing what the whole top is doing, and how the top is working together with the strings. The saddle is in essence the focal point of the entire guitar."

He uses the way an electric guitar's magnetic pickup works to illustrate how the saddle can capture so much of what the guitar is doing.

"Electric players will say, 'When I'm playing I can really hear the sound of that alder' — or whatever wood — and the question is, how do you hear it, because those magnetic pickups don't know that the wood is there,"

he says. "There's nothing in the wood that is directly going into that pickup. If you could see the world the way that pickup does, everything would be invisible unless it were made out of metal. Well, the way it works is that the sound of the resonating wood goes *back* into the strings. So the vibrating strings go to the body, the body resonates and sends that energy back through the bridge into the strings...and back to the pickup. That's how you can hear the different types of wood in electric guitars. It's the same with an acoustic guitar. The energy from the vibrating strings goes to the saddle and into the top, and the energy from the top goes back via the saddle to the strings."

The key, Hosler says, is accurately harnessing the direction of travel of the waves at the point of interaction and in the proper orientation of the flow.

"Think of it like this," he suggests: "If you're out surfing and you want to catch a wave, it doesn't do much good to paddle parallel to the shore. So if we can capture things the way they are actually flowing, we have a truly dynamic pickup."

That's why the new pickup design doesn't need a body sensor: It's already sensing the body movement through the saddle in the direction of the motion of the traveling waves.

"That was the revelation that turned our thinking — and ultimately the pick-

*continued on next page*

### The "Cutting Edge" of Amplified Tone

One of the qualities of amplified acoustic guitar tone that makes it easier to hear in a live, ensemble setting is its ability to cut through a mix with other instruments. David Hosler elaborates on what that "cutting" quality means in the context of the ES2's design.

"Because of where we're capturing the sound, there's a front edge to the sound," he says. "It doesn't occur as radically to your naked ear on an acoustic instrument even though it's there. Because we're capturing that front edge in a plugged-in situation, it pushes the guitar sound forward in the mix. It's not mushy either, like a typical under-saddle transducer often can be. An under-saddle transducer also can get so distorted on that front edge that after a while you don't want to listen to it anymore because it fatigues you."

Hosler says the lack of cut is one of the things that can make playing into a microphone in a live setting problematic.

"It isn't just the feedback issue; it's because you're not getting that edge of that sound," he explains. "You're getting the sound of the guitar, but it'll easily get buried in a mix if that cutting edge isn't there. Sound systems and mixing engineers like that front edge. It is something more common to our plugged-in experience for sure. I think people are used to hearing that when they plug in."

During the beta testing phase of the ES2, Hosler went to see Taylor Customer Service Manager Glen Wolff's country band play at a local venue. One of the acoustic guitars used during the show was equipped with the new pickup.

"I just stood in the back," Hosler says, "and the guitar was cutting through the mix and had a sound I didn't expect to hear. It was really cool."

### Small-Scale Robotic Assembly

One of Taylor's strengths as a production-scale manufacturer is the ability to produce a guitar with great precision, efficiency and consistency. Our investment in high-tech tooling — computer-controlled mills and lasers, robotic applications for spraying and buffing finish, digitally-programmed, automated sidebenders, to name a few — led our product development team in a fresh direction in order to produce the ES2 in house: small-scale robotics. It was a logical solution for executing the intricate assembly process required to produce Matt Guzzetta's pickup design, which required copper to be folded around the part of the pickup assembly that holds the piezo crystals.

"The copper acts like both a conductor and a shield," Hosler explains. "Part of the challenge of folding the copper around the assembly is that the copper is rigid, plus it has conductive adhesive glue on it, and the minute I pull the backing paper off of it, I can't touch it. We started thinking, how do they fold paper around a stick of gum?"

The development team eventually purchased a pair of Epson 3-axis robots, which feature an articulated arm that can maneuver in small areas and effectively assemble the pickup "sandwich."

"The robots were the key to locating everything accurately," Hosler says. Taylor's David Judd went to Epson to learn the programming language for the robot and then came back and wrote the programs. As of our press deadline, the team was working on programming the robot to load the crystals into place, which would essentially automate the entire assembly process.

"We're shooting to be able to manufacture 1,000 pickups a day," Hosler says.





Three Allen screws enable proper calibration of each sensor's pressure against the saddle in Taylor's Final Assembly department. Once the pressures are factory set, no further adjustment should be required unless the saddle is being moved or replaced.

up – on its side,” Hosler says. “This is as dynamic as the body sensor on the magnetic Expression System. And it's simpler overall – fewer parts, a little less weight.” He adds that it's also highly resistant to feedback.

Andy Powers points out that location of the ES2 pickup is more consistent from one body shape to the next, compared to the more variable nature of the magnetic ES's body sensor placement.

“The body sensor of magnetic ES is meant to capture movement of a very specific vibrating spot on the guitar, and that spot can move around a tiny bit from guitar to guitar,” he explains. “What you end up hearing with the ES2 is more of a summation of the whole guitar package. It's a very cohesive sonic picture of what the guitar is doing.”

Like the original ES, the ES2 features the same volume and tone control knobs. The preamp is different, with a gain structure that's about 25 percent hotter, which produces an output level that's more in line with other pickups.

In comparing the amplified tonal qualities of the original ES to the ES2, both Hosler and Andy tend to deflect the argument of which pickup sounds better. They think of the two systems as each having their own unique sonic character traits due to their respective

see what you're adding to it! Nothing. Everything was being run flat.”

Hedden's colleague, Nolan Rossi, who manned the console next to the stage, was also impressed.

“It was that familiar piezo sound, but improved,” he shared afterward. “It sounded more dynamic and detailed. I also appreciated the consistency between guitars. That made it easier for us to have artists switch between multiple guitars while using the same channel on the consoles.”

The response among dealers has also been favorable. Some had a chance to preview it at our dealer events held at the Taylor factory throughout 2013, while others had their first taste at NAMM. Brian Meader, sales manager at the Guitar Sanctuary in McKinney, Texas, and formerly of Washington Music Center in Wheaton, Maryland, has been selling Taylors since 1992. He shared his early assessment of the new pickup after the Winter NAMM Show based on hearing it with the new 800 Series. He offered his thoughts compared to the magnetic system.

“The [magnetic] ES has more of an open, miked tone, and it really does what it was set out to do,” Meader says. “It takes away the issues of compression and distortion that you typically get with an under-the-saddle pickup. But it does lack that kind of cut that I think most people are listening for. The reality is that the larger guitar-buying public has never miked their acoustic guitar and chances are will never mike their acoustic guitar. They've only ever plugged it in through an under-the-saddle pickup and into an amplifier, and they're used to a certain tone and a certain level of cut.”

Meader feels the ES2 is likely to have a broader appeal in a variety of live scenarios. “I think it's going to sound much more in the wheelhouse of what those people are going to want,” he says. “And it'll be really simple: plug in and listen to it. It conquers those classic under-the-saddle pickup issues, and it's really accurate to the guitar, but it has a little bit more cut. A lot of Taylor players are playing their guitars in a live music setting, in a worship music setting, in a band setting, and so having it cut through the mix is going to be a real crucial thing for them.”

### Early Reactions

Taylor's performance stage at the Winter NAMM Show proved to be a strong showcase for the ES2. Many acts played our new 800 Series guitars (see our NAMM Show report on page 24), enabling the ES2 to be heard in different performance configurations, from solo acoustic to full band with a mix of acoustic guitar and other instruments. David Hosler paid close attention.

“To me the proof of the pickup's capabilities was what we heard in the room,” he says. “I was standing next to [sound engineer] Aaron Hedden when he was mixing, and I said, ‘OK, let's

### Refining the Preamp

Another aspect of the ES2's development was the design of the preamp.

“We spent as much time on that as the pickup itself,” says David Hosler. “The sound architecture of the preamp is just as important.”

As Hosler and his electronics team, led by expert preamp designer Trenton Blizzard, worked to calibrate its nuances, Hosler enlisted his friend, guitarist and producer Jim “Kimo” West, a longtime Taylor player (514ce) who has recorded and toured with Weird Al Yankovic since the mid-'80s. West is also a prolific Hawaiian slack key player who has released several solo albums and performs regularly. His versatile skills as a player, his ear for recording and live sound, and his attention to detail made him a useful sounding board for Hosler.

“Jim was really helpful,” Hosler says. “He's a fabulous player, and I think from the very beginning he understood what we were trying to accomplish and what we needed him to do.”

West had also performed with the magnetic ES on stage for years, so he was able to offer a comparative perspective with the ES2. His first exposure to the new pickup at the Taylor factory made a strong first impression.

“I thought the concept was really good,” he says, “and I thought it was a really focused sound.” Hosler sent him home with a 514ce equipped with the new pickup, the latest version of the preamp, and a tool to swap it out for subsequent prototypes that Hosler would send him. One of the first things West did was record it with a studio microphone and then direct with the pickup to create an A/B comparison. He suggested a few minor refinements relating to the overall tonal balance. Another tweak was an adjustment to boost the output level compared to the magnetic version of the ES. West also stage-tested the guitar and each new iteration of the preamp in his live shows.

“As we got closer and closer I was getting happier and happier with it on stage,” he says. “Even though the original Expression System sounds fabulous, I felt for my playing that the notes through the ES2 seemed to ring a little truer; there's a little more purity in the sound.”

West says that for a solo acoustic scenario, the magnetic ES has a “smooth, buttery” quality that he likes a lot, but that the ES2 seems to fit better with other instruments.

“I think the original ES has a little more of a complex tone, whereas the ES2 seems to have more focus, and more cut, and I think it has something to do with the purity of the tone,” he elaborates. “I found the high notes to be just a little more clear and bell-like. In that respect this system seems to be simpler. And sometimes, like when you're mixing music, simpler is better.”

West thinks that players and sound engineers will also appreciate the functional simplicity of the system.

“The plug-and-play aspect is really valuable,” he says. “You can just plug it into a DI box and it's great.”

West even started to use the direct signal of the pickup as a source for his studio recordings after his initial A/B testing.

“I typically never use a direct signal when I record, but because of this system, I started using it mixed with the mike,” he explains. “It all came from when I was first testing it. I usually use a stereo mike setup, so on my Christmas CD, I recorded with two mikes and used the third channel for the direct and mixed some of that in there, and it definitely improved the sound.”

For all the design work that Hosler and Taylor's development team have invested in the ES2 project, he says the driving goal is for the player to forget about the pickup and simply be able to plug in and play.

“It should never be about the pickup,” he emphasizes. “It's really meant to be invisible so the guitar is the star. In

the end, if the pickup sticks out sound-wise, we really haven't accomplished the greatest good that we can hope for. Andy's current design of the 800s and all of our future guitar designs have an even better chance of success if the pickup can show off the guitar when it's plugged in. That's the goal!”

### Danny Rader

Nashville-based guitarist/multi-instrumentalist Danny Rader is an in-demand session and stage musician. He's currently on tour with Keith Urban and has also played alongside or on recordings for Jason Aldean, Rascal Flatts, Kenny Chesney and Lady Antebellum, among many others. A longtime Taylor player and a fan of the original Expression System, he had a chance to sample some of Andy Powers' 800 Series prototypes with the ES2 and felt the amplified tone compared favorably with the acoustic tone he's able to get in recording sessions. He ended up getting the ES2 installed in some of his existing models, including two rosewood/spruce Dreadnoughts and a pair of rosewood/spruce 12-strings (a Jumbo and a Grand Auditorium).

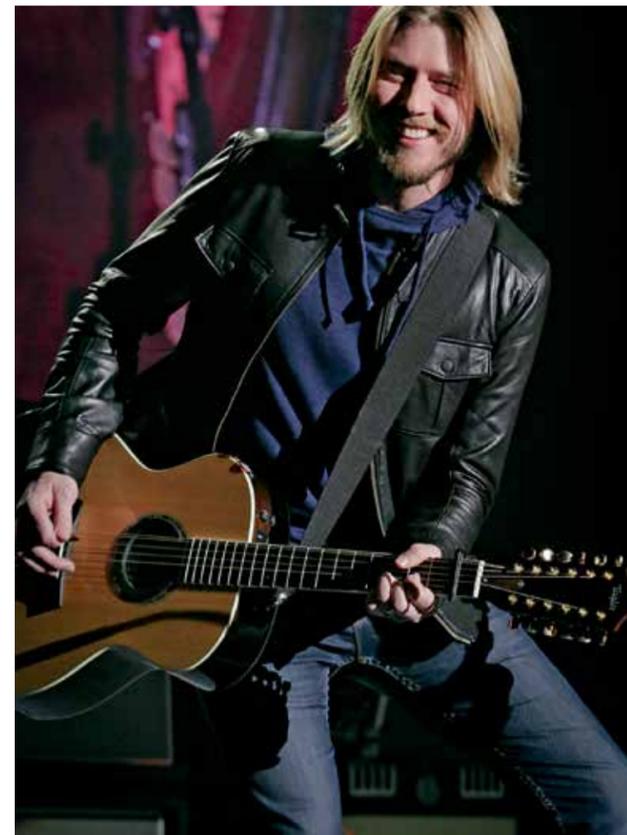
“The ES2 is definitely the most natural-sounding pickup I've played through,” Rader says. “Most of my acoustic work is done in sessions in studios with world-class mikes/preamps, so going to a pickup through in-ear monitors on stage can be a huge drag. But, honestly, the new ES2 feels so much like a mike that it really isn't much of a transition anymore. I run mine through a Fishman Aura Spectrum DI, and it sounds like a million bucks. I love it!”

### Zane Carney

Guitarist, singer and songwriter Zane Carney is a talented and versatile player whose recent credits include the Broadway musical *Spider Man: Turn Off the Dark* as a member of the pit orchestra. (His brother Reeve starred as Peter Parker for the first 2-1/2 years of the production.) He and Reeve also have their own critically acclaimed band, Carney, and Zane was handpicked by John Mayer to play on his most recent album and current world tour.

While Zane owns a 314ce and played an NS74ce for *Spider Man*, he also owns a couple of vintage acoustics that he often favored for his own music, although he admits that the sound of the pickups he used with them had caused him to all but give up on playing acoustic guitar live.

“I've never enjoyed the [amplified] sound,” he says. “I'm someone who, if the tone isn't inspiring, I sound like I'm not even a professional guitar player.”



Danny Rader on stage with his ES2-equipped GA8e-12

He rattles off a flurry of different pickup types and brands he's tried over the years – magnetic over-the-soundhole pickups, piezos, piezo/internal mike combos – but says he hadn't found anything that he felt properly conveyed his different acoustic textures.

“The sound is important to me because the songs I write involve pretty intricate guitar parts,” he explains. “It's like what John Mayer does on a song like ‘Stop This Train,’ where the [acoustic] guitar is an important part of the song. My songs have fingerpicking – I mix between my thumb and fingers – and all those nuances are lost when I play a piezo pickup.”

Zane had an epiphany at the Winter NAMM Show when he stopped by the Taylor room while another act, JOHN-NYSWIM, was performing, with guitarist Abner Ramirez playing an 812e 12-Fret.

“I was blown away by the tone I was hearing,” he says. Zane immediately cornered Andy Powers to learn the secret. “I said, ‘What preamp are you going through? Are you using the modeling thing? Is there a mike inside there?’ He told me it was just the guitar into the DI, and I said, ‘Are you kidding me?’”

Zane sampled a few different 800 Series models and loved the voicing nuances of each shape. He found that the 810e responded best to his dynamic playing style, especially when he was digging in with a pick. He's had one for a few months now and loves plugging in.

“This is the best pickup system I've ever used by about a hundred times,” he says. “With this pickup, I can go from angling my pick on the side to going straight to a flatpick to chopping it with my wrist to pulling off, and it picks up all those nuances as opposed to being one uniform piezo sound. That's so important to me because the nuances are where I like to live.”

He found that it even sounds good when a venue's sound system isn't great.

“I played it straight into this really junky PA system at an art show, and it sounded amazing,” he says.

Zane was looking forward to playing the 810e with Mayer on the spring leg of his world tour.

“I can't imagine playing another acoustic guitar live at this point.” **W&S**

### Using the ES2

The Expression System 2 was designed with plug-and-play simplicity in mind. Below are some basic tips on how to use it. For more details, consult the Tech Sheet that comes in the case with the guitar or download it at [taylorguitars.com/support](http://taylorguitars.com/support).

### Guitar Cable

Because of its different design circuitry, an ES2-equipped guitar should be plugged in using a standard quarter-inch cable, not the balanced TRS to XLR cable used for the magnetic ES. You'll want to plug into a DI (Direct Input) box to convert to a balanced signal for long runs to a mixer or snake.

### Tone Controls

Like the magnetic ES, three soft-touch tone control knobs located on the bass side of the upper bout give you easy, accurate control of your amplified tone. The knob closest to the soundboard is the volume control, the middle knob is the treble control, and the knob closest to the back is the bass control. All three have a center detent, which you'll be able to feel as you rotate the knobs. For the bass and treble knobs, the center position indicates the “off” or “flat” mode. For the volume knob, center is the midway point.

### Shaping Your Tone

Turning the bass or treble knobs clockwise past the center detent will add bass or treble; turning them counterclockwise past the center detent will reduce the bass or treble. To adjust the midrange, simply turn both the bass and treble knobs accordingly – boosting the bass and treble together will effectively reduce the midrange in relation to the frequency boost; cutting the bass and treble together and increasing the volume control will boost the midrange.

### Setting Proper Volume/Tone Levels

1. Turn all three control knobs on the guitar to the center detent position.
2. Turn the volume knob on your amplifier or mixer all the way down, and then plug in the guitar.
3. Set the tone controls on your amp/mixer to flat or a neutral position.
4. Slowly raise the amp or mixer volume to a comfortable level, and then use the tone controls on your guitar to shape the tone to your taste.

### Battery Usage

Like the magnetic version of the Expression System, the ES2 incorporates a 9-volt battery, which should provide 40-50 hours of plugged-in use. The pickup is in an “off” state until the guitar is plugged-in, which activates the preamp. An LED battery life indicator is located inside the soundhole on the preamp circuit board. Unplug the guitar when you're not playing or between sets to prolong the battery life.

### Phase Switch

A phase switch is located on the side of the circuit board inside the guitar (accessible through the soundhole). This will help reduce low-frequency feedback should it occur in a live situation. If so, changing the phase on either the guitar or your amplifier should reduce the problem.

# Winter NAMM 2014

Anaheim, California  
January 23-26



## The 800 Series Shines in the Spotlight

Without a doubt, the runaway star of the Taylor room at this year's Winter NAMM Show was our newly redesigned 800 Series. Amid the heap of new product hype generated by music product exhibitors throughout the Anaheim Convention Center, the 800s more than delivered on their billing and caught the eyes and ears of artists, members of the media, and Taylor dealers at the show.

"I've been selling Taylors since 1992, and the new 814ce is the best-sounding 814ce I've ever heard," said Brian Meader, sales manager at the Guitar Sanctuary in McKinney, Texas, and formerly of Washington Music Center in Wheaton, Maryland. "It really captures all that's great about the traditional Taylor voice, but it's got that

bigger, more pronounced bass presence that will silence the critics."

Taylor kicked off the NAMM festivities on the eve of the show by hosting a special invitation-only media dinner event at a local restaurant to celebrate Taylor's 40th anniversary and introduce the new 800s. Both Bob and Kurt spoke.

"Welcome to the 40th anniversary of Listug Guitars," Kurt joked, before reflecting on his partnership with Bob and sharing his excitement for the road ahead. Bob shared similar sentiments and talked about the talents of Andy Powers and the design of the 800 Series. Andy emphasized Taylor's tradition of innovation and the privilege of being able to contribute to Taylor's continuing trajectory of forward-thinking guitar design with the 800 Series. He then played an original composition with Taylor sales staffers Andy Lund and Michael Lille, with

each on a different 800 Series model to showcase the different tonal personalities of the guitars. Some of the guests had already received an 814ce to review for the upcoming editions of their publications and/or websites. (You'll find a round-up of their assessments – unanimously favorable – in Taylor Notes on page 30.)

Among the chorus of dealers who praised the 800s was George Gruhn, owner of Gruhn Guitars in Nashville and one of the industry's leading experts on vintage guitars.

"In my opinion, these are by far the finest Taylor instruments ever made and are among the finest production model guitars on the market today," Gruhn shared via email after the show. "They have great tone, volume, dynamic range, and projection, which are the features of a truly fine musical instrument. They offer sound which rivals that of instruments costing far more,

along with superb playability. While I am a traditionalist known for my preference for vintage instruments, I must admit that the new 800 Series Taylors are a joy to play."

Gruhn spent time with Andy Powers at the show and came away with a deeper respect for Andy's breadth of guitar knowledge.

"He is extremely familiar with the design and history of traditional fretted and bowed instruments, but he is by no means limited to tradition in his thinking," Gruhn said. "He has combined the finest of vintage instrument concepts and materials with creativity and innovation. I have always had respect for Taylor as a manufacturer, but I now feel a genuine enthusiasm for the new product line as well as a far deeper appreciation of Bob Taylor's commitment to quality, as well as conservation of our precious natural resources."

## Livestreaming Performances

Among the attractions in our NAMM room are the artist performances on three of the four days. This year marked our first video livestream, enabling Taylor fans everywhere to watch the music sets in real time via the Taylor website. Many of the acts played new 800 Series models, which made for a great live showcase of their tonal enhancements through the new Expression System® 2 pickup. It made life easier for the sound engineers who worked the room. (For their reaction, see our story on the ES2 on page 18.)

Thursday's lineup led with 13-year-old singer-songwriter **Alana Springsteen** from Virginia Beach, the youngest songwriter ever to play Nashville's Tin Pan South Songwriter Festival. Springsteen, who has written with notable Nashville songwriters



including Sugarland's Kristian Bush, captivated the room with her poise, beautiful voice and well-crafted tunes. Next up was **Vicci Martinez**, a runner-up in the first season of NBC's *The Voice*, who had brought her 510ce to play, but after sampling the new 800s, opted for an 814ce. Her powerhouse vocals made for a soul-stirring set of originals, plus a cover of the Dolly Parton classic "Jolene." Closing out the day was **JOHNNYSWIM**, featuring the husband-and-wife duo of Abner Ramirez (on an 812e 12-Fret) and Amanda Sudano-Ramirez, who treated the crowd to an uplifting set of soulful Americana (see our profile on page 6).

Friday's performances began with a set from legendary tunesmith **Jack Tempchin**, who prefaced several of his hit songs (The Eagles' "Already Gone" and "Peaceful Easy Feeling," Glenn Frey's "Party Town" and "Smuggler's Blues," plus the ballad "Slow Dancing,") with wry asides about how they came to be. Tempchin was joined by Andy Powers on a mix of lead guitar, mandolin and resonator guitar, with a guest appearance from former New York Yankees star **Bernie Williams**.

The next act, singer-songwriter and rising star **Tori Kelly**, has built a huge online fanbase via YouTube (more than 55 million views and nearly 700,000 subscribers) and other social media. Her set began with a live interview on stage conducted by *USA Today* technology columnist Jefferson Graham for his web series "Talking Tech." Kelly shared her insights on using social media to cultivate her audience and then wowed the crowd with an evocative pop/R&B set infused with acrobatic vocals, joined by Jefferson on lead guitar. Philly-based indie-folk trio **Good Old War** closed out the day with an

organic acoustic performance, featuring honeyed three-part harmonies, with guitarist Dan Schwartz driving the rhythm on an 818e. Prompted for an encore by the crowd as they finished their set, the band obliged with an intimate cover of Simon and Garfunkel's "Cecilia" in the middle of the room surrounded and accompanied by the audience.

On Saturday, singer-songwriter **Ben Rector** opened with a hum-laced solo set in which he played a new 812ce ("This guitar sounds great, and they didn't pay me to say that," he shared with the room). On his song "Loving You Is Easy," Rector had fun improvising an extra verse based on a random theme – jellybeans – suggested by a member of the audience. The day's middle performance slot featured 15-year-old aspiring SoCal singer-songwriter **Cody Lovaas**, who charmed the room with his chill surf-pop grooves.

An appreciative Bob Taylor introduced the day's headliner, **Jason Mraz**, by personally thanking him for indirectly introducing him to Andy Powers, explaining how it set in motion a chain of events that eventually led him to Taylor. Mraz actually took the stage twice – earlier as part of another live interview segment with Jefferson Graham, and later to close out the day with a set joined by frequent musical collaborators **Raining Jane**, with whom he recently recorded his latest record. The band reimagined Mraz hits like "I'm Yours" and "Lucky" with fresh instrumental and vocal arrangements, and previewed material from Mraz's new album.

The Taylor NAMM Show performances are all archived on the Taylor website. You can watch them at [taylorguitars.com/namm](http://taylorguitars.com/namm) **W&S**



**This page:** Top row (L-R): Vicci Martinez, Alana Springsteen, Tori Kelly; Middle row (L-R): Ben Rector, Jason Mraz; Bottom row (L-R): Andy Powers with Jack Tempchin, Good Old War (upper photo), Cody Lovaas

**Opposite page:** JOHNNYSWIM plays to a full Taylor room

## Guitar Spotlight: 150e

### Double Course Delight

**The budget-friendly 150e joins the line, making a great-playing 12-string experience more accessible than ever**

An acoustic 12-string lingers on the wish list of many a guitar lover, but its tendency to play more of a secondary role might make it hard to justify the investment in a high-end solid wood model. If you've ever compromised and bought an inexpensive 12-string, you've probably paid the price in other ways, namely a sub-par playing experience. That's where our new 12-string Dreadnought 150e comes in. We think it's the best 12-string you'll find for the money in terms of playability and tone.

Signature Taylor touches include our ultra-playable neck design and clear, balanced voicing. The Dreadnought body's strong low-end response, paired with layered sapele back and sides and a solid spruce top, produce a tone that's lush and well-defined, with crisp octave shimmer. Your hand will feel completely at ease gliding up the sleek 1 7/8-inch neck, and you won't have to fight to keep the guitar in tune.

The 150e features our magnetic Expression System<sup>®</sup> pickup and comes with a gig bag. Check one out at your local Taylor dealer starting in June. Whether you find yourself dusting off all those 12-string classics or giving birth to a few of your own, make yourself comfortable — you might be there for a while.



## The Craft

### Under the Influence

Andy reflects on the great traits of the luthiers he admires and explores the graceful harmony between tradition and evolution

I've often thought about the ingredients that inform an artist's identity. You've probably heard the old saying, "No man is an island." Often this expression is understood to mean that a person cannot truly isolate himself from the influence of society and is spoken as an admonishment to the person who wishes to withdraw. In the context of art, what I infer from this adage is that no artist is a complete original. Speaking broadly, no artist,

musician or guitar maker I've ever encountered is completely free from the influence and knowledge of those whose work has come before them. Far from a bad thing, this is the nature of artistic culture. This artistic framework enables a budding artist to refine their understanding, their tastes, and their ability.

As both a musician and a guitar maker, I'm no exception to this idea. I'd like to talk about the guitars made

by some other folks for a moment. I like traditionally-minded guitars. When I was a guitar-obsessed kid, I'd study photos of old Gibson, Martin and D'Angelico guitars. D'Aquisto and Stromberg were other makers whose guitars I would dream about seeing and playing. I would pretend my Squire electric guitar was a Stratocaster from the mid-1950s. Later on, when I had opportunities to restore and repair instruments I had dreamed about, I felt

a serious presence, a peculiar gravity, from the instruments that drifted in and out of my shop. They taught me things, and I began to understand them and the qualities that made them so appealing to players. In a way, being acquainted with those instruments felt like putting on my dad's work boots as a little boy and plodding around the house thinking, wow, these are what a real man's boots feel like. There was a sense of some instruments being larger than life, like meeting a musical hero in person.

I haven't grown out of that. To this day, I still love guitars that carry a traditional sensibility. Makers like Bill Collings, Dana Bourgeois and Richard Hoover build great instruments steeped in tradition. I also greatly admire builders like Bob Benedetto, Martin Seeliger, James Goodall and Jim Olson, all of whose work may embody less-than-direct impressions of instruments from previous generations, but who have sought to express the musical values reflected in good instruments from every era.

One interesting common denominator among these and other great luthiers whose work I admire is in the subtle, yet evident manner in which they execute refinements and impart their personalities into the instruments they make. When a builder wants to make a change, it takes a great deal of restraint and experience to carefully shape an idea or refinement into a form that is respectful of the instrument-making tradition, while still advancing the builder's ideals.

As an adolescent, I read this comment in a fantastic archtop guitar-building book written by Bob Benedetto: "Change for the sake of change is without substance and should be avoided." He went on to explain that genuine improvements always had the player's best interests in mind and how the best makers, while not afraid to develop their instruments and make changes, made improvements that were respectful in continuing the tradition of the guitar's lineage. Even now, I'm reminded how clearly true and what great advice that is.

Bob Taylor is another builder in whom I admire this great trait. One of his great contributions to the instrument is a consistently repeatable and adjustable neck angle that is utterly exact in its precision. Rather than making this system we know as the NT neck a visual distinction, he worked hard to make it align with the aesthetic conventions of the acoustic guitar to uphold the unique gracefulness time has honed in the form of the guitar.

Another builder I've been privileged to work with over the last few years

is Larry Breedlove. Larry's unique qualities as a builder are reflected in guitars of his own namesake and in the distinct aesthetic marks he has made on our guitars. As a visual artist with a background in sculpture, Larry has a great deal of what I think of as intuitive intelligence, particularly when it comes to a curve. While it might seem that drawing a pleasing curve should be simple act, in reality it isn't always easy. Curves are more than simple geometry, more than segments of an arc you might draw with a compass. A graceful curve has invisible guides and controls that influence its path forward using its own past.

Growing up as a young instrument builder, particularly in Southern California, I'd been influenced by Larry's sense of a curve, occasionally in very direct ways, but more often in quiet and subtle ways. There is a refined modernity to his work as he harmonizes the crisp and distinct with the organic lines of the natural world, which is unmistakably his signature. Many of you have known his work, consciously or not, in the form of guitar shapes or inlay designs he has created for years. Whether depicting a direct reference to a subject matter with an inlay, or in something more esoteric like an impressionistic shape, his pencil draws lines that reflect his personality.

Soon, Larry will retire from his workshop here in the Taylor guitar workshop, where he has been a quiet but driving influence on our guitars, the musicians who play them, and builders like me who have admired the lines he draws. I consider myself indebted to him for sharing his artistic sensibility with me as well as many others.

This season we introduce the 12-string Dreadnought 150e along with the limited edition baritone Dreadnought 320e and 400 Series models. These guitars, like many other Taylor models, owe a great deal to Larry. I particularly like the refined Dreadnought shape Larry designed. It has been several years since this shape was reborn here in the Taylor shop. While it preserves a great deal of respect for the heritage of the Dreadnought flattop guitar, Larry's unique blending of crisp modernity and organic influence makes it a distinctive shape that I admire.

I'm fortunate to have been able to share a workbench next to Larry's and will miss his daily presence here in the shop a great deal. Don't be a stranger here at the workshop, Larry. There is always a place at the drawing board for you.

# Soundings

## Not So Ordinary

A star-studded parade of special guests helped celebrate Jimmy Fallon's debut as the host of *The Tonight Show* on Monday, February 17, including **U2**, who appeared as Fallon's first musical guest. The band played two songs: "Invisible," on the rooftop of the 30 Rockefeller Plaza building at sunset, and later on the show's set, an acoustic version of their Academy Award-nominated tune "Ordinary Love," from the soundtrack to the film *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*. The stripped-down rendition had an especially intimate feel, with the band performing from the guest seating next to Fallon after a chat. The Edge fingerpicked and strummed an **818e** throughout the song, with Fallon's house band, The Roots, joining in at the end. The band also performed the song acoustically at the Academy Awards broadcast on March 2.

## Folk Jamboree in KC

Taylor was among the exhibitors at the 26th annual **Folk Alliance Conference**, held February 19-23. This year brought a change of location to Kansas City after an eight-year stay in Memphis (with a year in Toronto as part of its Canadian rotation). By most accounts the fresh setting seemed to invigorate the show. Or maybe it was the spirit of Pete Seeger, who had passed away less than a month earlier, yet seemed more present than ever among the folk community that honored his legacy throughout the event.

In addition to the conference's deep mix of panel discussions, workshops, and musical showcases, this year's special events included a presentation on climate change from former Vice President Al Gore, during which he spurred artists to use music as a platform for spreading awareness of global warming's impact on the world. Elsewhere, pioneering singer-songwriter Tom Rush performed and also was on-hand to answer questions at the screening of a documentary on his life, *No Regrets*. The show's keynote address was delivered by folk-rock icon **Graham Nash**, who reflected on growing up in post-war Manchester, his political activism, and his passionate belief in the power of music to shape history. "Woody Guthrie knew that, and Pete Seeger certainly knew that,"

ment the trials, missteps, successes and eventually, the magic that lives in a great song. Dubway Studios producer and engineers Mike Crehore and Al Houghton were on hand to give the track polish, and Acoustic Café Radio's Rob Reinhart interviewed each artist. To help facilitate creativity and sonic inspiration, Taylor provided a selection of our acoustic-electric guitars, including a **714ce**, **416ce** and **528e**. Check the Taylor Guitars YouTube channel to see the videos as they debut.

## Palmer Method

It's no accident that 18-year-old **Matteo Palmer's** self-released debut, *Out of Nothing*, resembles the type of composing and playing that made the Windham Hill music label new-age central – the soft, soothing stuff but also Michael Hedges' "new-edge" and Will Ackerman's earlier nods to John Fahey. And Palmer's is the odd case where being in the right place at the right time means as far from the "music industry" as possible, in a small Vermont town.



"I was definitely introduced to fingerstyle guitar through older recordings, such as the music of Alex de Grassi," Palmer details. "I was about 14 when my father took me to see him in concert, and I fell in love with his guitar style. The following year, I began to discover other artists from the Windham Hill catalog, like Will Ackerman, Michael Hedges and George Winston. The sound that came from them was so pure and beautiful. I used to listen to Will's 'Sound of Wind Driven Rain' [from the 1998 album of the same name] over and over while doing homework, and I finally found myself wanting to create my own music in that style. Will Ackerman and Alex de Grassi started my musical journey. The first two fingerstyle pieces I learned to play were Alex's 'Turning' and Will's 'Passage' [from 1978 and '81, respectively]. They both have an amazing sense of melody, and their compositions are full of emotion. I'm also in love with the music of guitarists Andy McKee, Don Ross and Trevor Gordon Hall, and Coldplay's album

*Rush of Blood to the Head* helped me establish my musical style."

While organizing a benefit for the local opera house, which was in bad need of repairs, Palmer discovered that Ackerman also lived in Vermont, not far away. "I emailed him, and he agreed to headline the show and was very gracious during the whole experience," Palmer says. "We even played a duet on his piece 'Hawk Circle.' After the concert, he invited me to his studio."

If you're thinking that the Grammy-winning Ackerman, who founded Windham Hill and produced its seminal albums, gets inundated with demo tapes of steel-stringers aping Hedges or himself, you're right. So what made him want to produce Palmer?

"I remember Robbie Basho saying to me, 'If you can't sing it, it's not a melody,' and that's always stayed with me," Ackerman stresses. "It's gotten to the point where performance gymnastics seem to be accepted as composition, whether there is any substance there or not, even when no melody beyond chordal changes exists. I obviously appreciate skill – de Grassi, Hedges, Mark Knopfler, B.B. King – but they all have something to say artistically.

"Matteo hasn't fallen into that trap," he continues. "He has developed a sizable arsenal of skills and is an impressive player, but he never seems to be overtaken with the need to showboat; the composition and expression always come first. His work gracefully merges a number of styles and broad influences. Matteo is an artist, not just a guitarist."

Though Ackerman has typically played custom-made or boutique models, he steered Palmer towards Taylor when he learned that he was looking for a new guitar. "I worked hard to buy my **314ce**," Palmer says, "but it was totally worth it. In order to save enough money to buy it, I had three jobs one summer. I went to my local music store, sat for hours, and played each and every Taylor on the wall. The 314ce spoke to me. It was comfortable, it sounded beautiful, and I knew it would be a guitar that I'd be able to afford before my recording date. Every composition on my album was recorded on my 314ce, and it is my main instrument. As of right now, it is the only Taylor I own, but I have my eyes on other models and hope to someday add to my Taylor collection."

So what does Palmer call his type of music? "My response is never the same, but I say something along the lines of 'contemporary instrumental guitar.' And I always end my answer with, 'I don't sing.' I'm trying to paint a picture of emotions that listeners can

connect to. I want my music to inspire other people to pursue their own creativity." – Dan Forte

## Above and Beyond the Dance Floor

One of the UK's biggest electronic music acts, **Above & Beyond**, recently released an acoustic album, the aptly titled *Above & Beyond Acoustic*. For a group whose identity has been securely rooted in the dance music world, going "unplugged" marked a dramatic turn, but the trio's principals, Tony McGuinness, Paavo Siljamäki and Jono Grant, wanted to find a way to reinterpret some of their dance hits in a way that satisfied their yearnings as musicians and provided a somewhat quieter setting for the different vocalists with whom they work.

While the album contains studio recordings, the project was conceived with live acoustic performances in mind. The trio worked with three singers, a string quartet, a harpist, drummer and bassist, with each band member contributing multi-instrumental parts – McGuinness on guitar, mandolin, ukulele and vocals, Siljamäki on grand piano and cello, and Grant on Rhodes piano, guitar and vibraphone. As they considered the guitar arrangements and rhythmic textures they wanted for the songs, they searched for the right type of acoustic guitars and discovered Taylors, in particular a **414e**.

"We became huge fans of Taylor guitars," McGuinness told Laura Whitmore from *Guitar World's* Acoustic Nation in an interview for their online feature ([guitarworld.com/acoustic-nation](http://guitarworld.com/acoustic-nation)). "I went into about 15 acoustic guitar shops in this very famous road in London, Tin Pan Alley, around there in central London. We were trying to decide and figure out how to buy the right guitar because once you played five or six, it becomes quite challenging.

"Then I picked up this Taylor 414, just strummed eight chords on it, and suddenly I thought, 'This is the thing.' It throws out a hint of the acoustic guitar palette perfect to fit in our record. As part of a four-piece band or part of a dance arrangement or part of a 15-piece band, the nature of the Taylor guitars and the presentation that we needed was perfect. I think when we played at the Greek Theatre [in Los Angeles], we had about 15 guitars and I think 14 of them were Taylors."

A concert film of one of the performances, at West London's Porchester Hall, is accessible on YouTube.com.

[www.taylorguitars.com](http://www.taylorguitars.com)



**Clockwise from top left:**  
U2 with Jimmy Fallon on *The Tonight Show* (photo: Getty Images); Graham Nash performs at the Folk Alliance Conference (photo by Neale Eckstein); Matteo Palmer; (L-R) Ben Arthur with Tim Easton during a SongCraft Presents session at SXSW; Turin Brakes work on a song at SXSW; Above & Beyond perform at West London's Porchester Hall



# Taylor Notes

## Taylor Receives Award for Corporate Excellence

On January 29, Taylor Guitars was honored by the U.S. State Department with the Award for Corporate Excellence (ACE). At a formal presentation ceremony held in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the State Department in Washington, D.C., Secretary of State John Kerry presented the award to Bob Taylor in recognition of the company's transformative work in the ebony trade and in the lives of its employees at its ebony mill, Crelicam, in Cameroon. The annual award recognizes U.S.-owned businesses that play vital roles around the world as good corporate citizens in supporting sustainable development, respect for human and labor rights, environmental protection, open markets, transparency and other democratic values.



Secretary Kerry noted that through Crelicam, "Bob and Taylor Guitars have fundamentally changed the entire ebony trade." He also acknowledged the company's commitment to the environment and employees, along with its efforts to implement responsible forestry management practices. "Taylor Guitars has become an effective advocate for legal and policy reforms to improve the permitting process around the ebony trade to better protect both the environment and the rights and needs of other forest users," he observed. "Taylor ensures that its works are protected, and they ensure that their workers likewise benefit as a result of this." To close, Secretary Kerry noted that "this is absolutely the example of how people ought to do business. We're so proud to be able to tell this story, and each of these stories, because they're a wonderful example of the best of corporate citizenship globally."

In his acceptance remarks, Bob acknowledged the company's commitment to transforming the ebony trade and the lives of its employees by applying business solutions to an environmental problem. He also underscored the company's commitment to act in the spirit of compassionate capitalism, with an emphasis on enriching the lives of employees through training and social events, and to retain the value of ebony wood in Cameroon.

"Our vision was to transform the way that ebony is harvested, processed and sold into a new model of responsible social forestry, while enriching the lives of our 75 employees through meaningful work," Bob said. "To accomplish this, we assumed the role of guardian of the forest, and we operate with the philosophy to use what the forest gives us. To us, this means using ebony of all colors and all variegations, including wood that features spotted or streaked coloring, wood which prior to our involvement would have been left to deteriorate on the forest floor."

## GreenWood Wins Yale Innovation Award

The same week that Taylor received the ACE, our friends at GreenWood, a non-profit organization that helps forest-based communities support themselves through sustainable forestry practices, and its Honduran counterpart, Fundación MaderaVerde, received the first-ever Innovation Prize from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies (FES).

The Yale prize recognizes GreenWood's development of a "Green Broker Network" – a unique, entrepreneurial approach to forest conservation that cultivates enterprising relationships across the value chain, from forest producers to consumers. The network combines forest management, woodworking training, product development and market access for artisan producers of furniture, guitar parts and other high-quality forest products.

GreenWood and MaderaVerde laid much of the groundwork for the mahogany sourcing partnership that Taylor has developed with three community forestry cooperatives in the Mosquito Coast region of Honduras, including our original pilot program in Copén, which has been in place for 13 years. GreenWood founder and president Scott Landis was humbled and honored by the recognition, and noted the need for perseverance in order to achieve progress.

"Having an innovative idea is cool, but it's only the first step," he said. "Keeping at it day after day and year after year – forging partnerships along the way – that's what makes innovation real."



## A Wave of Raves for the New 800s

The first magazine reviews for the new 800 Series have hit the street, and the reception has been consistently stellar. We sent an 814ce out as our review model, and it earned a Premier Gear Award from *Premier Guitar*, a Platinum Award from *Guitar World*, and an Editors' Pick Award from *Guitar Player*.

In the March edition of *Premier Guitar*, reviewer Scott Nygaard called the 814ce "a stunning-sounding guitar" after his test-drive. "Its bass frequencies are loud and fat, but not overwhelming," he writes. "The midrange is rich and smooth no matter where you are on the neck. The low-end response...is felt by the player's body as much as it's heard by the listener." He also loved the guitar's versatility. "Considering how well suited this Taylor is for so many musical settings, you'll rarely wish you had another guitar instead."

Teja Gerken from *Acoustic Guitar* also lauded the guitar's ability to accommodate different playing styles. "The instrument is just as suitable to strumming chords as it is to playing jazz voicings in standard tuning or fingerpicking in alternate tunings," he writes. "This latest version just raises the bar."

In a video review of the 814ce, *Guitar World* Tech Editor Paul Riario called the design "nothing short of extraordinary," describing the guitar as "a perfect marriage of many different acoustic sounds. It has all the projection of a Jumbo but the warmth and clarity of a smaller-bodied acoustic all wrapped

up in one acoustic that sounds phenomenal."

*Guitar Player* Senior Editor Art Thompson loved the setup of the 814ce he sampled and noted that the intonation "helps to make everything sound focused and coherent." The end result: "a fantastic acoustic sound with deep lows, nice midrange bloom, and a top end that exhibits an uncanny blend of clarity and warmth.... Picked lightly it sounds radiant and dimensional, yet it doesn't compress when you strum or flatpick it aggressively."

Thompson also embraced the Expression System 2's breakthrough design, calling it "a significant advancement in amplified sound by essentially giving the pickup more room to breathe." After playing it through several different acoustic amps, he praised the balance from top to bottom, observing that it exhibited "no honkiness, harsh transient spikes, or plastic-y piezo artifacts." He was also able to get plenty of volume without feedback issues. "This guitar succeeds on so many levels," he concludes, "and taken in total it would be hard to imagine a situation where it wouldn't excel."

The ES2 also impressed *Premier Guitar*'s Scott Nygaard. "I was astonished by how well the system duplicated the guitar's acoustic characteristics, including the string-to-string and bottom-to-top balance," he shares. *Guitar World* scribe Chris Gill echoed the sentiment in his review in the March print edition of the magazine. "The latest Expression System sets a new standard of excellence for piezo pickups," he writes.



## Grand Orchestra Wins Best Acoustic Guitar

At the Winter NAMM Show in January, the Grand Orchestra took home the award for "Best Acoustic Guitar" of 2013 from *The Music & Sound Retailer* magazine. Now in its 28th year, the Music & Sound Retailer awards are given based on votes by dealers in the United States and signify the best of the best in each product class. The award is considered one of the industry's most prestigious, and stands out as the only award based on a poll of every American dealer and manufacturer rather than being selected by an editorial board or influenced by advertising revenue.

## Making Friends at Musikmesse

The Taylor booth at Musikmesse was bustling during all four days of this year's show, held March 12-15 in Frankfurt, Germany. We've enjoyed the same prime location over the past few years, which enables us to welcome visitors as they enter the acoustic hall because they pass our exhibition area. Saturday's "Consumer Day" was especially busy and brought guitar enthusiasts of all ages to the booth to sample guitars.

account of the design philosophy behind the 800s, and both obliged with a steady stream of interviews. The 800s would go on to win a Musikmesse International Press Award (M.I.P.A.) for Best Acoustic Guitar at the show. The M.I.P.A. winners were announced at a special awards ceremony on March 13, and a healthy Taylor contingent was in attendance. More than 160 publications from around the world cast their votes for the top products in over 40 musical instrument categories to determine the M.I.P.A. winners.



L-R: U.S. Ambassador to Germany John B. Emerson with Bob Taylor

With our emphasis on the redesigned 800 Series models, we dedicated a significant amount of wall space to them at the show. This area quickly became the most popular spot in the booth. Many of the attendees had heard about the voicing and aesthetic refinements but hadn't yet had the chance to play any in their respective guitar shops. Each body shape was represented, allowing players to compare all the new models.

Bob Taylor and Andy Powers were in high demand among international media outlets eager get a first-hand

Another well-received product debut at the show was our Spring Limiteds, especially the 320e Bartone. People came to our information desk specifically seeking out the guitar, and once they started playing, it was hard for them to put it down. We also unveiled the new 12-string 150e, which enjoyed lots of hands-on attention.

Among the highlights at the booth was a visit from the U.S. Ambassador to Germany, John B. Emerson, who spent time chatting with Bob Taylor.

## Andre Bena Joins Crelicam as General Director

We are pleased to welcome a new addition to the management staff at our ebony mill in Cameroon. Andre Bena joined Crelicam as the mill's General Director in early 2014. A native of Douala, Cameroon, Bena spent nearly 30 years in Europe, during which he earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, a master's in engineering, and a doctorate with an emphasis on high speed information routing and data compression algorithms design. He subsequently worked for some of Germany's largest technology and financial companies.

In a career twist, Bena returned to Cameroon in 2010 to contribute to the protection of his native country's natural resources. He joined Helveta, a U.K.-based vendor that specializes in timber tracking systems. Working with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife in Cameroon, the company sought to take inventory of the nation's forests and implement a national traceability system. While the project has since ended, Bena's passion for protecting Cameroon's natural resources hasn't. His vision is a great fit with Crelicam's mission. We interviewed Bena via email to offer the Taylor community a glimpse of his perspective looking ahead.



## What are the opportunities at Crelicam?

For me the greatest opportunity at Crelicam is to be part of a team that does business by maintaining their vision to leave a sustainable world for future generations. I believe that it is time to move forest preservation from the sidelines of global priority to the center of the world stage, simply because human well-being and survival depend on a healthy, diverse environment.

## Where do you see Crelicam in five years? Ten years?

In five years, Crelicam should be the model factory for any existing or new company in the forestry sector, not only for special (ebony) product manufacturers but also for any other species. To get there we hope that the Cameroon law for special permits will have been upgraded to the new proposal currently awaiting the approval of the national assembly. This will include three impacted areas: A traceability system will be in place to help tracking wood product changes along the supply chain from their origin in the forest through the transformation unit down to the country exit points; the company will improve its compliance to the national legality constraints;

## How is Crelicam working to preserve the forest?

We are achieving this mission in three ways: through the dedicated effort of our diverse field staff, including the local population, who are contributing to a sustainable manner of exploiting the forest as described in our operation guidelines; with the help of our partners, from

and the company will have optimized the efficiency of its production, logistic, administrative and accounting processes.

## Given your knowledge of Cameroon's forest inventory, what is the state of Cameroon's forest?

The Cameroon rainforest is still in a relatively healthy state according to World Resources Institute, but the longer the national forestry sustainability program takes to be implemented, the more the forest gets damaged. It is the responsibility of any local operator to minimize the forest devastation while doing business in that sector. I am happy to have joined Crelicam, a company that has been a pioneer in forestry preservation. As the new General Director, I promise to continue to pursue that same direction.

## How do you hope ebony is perceived by musical instrument players?

Whether dark or light in color, ebony has special characteristics that make it sound fabulous when strings vibrate over it. I am convinced that music players understand the need to preserve the global ecosystem by accepting both colored and uncolored ebony on their guitars or any other music instruments.

individual and governmental to local nonprofit organizations and corporate; and by using a non-confrontational, collaborative approach and staying true to our core values. Since 2011, Crelicam has done more than anyone else to advance preservation of the forests in which they operate.

## Do you play guitar or another musical instrument?

I have been playing guitar since I was 13. I started with the acoustic guitar, followed by the electric guitar. I have been an active bass player for the last 15 years. My favorite music has been bossa nova and funk-pop.

## How do you hope ebony is perceived by musical instrument players?

Whether dark or light in color, ebony has special characteristics that make it sound fabulous when strings vibrate over it. I am convinced that music players understand the need to preserve the global ecosystem by accepting both colored and uncolored ebony on their guitars or any other music instruments.

# Calendar

For all the latest Taylor event listings, visit [taylorguitars.com/events](http://taylorguitars.com/events)

Our Road Show crew has been having a blast showing off our revoiced 800 Series, the Expression System 2 pickup, and the new T5z at local music stores. You'll find our latest Road Show listings below, with more on the way throughout the rest of the year. We hope to see you at an event near you!

## U.S. ROAD SHOWS

### Birmingham, AL

Thursday, June 12, 6 p.m.  
Bailey Brothers Music Company  
(205) 271-7827

### Huntsville, AL

Friday, June 13, 7 p.m.  
The Fret Shop  
(256) 430-4729

### Thousand Oaks, CA

Monday, June 16, 7 p.m.  
Instrumental Music  
(805) 496-3774

### Santa Barbara, CA

Tuesday, June 17, 7 p.m.  
Santa Barbara Guitar Bar  
(805) 770-7242

### Palo Alto, CA

Wednesday, June 18, 7 p.m.  
Gryphon Stringed Instruments  
(650) 493-2131

### Auburn, CA

Thursday, June 19, 7 p.m.  
Encore Music  
(530) 889-0514

### Steamboat Springs, CO

Monday, June 9, 6 p.m.  
First String Music  
(970) 871-4661

### Boulder, CO

Tuesday, June 10, 7 p.m.  
H.B. Woodsongs  
(303) 449-0516

### Colorado Springs, CO

Wednesday, June 11, 7 p.m.  
Tejon Street Music  
(719) 634-2228

### Denver, CO

Thursday, June 12, 7 p.m.  
Denver Folklore Center  
(303) 777-4786

### Margate, FL

Monday, June 23, 6:30 p.m.  
Sam Ash  
(954) 975-3390

### Sarasota, FL

Tuesday, June 24, 6:30 p.m.  
Sam Ash  
(941) 351-7793

### Clearwater, FL

Thursday, June 26, 6:30 p.m.  
Sam Ash  
(727) 725-8062

### Orlando, FL

Friday, June 27, 6:30 p.m.  
Sam Ash  
(407) 599-1222

### Alpharetta, GA

Wednesday, June 11, 7 p.m.  
Ken Stanton  
(770) 670-4424

### Marietta, GA

Tuesday, June 10, 7 p.m.  
Ken Stanton  
(770) 427-2491

### Collinsville, IL

Tuesday, June 24, 2014, 7 p.m.  
AAA Swing City Music  
(618) 345-6700

### Champaign, IL

Friday, June 27, 6:30 p.m.  
The Upper Bout  
(217) 607-8132

### Lexington, KY

Friday, June 27, 6 p.m.  
Willcutt Guitar Shoppe  
(859) 276-4070

### Bangor, ME

Tuesday, June 10, 6:30 p.m.  
Northern Kingdom Music  
(207) 947-6450

### Portland, ME

Thursday, June 12, 6:30 p.m.  
Guitar Center  
(207) 822-9822

### Lees Summit, MO

Wednesday, June 25, 7 p.m.  
Legacy Music  
(816) 554-7350

### Lebanon, MO

Thursday, June 26, 6:30 p.m.  
Morgan Music  
(417) 588-1970

### Manchester, NH

Monday, June 9, 6:30 p.m.  
Manchester Music Mill  
(603) 623-8022

### Littleton, NH

Wednesday, June 11, 6:30 p.m.  
Northern Lights Music  
(603) 444-7776

### Memphis, TN

Tuesday, June 24, 6 p.m.  
Martin Music  
(901) 729-2466

### Nashville, TN

Wednesday, June 25, 6 p.m.  
Gruhn Guitars  
(615) 256-2033

### Sevierville, TN

Thursday, June 26, 7 p.m.  
Music Outlet  
(865) 453-1031

### Katy, TX

Monday, June 9, 6:30 p.m.  
Guitar Center  
(281) 394-5390

### League City, TX

Tuesday, June 10, 7 p.m.  
Danny D's Guitar Hacienda  
(281) 338-1830

### Plano, TX

Wednesday, June 11, 6:30 p.m.  
Guitar Center  
(972) 422-7171

### Tyler, TX

Thursday, June 12, 6:30 p.m.  
Mundt Music  
(903) 561-882

## FIND YOUR FIT

### Coquitlam, BC

Friday, June 6, 1 p.m. - 7 p.m.  
Tom Lee Music  
(604) 941-8447

### Vancouver, BC

Saturday, June 7, 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.  
Tom Lee Music  
(604) 685-8471

### Lexington, MA

Saturday, June 14, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.  
The Music Emporium  
(781) 860-0049

### Houston, TX

Saturday, June 14, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Fuller's Guitar  
(713) 880-2188

## Up to 18-Month, No-Interest Financing on 300 Series Models and Up

We're pleased to once again offer Taylor customers 0% financing on purchases of models in our 300 Series and up, including the T5, T5z, and T3, if they're paid in full within 18 months. The program runs through December 31, 2014, and is available through participating Taylor dealers in the U.S. only.

Contact your local authorized Taylor dealer to find out if they've signed on as a program partner.



# TaylorWare

CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS



*Monica from our Human Resources team, shown in our Ladies' Island Vine T, helps make Taylor a great working environment for employees. Ryan, who gives shape to our guitar bodies in Sidebending, sports our new Baseball T.*

### NEW

#### Ladies' Island Vine T

Vintage short-sleeve track shirt featuring Island Vine inlay graphic elements. Soft and form-fitting poly/cotton/rayon tri-blend. Slim fit. Sizing up recommended. (Indigo #4580; S-XL, \$25.00)

### NEW

#### Baseball T

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

### NEW

#### Men's Embroidered Polo Shirt

100% Peruvian Pima cotton short sleeve polo. Dura-Pearl buttons. Rib knit cuffs. Embroidered Taylor logo on left chest. Standard fit. (Navy #2706; M-XL, \$42.00; XXL, \$44.00)

### NEW

#### Logo T

100% preshrunk cotton. Red Taylor logo. Short sleeve. Standard fit. (White #1640, S-XX, \$20.00; XXL-XXXL, \$22.00)

### NEW

#### Aged Logo T

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



**NEW****Shield T**

Shield/crossed guitar design available in youth and toddler sizes.

**Youth** 100% pre-shrunk cotton. Short sleeve. (Black #1420; S (6/8), M (10/12), L (12/14), \$19.00)

**Toddler** 100% cotton jersey. Short sleeve. (Black #1391; Size: 2, 4 or 5/6, \$19.00)

**NEW****Infant Shield Onesie**

Ultra-soft infant lap shoulder bodysuit with snap closure. 100% ringspun cotton. Short sleeve. (Black #1340; Size: 6, 12 or 18 months, \$18.00)

*Oscar from our Materials Management crew knows our warehouse inside and out. His SoCal T celebrates Taylor's West Coast roots and contributions to California's culture of innovative guitar design.*

**NEW****SoCal T**

50/50 poly/cotton blend. Ultra soft, worn-in feel.

California/peghead design.

Short sleeve. Slim fit.

(Olive #1471; S-XL,

\$30.00; XXL, \$32.00)

**Military Embroidery Cap**

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

**Men's Cap**

Adjustable fabric strap – one size fits most. (Charcoal #00375, \$25.00)



Front Pocket  
Taylor Shield

**Men's 40th Anniversary Work Shirt**

Wrinkle-resistant, permanent press polyester/cotton blend, featuring Taylor shield on front, 40th anniversary design on back. Short sleeve with two button pockets. (Black #3080; S-XL, \$44.00; 2XL-3XL, \$46.00)

**Men's 40th Anniversary T**

Preshrunk 100% combed cotton. Short sleeve. Fashion fit. (Black #1570; S-XL, \$25.00; 2XL-3XL, \$27.00)

**Headstock T**

100% cotton. Short sleeve. Fashion fit. (Black #1481; S-XL, \$24.00; XXL-XXXL, \$26.00)

**Color Block Zip Hoodie**

Slim fit. (Gray/Red #2815; S-XL, \$44.00; XXL, \$46.00)

**Ladies' 40th Anniversary T (not shown)**

Preshrunk 60/40 combed cotton/poly blend. Short sleeve. Slim fit. (Black #4570; S-XXL, \$25.00)

**Glassware****Etched Glass**

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

**Taylor Etched Peghead Mug**

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

**Taylor Mug**

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

*Joe, a nine-year Taylor veteran, ensures that the finish quality on our guitars meets our exacting standards.*

**NEW****Rosette T**

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

**Accessories**

1

**1) Digital Headstock Tuner**

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

**2) Taylor Polish Cloth 3-Pack**

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

**3) Taylor Guitar Polish**

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



2

**4) Guitar Stand**

Features laser-etched Taylor logo, rich satin finish, and rubber pads to protect your guitar's finish. (Sapele/Mahogany #70100, \$70.00; assembly required)

**5) Black Composite Travel Guitar Stand**

Made from durable recycled ABS composite material to securely hold your Taylor guitar. Travel-friendly design. Folds up to store in gig bags and most guitar cases. Accommodates all Taylor models. (#70180, \$39.00)



3

**6) Travel Guitar Stand**

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

**NEW****7) Elixir® HD Light Strings**

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



4

**8) Big Digit Hygro-Thermometer**

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



5

**9) Mini Hygro-Thermometer**

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



6

**10) Guitar Straps**

Visit [taylorguitars.com](http://taylorguitars.com) for a complete selection of Taylor guitar straps.



7



8



9



10

# TaylorWare

CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS

1 - 8 0 0 - 4 9 4 - 9 6 0 0

Visit [taylorguitars.com/taylorware](http://taylorguitars.com/taylorware) to see the full line.



# Wood&Steel

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socially responsible and economically viable management of the world's forests.*

## A River Runs Through It

The centerpiece of this custom Grand Symphony is its sinker redwood top, whose unique variegation comes from mineral-rich river water in Northern California, where the log was submerged for many decades. Straight-grained cocobolo back and side sets were chosen to complement the grain orientation of the top. A shaded edgeburst supplies a dusky backdrop for the figured koa binding and heightens the kaleidoscopic beauty of the abalone-edged top. Tonally, cocobolo's rosewood-like properties also yield extra punch and clarity on the fundamental, while redwood blends the mellow warmth of cedar with more sonic horsepower. The wood pairing matches exceptionally well with a GS body, especially for moderate-to-heavy strummers who crave volume and clarity with round overall warmth.

