

# Wood & Steel

## The New 900 Series

Detail-rich curve appeal

## Maple Grand Concerts

Surprising power, warmth & sustain

## The GS Mini Turns 5

## Guitar Workout

Build speed, strength  
& endurance

## Guitar Care & Travel Tips





# Letters



## Family Support

I wanted to send a note of thanks for Vol. 81 [Winter 2015], particularly the feature on Mr. McMinn's extraordinary efforts to propagate figured maple. I've got a Guild 12-string jumbo with maple back and sides. I can attest to the unique tonal quality of the wood, and would love to see more of it "out there." I was so fascinated with the reporting on Mr. McMinn's work that I actually found myself reading excerpts of the article out loud to my wife.

I'm also very grateful for the outstanding photography always on display in *Wood&Steel*, and the company's website. It was that attention to detail that gave me the confidence to purchase an 816ce several years ago, without ever having touched the instrument. I knew what woods I wanted; I felt like I knew exactly what I'd be getting in the 816ce, and that I didn't need to play it beforehand. I wasn't disappointed.

One of the things I like most about being part of the Taylor "family" is the feeling that I'm supporting these kinds of groundbreaking efforts to enlighten people about environmental issues, and make our commercial uses of the natural world more sensitive, renewable and sustainable. Please keep up the fine work, and praising/publicizing the efforts of your suppliers to do the same.

**Mark R. Wietstock**  
Santa Barbara, CA

## Eco-Logic

I am impressed by your no-nonsense, hands-on eco-friendliness I can infer by reading *Wood&Steel*. I like your intelligent and long-term approach both in Cameroon and in the U.S. You and your partner [Steve McMinn] make the world a better place through innovative products and a strong moral compass combined with a positive vision of the future.

**Hans Karlsborn**  
Helsingborg, Sweden

## Good Vibrations

Bob, you responded to my question about a mahogany top on a rosewood body in the Winter 2015 edition of *Wood&Steel* ["Ask Bob"] with a recommendation that I check out the new 810 or 814ce instead. I was a little surprised but have never been steered wrong by you or your team, so I decided to check out both models. While doing so, I picked up one of the few new 614ce models in my area, which I found at one of your best [dealers], Melodee Music in Sterling, Virginia. I've always been one of those "I don't much care for maple" guys, but I was curious after seeing what Andy Powers had written about the new series and watching several of your online videos about the re-engineering of the series.

An engineer by trade, I've spent a reasonable amount of time trying to understand guitar building (including a wonderful build class at Whetstone School of Lutherie in Brattleboro, Vermont) and was captivated by the new back bracing, so I had to try it out. It took all of 10 minutes to realize I simply couldn't live without this guitar! Not only was this one of the prettiest pieces of maple I've seen, but the fit and finish were flawless and the appointments amazing.

After a week of playing it daily, I'm still in awe. I don't know whether your team has measured the movement of the back with Andy's new bracing system, but I swear I can feel it "pumping" against my chest when I play – providing an unbelievable level of feedback to the player as well as the remarkable tone and volume already described on your website. I've compared the physical sensation of this guitar to each of my other six Taylor guitars (I added a K66ce since we last corresponded), and there's simply no comparison – the 614ce provides much more physical feedback than anything else I've played. It's like having a wonderfully resonant bellows in your hands.

I'll never be one to draw a crowd with my playing, and I'm okay with that. I play for my own enjoyment, and the physical response from the guitar is a huge part of that. Without getting all weird about this, I have to say that Andy has created one of, probably *the*, most tactile and physically responsive instruments I've ever experienced. How cool is that! The 810 and 814ce are still out there waiting, but for now I have my hands happily full with this 614ce.

Thanks once more for a wonderful playing and ownership experience,

and yet another reason to declare my appreciation of and loyalty to the Taylor brand.

**Greg Clare**

P.S. My wife would really appreciate it if you guys would stop turning out new and increasingly compelling guitars... but I know you won't do that, right?

## C1 Concierge

I had such a positive experience with Taylor Guitars that I wanted to share it. Recently I went to my local Guitar Center, came across the Taylor T5z Custom (koa top), and played it through a Fishman 200 amplifier. I was so blown away by the sound that I decided to purchase the T5z immediately. It has the sweetest guitar sound I have ever heard in 45 years of playing. About six months later I was experimenting with friend's 12-string and thought, I wonder what Taylor has on the web in 12-strings. I came across a legacy guitar called the T5C1-12. The picture on the web showed it as a blond quilted [maple] top. Although it was no longer in production, I called the Taylor sales staff at the San Diego factory and asked them to "comb the country" for one. Guess what? They found one – the only one in existence! I bought it. It is truly the only 12-string that has the same neck action as a 6-string guitar. Thanks again to Taylor for its quality products and to its outstanding sales staff. You guys rock!

**Steve Testa**  
Melbourne, FL

*Editor's Note: Although 12-string editions of our original T5 currently remain out of production, we did recently add two T5z 12-string models to the family: a T5z-12 Custom (koa top) and Classic (mahogany top).*

## Bizarre Guitar Dream

I finally purchased the guitar of my dreams [a 150e]. I've been playing and enjoying an [other brand] my brother-in-law gave me 30 years ago. It's a decent guitar but has seen better days. I've been a fan of Leo Kottke for more than 30 years, and the idea of owning a 12-string always percolated in my mind. I've hesitated to go low end and could never rationalize paying even hundreds for a new guitar (kids in college). I wasn't familiar with Taylor guitars, but luckily the salesman at Bizarre Guitar in Reno, Nevada, introduced me.

I think the stars just aligned for me and it was time. I am thoroughly amazed at the sound this instrument produces. This is how a guitar is supposed to sound! And the tuning is precise. My fingertips will always be calloused, and I will be a Taylor guitar fan for life.

**Larry Braybrooks**  
Fair Oaks, CA

## Worth the Wait

When I bought a Baby Taylor in 2006, I hadn't played a single chord on a guitar. I was 62, and my teacher confessed he'd wondered if I'd left it a bit late. I did struggle at first, but now I have great fun making music with him and also entertaining my husband and the cat.

I love receiving your beautifully presented magazine and [recently] fell in love with the GS Mini. So, this morning I did what every senior citizen should do. I went down to Dawson's in Manchester (England) and ordered one. I'm left-handed, and they didn't have one in stock. But I can wait. After all, I've waited 70 years for this. Thank you once again for the joy you've given me.

**Pat Bottomley**  
Denshaw, Oldham, UK

*Ed. Note: The following note was sent to Jeff Mallia, a respected luthier and Premier Level authorized Taylor Service Technician based in Concord West, New South Wales, Australia, a suburb of Sydney. Australian Taylor owners will find him to be a great resource and can find his contact information listed on the Repair Centers page of the Taylor website, under "Support."*

## Aussie Artisan

Jeff, thanks again for the brilliant repair to my Taylor acoustic. The guitar sounds and plays better than when it was brand-new – no exaggeration. I put this down to your attention to detail and professional approach to your work. I know the word "artisan" gets used a lot these days, but in your case it's justified. Thanks also to Taylor for providing customer service that went way beyond my expectation. It's so refreshing to find businesses and people who are proud of what they do and who stand behind their products and services.

**Ian King**

## Bluegrass and Beyond

I've owned three Taylors over the years, a new 512 and 510, and now have a Dan Crary Signature Model (DCSM), which I found secondhand, having always wanted to try one. I fell in love with it immediately. No other guitar in the shop came close for me. I enjoyed reading the article by Eric Bacher about the acquisition of his DCSM and its restoration (Vol. 80 / Fall 2014). The DCSM to me is much more than a bluegrass guitar. I've owned a Gibson L5 acoustic archtop, and when playing swing-style chordal bass runs, the Taylor has a depth and punch very reminiscent of the old L5. It also has a sweeter, more rounded tone on the top strings. For bluegrass the Taylor is, of course, superb, with that beautiful full tone shining through on the fiddle tunes. It's a very versatile instrument, and it's my favourite dreadnought of all.

**Eric Kwiatkowski**  
Nottingham, England

## Island Rules

For the past several years I have taken my GS Mini on our annual chartered catamaran cruise in the British Virgin Islands. Singing and strumming in a quiet mooring down there is something you can experience but can't adequately describe. I highly recommend it.

This year was a bit different on departure from West End, Tortola. As I ran the Mini through the BVI government TSA screening, normally a routine matter, something unusual happened. The rather large TSA agent, an Island native, looked at me sternly and said, "I'm sorry, sir, but there is a problem. Due to a recent ordinance, all Taylor instruments brought to the Islands must remain in the Islands."

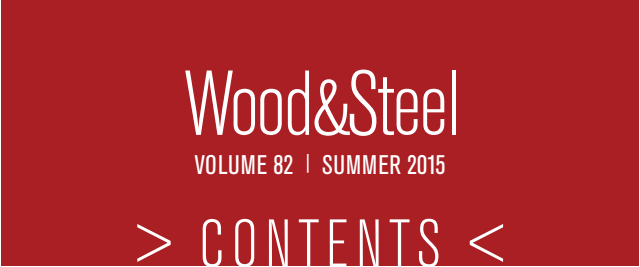
I froze. Then he cracked a big grin. "Have a nice trip home, sir."

Relieved, I smiled, swung it over my shoulder and boarded the ferry back to St. Thomas.

**Gene Lockaby**  
Charlotte, NC

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

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



## ON THE COVER

### 18 THE NEW 900 SERIES

A luxurious update to our most elegant class of rosewood guitars reveals a rich three-part harmony of tone, visual details, and playing comfort. We also spotlight a sustainable abalone sourcing program off the Pacific coast of Mexico's Baja California peninsula.



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## FEATURES

### 6 THE GUITARIST AS ATHLETE

Working these hand exercises into your practice routine will boost your speed, strength and longevity as a player.

### 8 THE GS MINI TURNS 5

This summer we celebrate the birthday of one of the most popular and well-traveled 5-year-olds in the world.

### 12 THE REDESIGNED MAPLE 600S: GRAND CONCERTS

The 612ce and its 12-fret sibling pack impressive volume, warmth and sustain into a compact form. Meet your new inspiration.

### 14 BACKSTAGE PASS: KENNY GREENBERG AND MARSHALL ALTMAN

Two veteran Nashville music pros have embraced the revoiced 810e and ES2 pickup for the stage and studio.

### 16 NOTES FROM NAMM

Our maple 600s made a great first impression. Our artist lineup made some memorable music.



## COLUMNS

### 4 KURT'S CORNER

We're exploring ways to help our dealers offer the best possible in-store Taylor experience.

### 5 BOBSPEAK

Even after 40-plus years in business, Bob is more eager than ever to learn and improve.

### 32 THE CRAFT

Andy Powers shares his thoughts on guitar-making design harmony and relates them to the aesthetic vision for the new 900 Series.

## DEPARTMENTS

### 10 ASK BOB

Tap tuning, stages of aging, cedar-top 12-strings, and thin finish concerns.

### 26 SOUNDINGS

McCartney rocks his koa Taylor, Hozier goes deep with a baritone, and Zac Brown stretches out. Plus, the Bacon Brothers, Alan Jackson on tour, Mike Keneally, and more.

### 28 TAYLOR NOTES

Remembering Pete Davies Jr., improvements in Cameroon, and T5z 12-strings.

### 30 EVENTS/CALENDAR

Musikmesse, new Road Shows in July, and summer guitar tips.

### 33 TAYLORWARE

New tees for summer and more from the Taylor store.





More in Store for Customers

Every business day, visitors arrive at our El Cajon headquarters for a tour of the Taylor factory, which starts at 1 p.m. Not a day goes by that we don't have tour attendees, and in the summer months or holiday weeks we'll frequently have several tour groups to accommodate all our guests. People visit us from all over the world – families, business people, school groups on field trips, competitors, retirees, even people who tell us they planned their vacation to San Diego around visiting Taylor Guitars.

The tours start and end in our Visitor Center, which to one side features a store displaying all TaylorWare items currently available (shirts, baseball caps, guitar straps, etc.). To the other side is a guitar display and signage which describes how to select the shape of guitar that best fits your playing style and how different tonewoods color the tone. Each model of guitar we make is designed to produce unique tonal characteristics in order to fit different players, and visitors find it very helpful to learn how to find the guitar that best fits them and suits their playing style. This mirrors some of the information we present at our Road Shows and the personal help we offer people at our Find Your Fit events.

Frequently, visitors ask where they can buy a Taylor guitar in the area. Our nearest dealer is a Guitar Center location in La Mesa, about a 10-minute drive

away. This particular Guitar Center had the opportunity last year to expand their store into some adjacent space, and in doing so they enlarged their acoustic guitar room substantially, including the creation of a dedicated Taylor room. As an experiment, we provided some of the same signage we use in our Visitor Center to tell our shapes and branding assets that include a large Taylor logo and brand-related imagery. The room was filled with a great selection of Taylor models, including some very special custom guitars, high-end models, and a nice assortment of left-handed models. We were very curious to see what impact the dedicated Taylor room, expanded model selection, and branding assets would have on sales. Specifically, we wanted to see if we would gain sales traction in filling a larger existing demand for our guitars, demand that heretofore hadn't been met with sufficient inventory assortment or brand representation at any of our dealers.

The Taylor room opened for business in mid-September and has been a huge success. Taylor sales have grown there dramatically and in the process have highlighted new problems, such as how to replenish guitar inventory faster when this happens. Customers have visited the store looking for one particular Taylor, but have left the store after purchasing a different Taylor

model because the store had it in stock, and they were able to try it. The room generated sales of more guitars than it holds in only a month!

We're now working on a similar concept in a handful of music stores in North America and in Europe. They will all open this year. We've created additional marketing assets, such as new signage and displays, which many other Taylor dealers will put into use this year.

It's important for us to be able to tell a consistent brand story with a consistent and recognizable look and feel, and to have a great representation of our guitars in any store that decides to be a Taylor dealer. But we also want to be a great partner to each store, and that means understanding that each store owner is in business for himself, and wants his store to have its own personality and vibe. We don't want to mess with that.

These are exciting times for us. We're designing and making the best guitars we've ever made, and we're being rewarded with great sales success. It's great to see so many of you when you visit us in El Cajon. If you haven't visited us yet and find yourself in Southern California, please plan on coming by for a tour. We'd love to see you and show you what we do.

– Kurt Listug, CEO

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Room for Improvement

I have to say that after 40 years of guitar building there's more now to delve into and improve than at any time in my career. When I first started, the whole thing was a mystery. Just the basic task of starting and completing a guitar was enough to keep me up all night, literally, working and thinking. My friend Greg Deering of Deering Banjos and I would stay up way past midnight, night after night, brainstorming on how we could more easily make a part for a guitar or banjo. We'd go to the industrial salvage yards on the weekends and dig through surplus trying to repurpose aerospace tooling into guitar or banjo tools.

All these years later, even after seemingly perfecting how to make a guitar, I still view our factory as just barely working. Don't get me wrong, I'm proud of it and the people involved, but there's so much left unknown and undone.

Start with the guitar itself and you'll soon learn that there's so much room for improvement. How does it sound and feel? How does it hold up under use and travel? I'm fortunate to have Andy Powers, who's helping us improve the sound and aesthetics of the guitar. He's chock full of incredibly solid ideas of what the inside of a guitar body can and should be like in order to make the sound we want. I'm endlessly fascinated with his ideas and improvements, especially when he predicts a change and then I hear it and find that he nailed it.

We're getting deeper into drying, seasoning and treating wood to help it be more stable. Andy is helping me here too, with experiments and expert woodworking knowledge. What a colleague for me! There is so much buzz around the world about different techniques to employ, some new, some old. It amazes us that almost anything we think of we'll find that some old-timer did it already in one way or another, or that some other industry is employing it. When it comes to wood in guitars, there's a lot to be learned from the great piano makers, the bowed instrument makers, as well as others in guitar making. The deeper we go, the more we discover that we're just starting to understand. I even toured some lumber mills lately that make 2x4s and learned things about wood fiber in trees that I had no idea about.

Then there's the volume of production we currently do, with even more demand. We make so many guitars now that we constantly have to invent systems and methods to improve the work. The amazing thing to me, even at these fantastic numbers we build, is that we can always improve our efficiency just by improving the quality. Almost everything that slows us down, when analyzed, is slowed down from a quality issue. A piece of wood twists, a part isn't put on right, we've outgrown a method, a glue joint is made badly. (Yes, occasionally we do bad work here too, just like where you work!) But we work each day to cor-

rect and improve, and it's endless fun to invent our way out of situations. This is the work I love the most because it's so challenging and creative.

We've recently gotten into some very high-tech machines we've built to make our ES2 pickups. This pickup works very well, and its failure rate is almost zero. Much of this success is due to the super elegant robotic assembly process for making these little gems. It's really fun to see it work and then see the astounding results of successful parts made when the build quality is top-notch. Of course, that's a pickup, and guitars themselves have limited potential to be made with something so high-tech. But it serves as an example to us in other areas that if the design is faithfully produced, then it can function at a high level.

You might detect that all this keeps me pretty engaged. But as I started out saying, it even surprises me sometimes how much meaningful work there is to do here, and I love being a part of it. And I haven't even talked about the work we're doing in forests to ensure that there's wood in the future, which is becoming one of the most rewarding and interesting adventures ever for me.

Here's hoping your work, your music, and your interests are equally rewarding. I'm a fortunate man for mine, and I realize it more each year.

– Bob Taylor, President

Editor's Note

Play Like a Craftsman

To a true craftsman, the idea of mastering one's craft is an elusive if not impossible proposition. Yet rather than being a source of frustration, there is joy in the ongoing pursuit of quality, as Bob Taylor testifies in his column this issue. That isn't to say obstacles won't impede progress, but a craftsman who cares will embrace those challenges because of the satisfaction that comes from making something better.

One of the coolest things about Taylor Guitars is that Bob and Kurt have dedicated their careers not only to crafting great guitars, but to nurturing a larger culture of innovative craftsmanship. That's how Taylor can thrive as a production-level manufacturer. That's how we can reconcile quality and quantity. That's how the same ideals of craftsmanship can live both within the exquisite new 900 Series guitars showcased in this issue, which embody the highest levels of woodworking detail, and a guitar like the GS Mini, whose features may be simpler but whose quality also resonates richly with so many people. In the end, great guitar craftsmanship can take many different forms. Whichever model we embrace as players, hopefully the same spirit of craftsmanship that went into making the guitar will inspire us to find joy in our own musical pursuits.

– Jim Kirlin



2015 Taylor Factory Tours & Vacation Dates

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

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

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

Factory Closures

<b>Monday, June 29 - Friday, July 3</b> (Independence Day/Company Vacation)	<b>November 26-27</b> (Thanksgiving Holiday)
<b>Monday, September 7</b> (Labor Day)	<b>Monday, December 21 through Friday, January 1</b> (Company Vacation)
<b>October 12</b> (Taylor Guitars Anniversary)	





## Adopting a guitar workout routine can help increase your speed, strength and endurance

Music is often called an art *and* a science, but very rarely do I hear it called a sport. Now I don't mean sport in a competitive way, but rather, as Dictionary.com puts it, as "an athletic activity requiring skill or physical prowess." Thus, if we accept the definition of "athletic" as meaning "physically active and strong," we find that playing music, and most certainly playing the guitar, can be defined as a sport.

Please understand, I am not a sports fan and loathe exercising, but when I accepted the fact that playing the guitar with just my hands wasn't cutting it, I decided I needed to get my entire body into shape, one way or another. This doesn't mean you have to start going to the gym to work out (although that's probably not a bad idea either), but I'm going to recommend some changes to your practicing/playing routine that incorporate your entire body – and that includes your brain and your heart.

### Stop Blaming Your Hands, Start Using Your Body

Do you ever feel like you have to play for 20 minutes before you begin to feel warmed up? Do your hands get tired after playing for another 20 minutes? Does your hand start to cramp

halfway through a song with lots of barre chords? Do you find that when you try to bend a whole step on the high E string you're almost always flat because it's too hard to bend that far? Do you practice for hours on end trying to get faster only to find yourself tired and frustrated? All of these issues and more are common to most guitarists – amateurs and pros alike. If we stick with our sports theme and borrow some motivational language, we need to start "working smarter, not harder." And I admit we also have to contend with "no pain, no gain." But I'll show you just how much pain is acceptable and how to deal with it.

### Your Guitar Workout Routine

In our workout routine we'll focus on two essential areas: speed and strength. Before we begin, an important disclaimer: I won't promise that becoming faster and stronger will make you a better musician. But if you've been struggling to get better, have plateaued, or feel you've reached your peak, I believe these approaches will yield positive results in your performance ability.

#### Speed

Speed is relative. A player with shredding aspirations might think playing

a lick with sixteenth-note triplets at 120 bpm (beats per minute) is fast (Ex. 1), while another guitarist finds strumming quarter notes at 120 bpm and switching from a C to a G chord (Ex. 2) is challenging. Let's keep this in mind when we talk about speed. I'm not saying you want to be Tony Rice or Steve Vai-fast; I'm saying you should be able to play whatever you want to play up to tempo and comfortably.

One important thing we need to accept about speed is that we all have a personal threshold we can't surpass, and this is fine. Think of it as your personal four-minute mile. That's not to say you can't play faster tomorrow than today, but at some point you will reach your limit. However, I would suggest you haven't reached your limit if you haven't taken into account some of the following ergonomic factors.

**Posture.** This includes how you sit or stand with your instrument. Is your spine straight, or do you hunch over and/or twist your upper torso? How do you hold your pick or fingers in relation to the strings? Do you ever raise your shoulders (very common) when playing? Where is your left-hand thumb?

**Physical contact with the instrument.** Does the guitar rest on your lap or does it hang on your shoulder with a strap? How does this affect your posture? If using a strap, how does the weight of the instrument affect your shoulders and back?

**Breath.** Are you breathing naturally when you play, or do you hold your breath?

These are all things athletes contemplate when practicing and then do naturally when it's game time. I'm not claiming there is a right or wrong approach to these physical considerations, but being aware of these attributes can go a long way towards improving your speed, strength and endurance.

Okay, let's add some notes. I've found that there are two easy (in theory) approaches you can use to increase your speed, whether it's single-note solos, chord changes, or whatever it is you're after:

**1.** Begin by practicing with a small group of notes or chords, two to four, and then gradually add more.

**2.** Practice a lot, though in small chunks of time.

Allow me to elaborate on both subjects. I came across the first approach in Lee F. Ryan's fabulous book *The Natural Classical Guitar*, wherein he labels this method "speed bursts." Let's

put these bursts to use. Say you want to play "Black Mountain Rag" (sometimes known as "Guitar Rag," Ex. 3) at 132 bpm. By almost any standard this is "fast," though by bluegrass standards this is also "normal." While I do recommend you play *slowly* through the entire four measures a few times – to get a feel for the line and the melody in your head – don't attempt to play all the notes when you start to increase the tempo.

Notice that the melody is actually made up of three different phrases, each one measure long. (Measures one and three are the same.) Let's break it down and focus on measure one. We'll begin playing at 80 bpm (with a metronome – get one on your smart phone, there's no excuse) and then gradually increase the tempo. At this point I still don't recommend playing all eight notes. In fact, let's just play the first note. One note (Ex. 4). I know that seems silly, but could you do it? Did you actually play one eighth-note E at 80 bpm, or did you let the note ring out as a quarter or even a whole note? It's important to play one eighth-note, then rest. And then try it again.

Next, add the second note and be sure you pick down and up (Ex. 5). And then do it again. How was that? If it

sounded good both times, go ahead and add the third note (Ex. 6). Once you feel comfortable adding the fourth note, do so (Ex. 7), play it twice, and then stop. Now instead of adding more notes, start increasing the tempo of your metronome in units of two, from 80 to 82, 82 to 84, etc. Once you reach your threshold, let's say 100 bpm, back the metronome down a couple of clicks to 96 bpm and stay there until it's as comfortable as strumming an Em chord. After that, you have a few choices. You can: 1) go back down to 80 bpm, add more one note and start the process over again; 2) stay at the same tempo and add one more note (more difficult than the first but very gratifying); 3) stick with the same four notes and try to increase the tempo, breaking through your ceiling of 100.

This process of practicing with a small number of notes and gradually adding more is highly effective. Not only will you see a noticeable increase in your playing speed, but your ability to remember the phrase will also increase.

This brings us to approach 2: practice a lot, in small chunks of time. Practice approach 1 for 3-10 minutes at a time, then take a break, then practice or play something different, and finally, return to the speed exercise. Just like lifting weights, you wouldn't do

different. This goes for guitars as well. Neck width and circumference, scale length, body shape and string gauge all factor into how we play and what we can accomplish. What might work for one person won't work for another. How do you find out what's best for you? Trial and error. The main concern here is to stay safe. The basic rule on experimenting with hand positioning is, if it hurts, stop it.

But I've found that this isn't always the case. Sometimes playing the guitar can hurt, especially barre chords (Ex. 8) and bends (Ex. 9). But there is something very easy we can do to remedy the pain: stretch! I am shocked at how few guitarists stretch their hands and fingers. Athletes stretch before, during and after a workout or game. Guitarists should do the same. Here are a couple of super easy and highly pleasurable stretches you can use to keep your fingers healthy and strong. Please read these directions fully before implementing them.

Hold your left arm out straight in front of you (without bending your elbow), palm up. Then use your other hand to gently pull down on one finger at a time, beginning with the pinky. Bend it down far enough to feel the stretch work its magic, but not so far that it hurts (I can stretch until my fin-



bicep curls for more than a few minutes without taking a break and/or moving on to other exercises. The same goes for guitar playing, so mix it up. The only thing left to do is repeat this process ad infinitum with everything you've ever wanted to play!

#### Strength

At some point you will probably run into a technique that makes your hands feel weak. The most common culprits are barre chords and bends. Quite often the issue is *not* strength but ergonomics. Hand positions can make a huge difference when it comes to barre chords and bending. Here's the real problem: Everybody – every body – is

## The Guitarist as Athlete

**Ex. 1**

**Ex. 2** C G

**Ex. 3** C C C G C

**Ex. 4** **Ex. 5** **Ex. 6** **Ex. 7**

**Ex. 8** F#m B E C#m

**Ex. 9**

finished. Just like an athlete's stretches, these moves will keep you limber, help build strength, and prevent the buildup of lactic acid in your hands. Lactic acid in your hands can slow down the muscles, giving you the illusion that your hands are weak. What they really need is a good stretch.

#### Longevity

These approaches to practice and playing will help ensure that you can continue making music for years to come. Unlike most athletes, musicians can continue to develop their physical

and mental skills indefinitely, one of the many benefits of a low-impact sport. Nevertheless, it's important to note that the older we get, the more challenging it can be to get better. Luckily this is truer of the physical than the intellectual. So as we age, we develop our intellectual approach to guitar playing alongside the physical. As we get older we become more inclined to focus on subtlety and nuance, refinement and grace, taste and discernment. And if we've been taking care of our bodies and thoughtfully regarding the way we approach playing the guitar, we

can marry the physical with the intellectual and embody the art, science and sport of music. **W&S**

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



# THE GS MINI TURNS



**In just five years, the fun-size guitar with the full-size sound has become one of the most beloved Taylor models ever**

Bob Taylor is often asked which of the company's guitars he's proudest of. "Although you won't pin me down forever, I often say the GS Mini," he shares. "It's just right. It works so well, it's so reliable, it sounds real, and it's fun!"

No doubt many others would agree. Nearly 125,000 GS Mini guitars are now out in the world – not a bad showing for a guitar that only turns 5 this summer. Bob says he had a strong feeling the guitar would resonate with players.

"When we finished the design I felt we'd nailed it," he says. "I felt the same way when I saw the first ones come off the production line. But I'll admit that even I didn't know how many people would agree and buy one. To this day the demand is overwhelming, in a humbling, wonderful way."

A lot of Taylor engineering and tooling work went into the guitar's design to give it everything a player would expect from any Taylor guitar – playability, tone, workmanship – all in a scaled-down size that manages to fit comfortably into nearly every demo-

graphic and setting, from the couch to the campfire to the concert hall, as so many happy owners have shared through Taylor's social media channels. Arguably one of the Mini's most endearing traits is that it makes the idea of playing guitar seem fun, inviting and accessible to anyone, wherever in life (or the world) they may be. Its affordability also strips away the hallowed aura of a high-end instrument to reveal a simple underlying idea: playing music is good for the soul.

"It sounds great without being too precious," Bob says. "You don't have to worry too much about it getting a used patina on it. It almost begs for that. That little guitar has found its way into the hands of young and old players, beginner and accomplished players, stay-at-home folks and adventure travelers. People love them as much as I do. It's been incredible to watch."

As we've said before, we think the world would be a better place if everyone had a GS Mini. And it seems like we're slowly getting there.



VALE DE JANEIRO, BRAGANÇA, PORTUGAL



HONG KONG



GRAND BEND



MILANO, ITALY



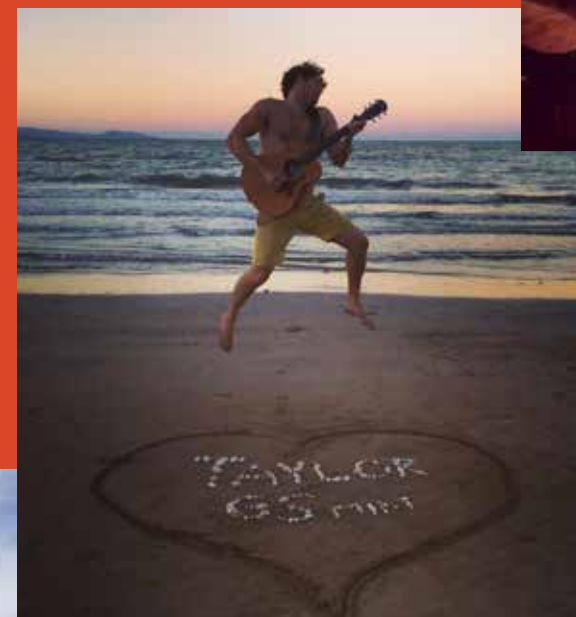
BOLIVIA



VANCOUVER



FLORIDA



AUSTRALIA



GUAM



SAVOGNIN, SWITZERLAND



THAILAND



SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO



MONTEGO BAY



NEW YORK CITY



# Ask Bob

## Tap tuning, stages of aging, and thin finish concerns

What is “tap tuning,” and how important is that process in the selection of the right woods for a guitar? I have heard a lot about how important it is to match up back/side/top woods that share the same sympathetic frequencies, etc., but I really don't know what all that means and if it makes one guitar better than another.

Bob Slezak

Bob, tap tuning is when you tap a piece of wood and listen for a clear note, and then remove wood, either on the piece itself or via the bracing in order to tune the part to a pitch. Some people just tune to whatever note seems dominant, and others tune to a certain note. There's only so much you can do to change a note because a piece of wood at a certain size will resonate very similarly to others of the same size and species. In a factory like Taylor we tap types of wood and do extensive experimentation of various densities and species in order to find out their overall characteristics. Then we design around that to bring out the best qualities. You could experience the results of this type of work on the new 800 Series or the new 600 Series. They've been tapped thoroughly! But then we produce a design and repeat it. A luthier who works alone might argue that you'd need to tap each guitar to create consistent results, while a factory like ours would argue that we have precise process controls that a luthier doesn't have in their shop, so we need to tap individual guitars less than they need to, simply because we have repeatability. In the end, in the hands of a good guitar maker, tapping the wood tells them a lot, and each luthier has their own take on how to use that information.

The *Wood&Steel* article on torrefaction [“Maple's Rich Revival,” Vol. 81 / Winter 2015] talked about giving the top properties of an older guitar, but did not mention what was meant by “older.” The top on my 1978 410 is noticeably darker than my XXX-RS,

and my 1997 450 falls somewhere in between, but I can't tell what can be attributed to age, wood choice, or finish. So, how old is “old”?

Ron Fryer

Great question, Ron. First, let's clarify that only the top in a new guitar with a torrefied top is “older,” and that a truly older guitar has all its wood aging at the same time. But here's my experience with tone. The first change to a new guitar happens in just hours. The next happens in a year. The next, really noticeable change happens in years 10-15 and then again after 25. To my ear, the biggest and best of all these changes happens in years 10-15, and I bracket that window because I haven't pinpointed the timeframe yet, but it's probably closer to 15. This is interesting because no matter which year I read a guitar forum, when the discussion of “When did Taylor make its best guitars?” comes up, as it often does, the answer always seems to be about 12-15 years before the time of the post. That agrees with my findings. A new guitar can sound great, but after a dozen years or more it *really* sounds great. I don't know that I keep hearing differences that significant after that age. I know this isn't scientific and double blind tested, but that's my story.

I have many acoustic guitars, which I enjoy playing all the time. I have noticed for some reason that the ones with the dovetail neck construction seem to be more affected by changes in humidity. I find that my Taylors are not as sensitive to the changes in humidity. Have you found this to be true, and do you have any thoughts on this topic?

Steve Kane  
Branchburg, NJ

Steve, I like that you're talking about the guitar in general being more stable in varying humidity conditions, and it makes sense to attribute that to the neck joint, since we are famous for that. The truth is that the neck joint alone would not make our guitar or any guitar

more stable than another guitar with a different kind of joint. But the subtleties in how we construct our guitars would make a difference, and the neck joint is part of that equation. Other factors include how we dry our wood, how the body is made, and how the neck angle is set in the first place. With the NT neck, we can ensure an ultra-precise neck angle at the factory. Others will argue, but this is not possible to the same extent in a factory that uses a dovetail joint. One reason is that no matter how good you get it set, you're still sometimes wrong after stringing the guitar. If so, with ours, we take it off and redo it. With a dovetail, you ship it. It's that simple. But once the neck angle is perfect, then the whole guitar can still function better under varying humidity conditions. There's even more to it than this, and we live our lives at Taylor to better the performance of guitars, but it would take pages to get in to. I'm happy to hear that your Taylors are acting stable for you.

I recently purchased my ninth Taylor, a used 2008 GS5-12 in mint condition. I have been a fingerstyle player for 40 years. Until this acquisition, I've found 12-strings to be too bright and jangly for fingerstyle. However, when I played this cedar/mahogany guitar at my local guitar store, I was shocked. The warmth is perfect for fingerstyle, yet sounds wonderful and has sufficient volume for light to moderate strumming. It's exactly what I wanted in a 12-string, because the wood combination tames the brightness, but still allows for the 12-string bell-tone. To me, it is amazing! There are many rumors that cedar cannot withstand the string tension that a 12-string exerts and that the bond between the bridge and cedar top is weak. There seem to be very few cedar-topped 12-strings built by Taylor. Is it due to these “concerns,” or is it because of the lack of availability of quality Western red cedar for this purpose? Also, with light gauge strings, can this guitar be tuned to standard tuning?

Susan Curtis  
Northern Michigan

Susan, I agree with your tone assessment, and I'm happy you've found the one that suits you perfectly. Yes, cedar does have that reputation, but it's a little undeserved. It's completely strong enough and even holds glue well, although it's difficult to glue in that the parts need to fit together well and you absolutely must keep clamping pres-



I have a 314ce. The last time I changed strings, the store did not have any Elixir Lights, so I bought and installed a set of Elixir HD Lights. I have read that these strings were designed for the new 614ce, which has different bracing. Could the HD Light strings be harmful to my guitar? And can I go back and forth from Light to HD Light strings without needing an adjustment to the guitar? I like the feel of the even tension on the HD Lights, but I also always liked the Lights as well.

James

Yes, James, you can go back and forth all you want. Your guitar will not be harmed in any way, even if you put mediums on it. Different strings really make the guitar sound and feel different, and it's perfectly fine to try different setups to see what you like, or what you're in a mood for.

sure on it for a much longer time than spruce. For instance, with braces on a spruce top, you can clamp for five minutes and move on to the next top, but with cedar, you must clamp at least 30 minutes. So imagine that in a factory setting. But don't worry, because if it is all done correctly, cedar will last as long as spruce. We wouldn't make a guitar that we knew beforehand would self-destruct. Why not make more? Spruce is just more popular, for one, and as you can see, cedar does present some efficiency problems, and it isn't always the best choice for sound. But in the right circumstance, it's the perfect wood, as you've testified.

My purchase of a new 814ce was a major investment for me, and I have a serious concern about scratching with the thinner [finish] coating. I am a fingerpicker, so I chose to not have the pickguard on my guitar. With very light playing I am seeing scratching on this guitar that I never had on any other guitar, including two 810ce models.

Why would you put so thin a coating on the new 800s and then a pickguard, which surely takes back some of the movement on the top of the guitar gained with the thin coating? I see now that the pickguard was a necessity; I did not know that when I ordered my 814ce. If I had been told that scratching and excessive wear were an issue, it would have been a necessity to opt for a pickguard.

Can I have a thicker coat of [finish] sprayed on my guitar if I send it back, or do I have to see major damage down the road because of the ultra-thin coating? I can't imagine any significant loss of volume or tone by doing this. I find the pickguards being placed on these guitars less than attractive. They do not appear to be regular rosewood, which has a tighter, harder grain.

Ron Wilson

Ron, those are all good questions, so let me break it down. The best guitars and violins in the world have the thinnest finishes on them because it helps produce better sound. This was the goal with the new 800s. Yes it's more easily worn, but we gain world-class sound. Some players never, ever put a scratch on their guitar, while some wear holes through the top, and still others fit in between. You don't scratch your thicker finished guitars, but you do scratch these. That's believable. A pickguard does, in a very small way, detract from sound, but not nearly

enough to retract the sound gains we made from a thinner finish, because the finish is everywhere and the guitar vibrates everywhere. The pickguard itself is actually made from small and damaged pieces of rosewood that we make backs and sides from. It's the same wood. What I would suggest is to order a pickguard and put it on your guitar. I would not suggest adding finish, because it would be noticeable in the sound, while the pickguard won't. I think in the long run if you keep this guitar you'll grow to love it because its sound is truly a step forward. It has the potential to be one of those guitars that in the future is looked at as one of the greatest sound pieces ever made. When you find a vintage and valuable guitar with sound like that nowadays, they're very expensive, old, and have lots of scratches on them with their thin finishes. So with these designs we wanted to make the best sounding guitar that we're capable of making, and we decided to undo some of the sins of the past of modern guitar making and apply a finish that honored the sound over the shine. I hope you choose to place a pickguard on the guitar and then proceed to play that guitar and turn it into one of the great vintage guitars of the future.

A couple of months back I purchased my third Taylor, this time a T3, but I feel that I have been misled. The top on this instrument appears to be a laminate of wood and what looks like fiberboard, or some other synthetic composite, as seen from the inside. I went back to the [Taylor] website, where the top is described as maple, but in fact it's maple plus fiberboard. The sense of being misled was furthered by your comment in a recent *Wood&Steel*, where you say, “So far we have never found a layered top to perform well for many reasons, but we expect to use solid tops nearly forever.” Can you comment on this?

Paul FitzGerald, Ph.D.

Paul, I'm happy to help you understand, because at first glance it would appear that we are contradicting ourselves. The T3 is unique among our guitars because there are rails of solid wood that are part of the back, and they run down either side of your pickups. They also connect across to each other, so in effect the guitar is chambered and doesn't gain its tone from the top vibrating in the way an acoustic guitar does, or even a T5. (A T5 has a live, braced top.) A T3 is essentially

a chambered solid body, or a semi-hollow body. The top is completely locked down to the skeleton of the body. Because of this, the cosmetic appearance of the piece of wood and its ability to be glued to a solid block become the greater design importance. By using veneer, we can obtain the most beautiful pieces of wood, so that answers that question. The next question has to do with attaching the top to the chambering rails. If the top were solid, it would likely crack along the edge of the solid block. If it didn't crack, it would certainly distort. With a vibrating top that spans edge to edge with braces, there is a lot of room for the expansion and contraction to go. But with the solid rails in the middle, the part of the top where it contacts the edge of the rails takes a lot of abuse. So we choose to laminate it, and to use a piece of paper fiber as the bottom piece to stabilize the pack so that it stays in a smooth arch. If the top were solid, it would not sound any better and would end up looking worse. I hope this settles your mind. It's a good design and helps make the T3 a good guitar.

Back in 2006, I fell in love with the sound of a Taylor K14ce. It took three trips to the store to convince me to commit, and the marriage is still going strong. I play every day and gig almost every week, making it a true value. The koa back is a beautiful 3-piece construction I never see on any other Taylor! Is there a reason for a 3-piece versus a traditional 2-piece bookmatched back? Are the bracing and therefore the sound different?

Rob  
Vancouver, Canada

Rob, the three-piece back serves one purpose only, and that is to use nice wood that is too narrow to make a two-piece back. There's no difference in tone and no need for different bracing. We use it when we have an opportunity to put good wood to use that would otherwise languish with nobody to love it. Looks like this one found a nice home!

It seems that most instrument makers and their customers prefer the density of the ebony but want the consistent black look of it. Isn't there something like an aniline dye that could be used to achieve that end? It might be easier than changing the mindset of the traditionalists and make use of somewhat irregularly

grained fretboards. I understand sunburst finishes were developed for similar reasons.

Tim Woods  
Spring Valley, CA

Fortunately, Tim, I'm finding that most of our customers love the ebony with grain showing. In fact, many have declared that they like it better and wish we'd done that earlier. Of course, it wasn't available to us earlier. So, I have to say that it is actually easier to change the mind of the player than to change the color of the wood. Ebony is impractical to dye. Why? Look at the other materials it's combined with. Maple binding, koa binding, ivoroid inlays, and wooden inlays. You'd have to dye those too, but we don't want to. Ebony does not absorb stain; it sits right on top of the wood. Its physical properties don't respond well to being dyed, so you can't dye the wood through and through and then work it after. It can only be topical. So, we're living within the realities of the forest, which is a good thing. But your question is legitimate. The proof of that is all the work we've done, as well as people a hundred years before us worldwide who've unsuccessfully tried to dye ebony. So, I thought like you at one time. Then I changed my mind.

I'm loving the custom shop K14 variant you helped me put together 11 years ago, and have always used a soundhole humidifier per the Gospel according to Bob, but what about the rest of the guitar? My house is very dry in the winter, and the humidity inside the case can lag behind the humidified body by as much as 8 percent. Is the humidity level as critical for the fingerboard and neck, for example, as it is for the body? I know ideally you'd like the entire guitar at 47 percent RH, but poor circulation in the case makes it tough to achieve without perhaps a second humidifier. Thoughts?

John Gray

John, if you use a soundhole humidifier without using a soundhole cover, that

allows the humidity to escape the body of the guitar and benefit the rest of the guitar, even if you see the readings differ. Not only that, but the case will also absorb humidity and help to protect the guitar. I recommend to people that they close their case after removing the guitar because that keeps the case itself from losing its moisture easily. You ask if the rest of the guitar is important, and yes, it is. However, it's not as needy as the body. You can always tell if your neck is dry because the fingerboard will shrink and the fret ends will feel very sharp because they have not shrunk, which in effect causes them to poke over the sides a bit. Humidify your guitar and they'll recede back (the fretboard actually grows) and no longer feel sharp. Bottom line, your soundhole humidifier will benefit the entire guitar, inside the case, if you don't put a cover over the soundhole.

I am a big fan of gorgeous woods like the ones Taylor uses. Take a wood like koa or maple, or whatever. Do those different types of the same wood — maple, curly maple, flamed maple, birdseye maple, or quilted maple, for example, all with the associated visual appeal — come from only one tree trunk, but just different parts? Different trees? Sometimes yes, sometimes no? Is there any way to determine that before a tree is cut and harvested?

Mitch Rolling  
Grand Turk  
Turks and Caicos Islands

Mitch, if a tree is flamey or quilted, it will exhibit those particular characteristics. You won't get birdseye from one section and quilted from another section of the same tree. Typically only about 1-5 percent of maple trees are figured the way we like. Each one of these types of figure comes from a different genetic mutation of the tree. Some species have it and some don't. For example it's very rare to see flamey rosewood, although once in a while you will. We even see flamey ebony sometimes, but again, it's very rare.

## Got a question for Bob Taylor?

Shoot him an e-mail: [askbob@taylorguitars.com](mailto: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.



# More Maple Mojo

Our maple 600 Series rollout continues this summer with the release of two palate-pleasing Grand Concerts

By Jim Kirlin



L-R: 612ce 12-Fret, 612ce

One of the gratifying pleasures of birthing new guitars at Taylor, especially when they reveal a new tonal personality that we love, is getting them into the hands of you, the players, and watching the sparks of musical romance fly. Six months after unveiling our revoiced maple 600 Series, the reaction so far suggests that we’ve struck a sweet chord and done maple proud. Out of the gate, the series notched a pair of “Best of Show” stamps of approval at the Winter NAMM Show (see our NAMM recap), followed by an award for “Best New Acoustic Guitar” from the Musikmesse International Press Awards during April’s Musikmesse trade show in Frankfurt, Germany.

A quick recap: Shaped by the design strokes of Andy Powers, maple’s tone profile has been rebooted

to reveal a richer, more versatile sonic palette. Among the voicing enhancements are torrefied (specially roasted) spruce tops that infuse the mature character of an older, played-in guitar into each instrument. Our staggered rollout for the year began with our Grand Auditorium (614ce), Grand Symphony (616ce) and Grand Orchestra (618e) models, and continues this summer with our two Grand Concert editions, the 612ce and its 12-fret sibling. While the series as a whole collectively shares the same fundamental tonal attributes of our maple 2.0 revoicing – greater warmth, sustain, balance and complexity – each individual body style has been uniquely optimized with custom-calibrated bracing and wood thicknesses to coax the most expressive tonal response from the guitar.

Of all the body styles in the series, the Grand Concert has arguably made the most dramatic impression so far among players, perhaps due to the way it transcends conventional expectations of both maple and a small-body guitar.

“I would have never thought I could get the kind of tone I wanted from such a small-bodied maple guitar,” says Taylor’s Michel Lille, our sales manager for Canada and an accomplished player with a nuanced touch. “For a fingerstyle player on the already extremely responsive Grand Concert shape, you still get maple’s fundamental, articulate sound, but now with a slightly longer decay and surprising warmth that a longtime rosewood or mahogany player will find refreshing.”

Another of our sales reps, J.R. Robison, was presenting a Taylor Road Show with product specialist Kenny

## Key Features

**Models:** 612ce, 612ce-12-Fret

**Back/Sides:** Figured maple

**Top:** Torrefied Sitka spruce

**Neck:** Hard rock maple

**Finish:** Hand-rubbed Brown Sugar back/sides/neck with gloss 3.5 finish (full body)

**Tone-Enhancing Features:** Custom-calibrated wood thicknesses and bracing for the Grand Concert shape, specially seasoned top and back, protein glues (bracing/bridge)

**Premium Appointments:** Ebony binding with grained ivoroid body purfling, paua rosette edged in ebony and grained ivoroid, grained ivoroid Wings fretboard inlay, inlaid ebony backstrap, striped ebony pickguard, Taylor nickel tuners (slothead tuners for 12-Fret)

Echizen at Alamo Music this spring, and Echizen played a 612ce 12-Fret that wowed everyone, including the two of them.

“The tone was not only complex and focused, but huge sounding with little energy,” Robison says. “I had many positive customer comments about that guitar during the petting zoo [a break in the show during which guests are encouraged to test-drive any of the Taylors on display]. It’s far and away my new favorite Taylor model.”

Echizen felt equally inspired. “That 12-Fret was ridiculous,” he adds. “Perfect studio guitar. It kept all the great quality of the maple, but the new features added a beautiful low mid and bass response. If every 612 12-Fret sounds and feels like that, oh man.”

Taylor sales manager Zach Arntz also fell for the 12-Fret, calling out the guitar’s “throaty vintage power,” and noting that for him, the tonal magic was in the unique midrange sparkle.

Paul Riario, Technical Editor at *Guitar World* magazine, loves the 612ce 12-Fret he’s been test-driving for a review in an upcoming edition of the magazine.

“It’s quite possibly my favorite Taylor in the redesigned 600 Series,” he shared via email. “It’s by far the most striking balance of sheer power and compactness for a 12-fret model acoustic. I’m knocked out at how incredibly loud this turbocharged acoustic is for its size. It possesses one of the sweetest, fine-tuned mid-range voices I’ve ever heard, but what I love most is its buttery feel, making it an absolute joy to play.”

Part of the uniqueness of the playing experience for these Grand Concerts is the shorter-scale 24-7/8-inch neck compared to the 25-1/2-inch scale length of our other body styles. As we noted in our 600 Series feature last issue, the different neck-to-body orientation of the 12-Fret edition, including a shifted bridge location closer to the center of the guitar’s lower bout, tends to punch up the midrange.

Kenny Echizen only had one caveat for players considering the 12-Fret model.

“Because it was very sensitive, I’d say it’s definitely not for a heavy strummer.”

Our only caveat is not to be surprised when you fall under the seductive spell of one of these guitars after playing one.

To experience one for yourself, visit your local Taylor dealer. **W&S**

## Grand Designs: Andy Powers on the Unique Sound and Feel of the Grand Concerts

As the tonal architect of the 600 Series redesign project, Andy Powers has enjoyed hearing players’ initial reactions to the revoiced maple Grand Concerts.

“It’s fun to see how different players and listeners key in on specific parts of the whole recipe based on their personal palates,” he says.

We picked Andy’s brain to glean more insight into how the unique design elements of these Grand Concerts – especially the body dimensions, the 24-7/8-inch scale length, and the distinctions between the 12-fret and 14-fret models – influence the overall sound and playing experience.

### How would you describe the tonal personality of these Grand Concerts and the misconceptions that people might have?

The reality is that at times, less really adds up to more. The Grand Concert body style is a perfectly appropriate platform for more playing styles than it often receives credit for. The smaller air chamber puts a natural emphasis on a slightly higher register, supporting the player’s performance in a unique way. Think of it this way: On one side of the stage, you have a powerful male tenor or baritone singer; this is your larger body guitar. On the other side of the stage, you have a soprano or mezzo soprano female singer, also powerful and projecting, but in a different way; this is a Grand Concert. Both have vocal chords and appropriately matched lungs that enable them to sing with volume and projection. These freshly designed Grand Concert guitars have powerful voices, but with a uniquely nuanced voice and lungs. The

clarity and dynamic range of the smaller body often is the best fit for an acoustic guitar in a setting when it will be stirred together with other instruments in a piece of music, both live and in a studio. Other times, I feel it is the most beautiful soloist – unadorned or uncrowded by others, allowing the beauty of a musician’s solo performance to be fully heard in high fidelity.

### Can you explain the effects of the shorter scale length of the strings and the 12-fret versus 14-fret designs on the playing experience?

By offering the 612 as both 14-fret and 12-fret designs, we’ve got an interesting case study. Both have the same scale length, 24-7/8 inches, a little shorter than our traditional long scale 25-1/2 inches. By the way, scale length is defined as the maximum vibrating length of the unfretted open string, before any compensation. This is generally regarded as the distance between the guitar’s nut and saddle. Scale length has less to do with the size of the guitar, as many would believe. The shorter length of the string means that for any given set of strings tuned to concert pitch, there is slightly less tension. This translates to a slinkier hand feel. And yet, there is something more. Where the ends of the strings lie in relation to the top substantially affects the way the top moves. Moreover, by affixing the strings to the top in a different spot, the string tension is further changed. In effect it’s a two-way street – the strings change the way the top moves, and the moving top changes what the strings do. In general terms, the center of the lower bout, where the bridge of the 12-fret GC is attached,

is more flexible than the edges. This flexibility creates a little bit of extra elasticity in the string, which most players feel as slinky. Exactly where and how the player attacks the string also changes both as a result of the elasticity of the string and because the string is shifted in relation to the player’s hands. The more flexible string response means that some players could overlay the strings, making them slap against the frets on the initial attack, compressing the natural response if they strum hard. With some exploration, most guitarists find there is great headroom if they shift their strumming hand back a little closer to the bridge, where it would typically fall on a 14-fret design.

### How would you describe the tonal distinctions of the two Grand Concerts based specifically on the 14-fret versus 12-fret differences?

The 14-fret neck, with its forward-shifted bridge [closer to the soundhole than that of the 12-fret], will emphasize long, ringing sustain and upper register transparency. Both Grand Concerts produce good volume and projection, which will surprise many players. They will have clarity and a richness that also will surprise many who wouldn’t expect it from a small-body maple guitar. Both will be balanced and responsive, but with two distinctly different overall sonorities. The 14-fret will accentuate the pristine clarity and shimmering overtones of the strings; the 12-fret will respond with a mature and smooth midrange response. Like people, these guitars are similar in many ways, but each has a unique outlook on life.



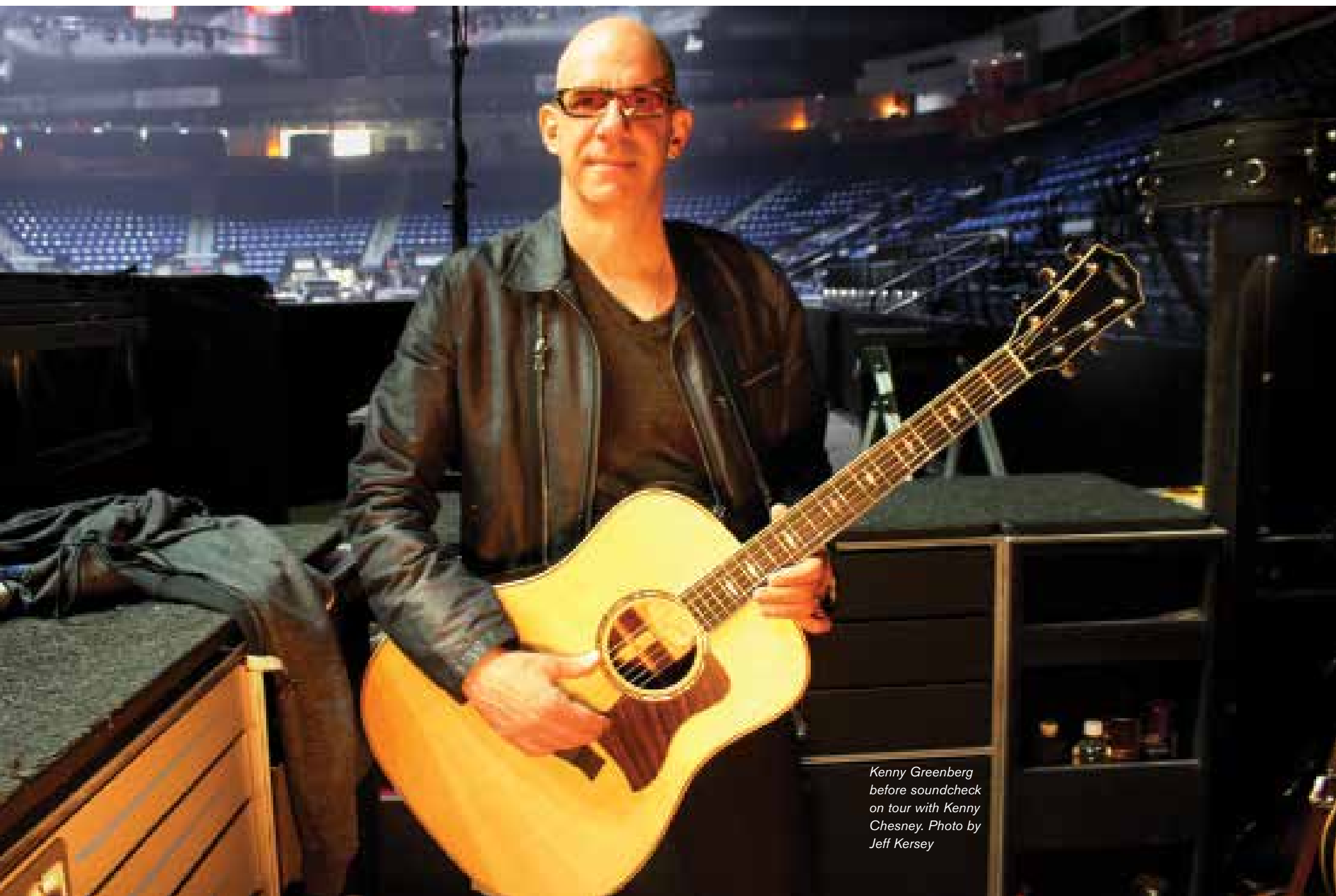
L-R: 14-fret and 12-fret editions of the 612ce. Note the 12-fret’s lower bridge position on the lower bout.



## BACKSTAGE PASS

Kenny Greenberg  
and Marshall Altman

**Two seasoned Nashville pros have made the revoiced 810e an essential tool of their trades**



Kenny Greenberg before soundcheck on tour with Kenny Chesney. Photo by Jeff Kersey

Nashville guitarist, producer and songwriter Kenny Greenberg's versatile skills have made him a fixture of Music Row's recording scene. The session ace's guitar work has flavored the songs of an endless playlist of country artists over the years, including Willie Nelson, Kenny Chesney, Tricia Yearwood, Sugarland, Brooks & Dunn, and plenty more. Greenberg was honored with the Academy of Country Music Award for Guitarist of the Year for 2012, and his producing credits include three Grammy-winning records for his wife, artist Ashley Cleveland, in the rock/gospel category. He's also written hit songs for Amy Grant and SheDaisy, and composed and produced instrumental music for a variety of TV programs.

Despite a busy schedule as a first call session player and other producing projects, Greenberg also manages to squeeze in some stage work as a touring sideman with country star Kenny Chesney, whose records Greenberg has played on since 2003. We caught up with him the day of a show in Greensboro, North Carolina, on the front end of Chesney's Big Revival Tour this past spring.

"It's going really well," he says. "It's the ultimate session guy tour because we do long weekends. [Chesney] said, 'I'll get you back Monday morning for your session,' so it's been a great thing for me. Last night I was playing on records until 10 o'clock."

While Greenberg's 710e has been a touring staple for him the last three years, he tends to play more electric guitar on stage with Chesney, whose latest record, *The Big Revival*, is seasoned with plenty of crunchy, arena-friendly rock riffs.

"My job is to recreate some of the guitar sound effect things from the records," he says, "so I have a big pedal board."

Most of his acoustic work, he says, happens in the studio, where he can tap into an arsenal of gear that includes his collection of vintage acoustics and high-end microphones. He admits he's always had to work hard to get a good amplified acoustic sound on stage.

"It's been a frustrating odyssey where my acoustics to me never really sound very good," Greenberg says. He wasn't especially fond of the magnetic Expression System\* in his 710e, and says he was constantly experimenting with a mix of other pickups, pedal effects, and EQ to try to warm up his acoustic sound and still get some top end.

"We got it to sound pretty good but not really great," he says.

Last year when Greenberg was rehearsing for a tour with Chesney, he

brought his 710e over to Taylor's guitar showroom in Nashville for a tune-up and learned about the redesigned 800 Series and new Expression System 2 pickup. We ended up bringing an 810e to the rehearsal space for him to plug in with the band and sound crew. The acoustic pickup immediately caught the ear of their front-of-house sound engineer.

"He was in a separate room with Pro Tools and they were recording all the rehearsals," Greenberg shares. "We really were digging into all the sounds, and he came out and right away said, 'Man that [acoustic guitar] sounds about 100% better.' He loves it. It sounds freaking great. It's the most natural plugged-in sound I've gotten yet, no question about it."

Not only did Greenberg buy the guitar, we also installed the ES2 in his 710e at the Taylor factory. He's currently touring with the 810e. He only plays acoustic on a couple of songs since one of the other players in the band is the multi-instrumental acoustic utility guy – a standard setup with a lot of touring country acts – who handles acoustic guitar, mandolin, banjo, and bouzouki. Greenberg does play his Taylor on one of the album's singles, the acoustic ballad "Wild Child." The guitar usually makes another appearance during an acoustic interlude in the middle of the show.

"It's me, Kenny and one other guy sort of at the edge of the stage," he says. "I play acoustic on whatever song he feels like playing. The beginning and the end of the show are choreographed, and then in the middle, Kenny has this microphone that only we hear, and he might say, 'I want to play this old George Jones song.' So I'll grab the acoustic and plug it in. I have this A/B switch that bypasses everything and goes straight to the console...the sound is great; it sounds like it's miked. I'm really enamored of this new pickup."

Apparently so is his wife Ashley.

"She was having troubles with one of her other guitars, and I'd just gotten the new pickup put in [the 710e], so she took it out for her gig and loved it. Afterwards she said, 'Can I just keep this?' and I said, 'No, I have to take it out on tour,'" he laughs.

Greenberg says that compared to the 710e, the acoustic sound of the 810e has a more open top end. He recently used it on a TV performance of "Wild Child" on *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*.

Greenberg's other Taylor gear includes a nylon-string Jason Mraz Signature Model he picked up for live shows ("It's the only gut-string I own") and another acoustic (he couldn't recall the actual model from the road) that he received

as a gift from folk icon Joan Baez in the '90s after playing on a couple of her records and at some live shows. He later added a unique twist to make it without question one of the most Nashville-sounding Taylor guitars out there – he had a B-Bender installed by its co-creator, Gene Parsons, who invented the device with legendary guitarist and bandmate Clarence White (Nashville West, The Byrds). (The string-bending device enables a guitarist to mechanically bend the B string up a full tone to simulate the distinctive sound of a pedal steel guitar.)

"Playing a B-Bender is one of the things you have to have in your bag of tricks in the studio," Greenberg says. "I met Gene Parsons at NAMM the year after I got the guitar, and he was putting them in acoustic guitars, so he put it in my Taylor. I've had a Taylor for 20 years that has a freaking B bender," he laughs. "And it works. The mechanism inside the guitar kind of darkens the sound. It sounds great! So one of my studio tricks is that I have an acoustic guitar with a B-Bender that nobody else has." kennygreenberg.com

### Marshall Altman

Our new 800 Series has a bona fide super fan in Nashville-based producer/singer-songwriter Marshall Altman, who has a prototype 810e in his studio that he first played when Taylor's Director of Artist Relations, Tim Godwin, put it in his hands during a visit to Nashville.

"I would not give it back," Altman says by phone from Nashville, having just returned from some recording sessions at Sonic Ranch Studios outside El Paso, Texas. "You'll have to pry it out of my cold, dead hands."

Truth be told, Altman has been a big Taylor fan for years. He's got a decade-old 314ce that he's in love with, especially the way the sound has opened up over time. It gave him an interesting perspective when he first played the 810e.

"It felt like somebody was playing it before I got it," he says. "The first time I took it out of the case, basically it was a brand-new guitar, but it already had a lot of soul in it, which is a rare thing for a new guitar. I don't care what kind of guitar you have; typically if it's new, you kind of have to put the soul into it. Not to be grandiose, but this guitar has music in it already; it just feels different to me. I've used it on every single record I've made since I've had it in my possession."

Altman has enjoyed an interesting career arc. He started out as an artist (full disclosure: he was a bandmate of our own Tim Godwin in the alt-rock act Farmer in the '90s) before moving to the A&R side of the business



Marshall Altman

with Capitol Records, then Hollywood Records, then Columbia, where he worked with the likes of Katy Perry and One Republic. His interest in the writing and production side of music led him to Nashville, where he's established himself as a respected producer and songwriter. He produced and played on soulful Louisiana singer-songwriter Marc Broussard's breakout 2004 release, *Carencro*. More recent projects include producing (and co-writing select tracks for) Amy Grant's *How Mercy Looks From Here* record; producing heartland roots rocker Will Hoge's latest release, *Small Town Dreams*; and co-producing and co-writing credits with country artist Frankie Ballard and producing country singer-songwriter Eric Paslay.

Altman says that every player who gets their hands on the 810e in his studio is drawn to it.

"Frankie loves it, everybody who comes in wants to play that guitar," he shares. "When I'm writing – three or four days a week – every player that comes in, I'm like, 'I've got some guitars in there if you wanna check them out,' and they all grab the 810, and they all play it, and they all say, 'Is this new?'"

Altman has always appreciated the sonic and playing consistency of Taylors, and has come to appreciate the 810e both in the studio and for live performance.

"As a studio guitar, when you mic it, it's so balanced and warm and beautiful, and the neck feels great, like someone's played down the edges."

It's also become his stage guitar when he plays out around town.

"The electronics are fantastic," he says, referring to the Expression System 2. "When I go out to the Bluebird or somewhere else, everybody's got their old vintage J50s or Strombergs or J200s or Martins, and they plug in and it's like, OK, and then I plug in and it's like [sings a high angel choir note]. It's just next-level. It sounds like I'm not plugged in, and that's what we all want from the electronics of the guitar."

He jokes that the guitar upstaged him at a songwriting festival where he showcased last year.

"I took this thing to Captiva Island [in Florida] for the Island Hopper Songwriter Festival, and I swear to you I had more people come up and talk to me about that 810," he says. "They were moderately interested in my writing and my songs [laughs], but if somebody was coming up to me it was to talk about the 810: 'What kind of Taylor is that? Where'd you get that? Can I look at it? What's up with the bracing, it sounds amazing. Where can I get one?' That guitar was the rock star of that performance. I played six shows at that [festival], and honestly, after every single show there were five people who were like, 'Hey, what Taylor is that?'" marshallaltman.com **W&S**





# Notes from NAMM

## The debut of the new 600s, a handful of awards, and an engaging artist lineup made for another memorable Taylor showing

It was another action-packed Winter NAMM Show for Taylor back in late January in Anaheim, California. The festivities began a day early with an afternoon custom guitar sales event for our VIP dealers at a nearby restaurant, followed that night by a Taylor-hosted media dinner to celebrate the launch of our new maple 600 Series. After co-founder Kurt Listug shared his thoughts about Taylor's growth and his excitement looking ahead, Bob Taylor talked about the company's vision of longterm forest stewardship and how maple fits into Taylor's blueprint moving forward.

"What if we could fold more meaning into our next guitar instead of just better tone or prettier looks?" he suggested, before introducing longtime spruce and maple supplier, Steve McMinn, recounting McMinn's recent exploration into maple propagation (which we detailed last issue) and a possible domestic-based future for cultivating tropical hardwoods. "It's

deeper when you're growing wood for the future," Bob said, before Steve shared the encouraging results of his work thus far. Andy Powers closed out the evening with remarks about the design philosophy behind the new 600s, including his hope of transforming maple "from a side dish to a main course" among guitar enthusiasts, and acknowledging its potential to be a "farm-to-table" guitar wood in the future. He ended with an original acoustic instrumental on a maple 614ce that highlighted maple's rich new tonal personality.

### 600 and 800 Series Awards

While our 600 Series guitars shined as the newest stars of Taylor's NAMM showcase room, praise for the revamped 800 Series continued to pour in to reflect their sustained appeal at the retail level. In the end, our guitars were honored by five of the top musical instrument industry magazines. The 600s earned Best of Show nods from

both *Guitar Player* and *Guitar World* magazines. Three additional awards were chosen by dealer votes. The 814ce was declared Best Acoustic Guitar of 2014 by *The Music & Sound Retailer* and scored a 2014 Product Excellence Award from *Music Inc.* magazine. *Musical Merchandise Review* magazine recognized Taylor as the Acoustic Guitar Line of 2014. *MMR* editor-in-chief Christian Wissmuller said that dealers recognized Taylor's consistent quality standards.

"The Acoustic Guitar Line of the Year is traditionally one of the most hotly contested categories in the annual Dealers' Choice Awards balloting," he shared. "This year, however, Taylor – the entire line, rather than one specific model – quickly stood out from the competition, with dealers pointing to the wide range of instruments available, as well as the attention to detail and craftsmanship as being key selling points."

### Live From the Taylor Stage

This year brought another diverse lineup of artist performances to the Taylor stage, and for the second consecutive year we live-streamed them on the Taylor website. Thursday served up an earful of Southern fare starting with young country rocker **Chase**

**Bryant**, a southpaw strummer who played upside-down and backwards on an 810e. Bryant led his band through a rollicking, harmony-rich set that ended with his hit "Take It On Back." Soulful Nashville bluegrassers **The SteelDrivers** treated the crowd to their signature blend of Americana, mixing sweet harmonies with funky acoustic grooves, culminating with their toe-tapping murder ballad "If It Hadn't Been For Love," which pop star Adele covered on her last album. On Friday, **Blondfire** rolled out a catchy set of acoustic electro-pop, fueled by singer Erica Driscoll's ethereal vocals. Our room could barely contain L.A. powerhouse **Vintage Trouble**, who owned the room with their retro blend of raw soul, R&B and thunderous rock. Paced by charismatic vocalist/frontman Ty Taylor, the band ramped up from a couple of slow-burning tunes off their 2014 acoustic EP to the pummeling riffs of "Blues Hand Me Down," with guitarist Nalle Colt tearing it up on a tobacco sunburst T3. On Saturday, singer-songwriter/guitarist **Zane Carney**, who has toured as part of John Mayer's band and played in the Broadway production of *Spider Man: Turn Off The Dark*, led off with an eclectic solo alt-rock set. Carney showed off his musical range, shifting from electric art-rock

to melodic acoustic (on an 810e) to smoky jazz – with an assist on vocals from his sister Paris, including a cover of the Thelonious Monk classic "Round Midnight." Young duo **Alex & Sierra** showed off the musical chemistry that helped them win the third season of the music competition TV show *The X Factor USA* with a harmony-rich set fleshed out with their backing band, as they mixed original tunes with covers. Besides playing an 810e and a T5z, Alex (Kinsey) also strummed his prized 310ce, which he recalled receiving as a graduation gift from his dad and shared how cool it was to be able to play it on the Taylor stage. Saturday's final act was Florida-based trio **Boyce Avenue**, comprised of three brothers (Alejandro, Daniel and Fabian Manzano), whose polished acoustic pop cover videos have earned them bragging rights as the most viewed independent band on YouTube (with close to 2 billion total views and nearly 7 million subscribers to their channel). The Manzanos worked through a mix of originals and covers, including tunes from Oasis ("Wonderwall"), One Direction ("Story of my Life"), and Coldplay.



This page (clockwise from top left): Chase Bryant, The SteelDrivers, Zane Carney, Boyce Avenue, Alex & Sierra, Blondfire. Opposite page: Vintage Trouble







*Above: Beveled ebony armrest on a new 914ce;  
Right: Bob Taylor's personal 12-string 955c, one  
of the first 900 Series guitars Taylor ever made*

# FINE LINES

A LAVISH REDESIGN OF OUR 900 SERIES BLENDS VOICING  
REFINEMENTS FROM THE 800 SERIES WITH SUBLIME NEW  
AESTHETIC DETAILS By Jim Kirlin

It's fun to play show and tell with Bob Taylor, especially when he taps into his personal Taylor collection. We're in his office discussing Taylor's latest redesign project, the new 900 Series, and as promised, Bob has brought in one of the very first 900s ever made: a 12-string Jumbo 955c that he crafted for himself in 1978 from fiddleback German maple and spruce. Despite being the work of a young luthier who was still refining his craft, it's a lovely instrument with a comfortable neck and a bundle of attractive appointments that Bob calls out in the knowing tone of someone who remembers installing them. He points out the marquetry of the back strip that they did in those days; the figured mahogany veneer used for the backstrap and purfling; the sharp Florentine-style cutaway; the vibrant rosette featuring green heart abalone; the original 900 Series inlay that he designed; and the mustache-style bridge Taylor was using back then. He's trying to pinpoint whether this is the first or second 900 Series guitar made. He thinks it's the second.

"I wasn't a record keeper," he confesses. "And unfortunately, whenever I made a guitar for myself I never put a label in it."

A memory comes to him – the other guitar went to Scottish singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Robin Williamson, a founding member of the 1960s psychedelic folk outfit The Incredible String Band. After the band broke up, Williamson moved to Los Angeles in the mid-'70s and released several records with his Merry Band. In those days, Bob says, a Taylor guitar might make its way up the California coast to McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica or to Westwood Music in Los Angeles, where people like legendary proprietor Fred Walecki helped put Taylors in the hands of many of the great artists he knew from L.A.'s famed Laurel Canyon singer-songwriter scene.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



"I think Robin got the first 900 and it's almost like this," Bob recalls. "It might have an abalone top, and this one was made at the same time. But they're definitely the first two."

The 900 Series bears the distinction of being the first formal expansion of the Taylor line beyond the company's bedrock rosewood/spruce 800 Series. In 1978 Taylor had signed on with a distributor to help them get their guitars into stores, and they felt it would help to expand their model offerings beyond the 800s, which featured their two inherited body styles from the American Dream shop where Bob and Kurt met, a Dreadnought and Jumbo (including a 12-string version of the Jumbo). The 900 was designed to be a more appointment-rich guitar that showed off more woodworking craftsmanship. If the ideals sound refined, the intent at the time was more pragmatic, as Bob remembers.

"In those days, we felt that if we could make a little bit fancier a guitar, put some abalone on it, and sell it for more money, then maybe we could actually eat," he shares.

In 1986, Taylor switched the back and sides of the 900s from maple to Indian rosewood in response to growing demand for a fancier rosewood guitar. The premium aesthetic package stood in contrast to the more understated, workmanlike appointments of the flagship 800 Series. Over the years, the 900s have continued to evolve to showcase a detail-rich aesthetic and the most refined levels of Taylor craftsmanship. From the iconic floral "Cindy" inlay scheme designed in honor of Bob's wife to the abalone top trim to the finely calibrated binding and purfling details, the 900s have always dressed rosewood in its finest trim.

In the wake of the transformative redesign of the rosewood/spruce 800s in 2014, the 900s were slated for a comparable reworking. But they would have to wait while Andy Powers and Bob shifted their creative energies to the overhaul of the maple 600 Series for 2015. In reality, Bob says, the same underlying design mission closely connects all three projects, especially with Andy at the epicenter of Taylor's recent voicing refinements.

"With Andy here, we've really been going down the path of taking Taylor tone to the next level of great sound," Bob says.

The good news for the 900s was that, in terms of tonal embellishments, the heavy lifting was done. The same tone-enhancing touches introduced to the 800s — customized bracing and wood thicknesses for each body shape, the use of protein glues for the bracing and bridge, ultra-thin gloss finish, Elixir

HD Lights on the Grand Auditorium models — could be grafted onto the 900s since the two series share a rosewood/spruce tonewood pairing. But the distinctive aesthetic heritage of the 900s signaled the need for a refreshed visual identity.

"These 900s really are a story of bringing everything from the musically revoiced 800s to a dressed-up package for the person who wants that," Bob says. "We really feel like the buyer of this guitar needs to be honored with something truly special."

**Adding an Armrest**

One new feature Bob and Andy wanted to bring to the new 900s was a contoured armrest. Also offered on Taylor's Presentation Series and available through our Custom program, the hand-carved treatment embodies the highest levels of woodworking and lutherie, adds a sleek sculptural detail

to a guitar's body, and delivers the ergonomic benefit of a more comfortable playing experience. It's also the one design component, Andy says, that might slightly alter the tonal nuances of a 900 Series model compared to its 800 Series counterpart, since the armrest does slightly reduce the soundboard's surface area.

"Honestly, most people won't hear the difference," he suggests. "For astute listeners who are directly comparing a 900 to an 800, the 900 might sound ever so slightly more articulate, with a dash of extra crisp sparkle."

Andy says a bigger contributing factor is that the contour of the armrest may alter the way someone plays the guitar because it changes the player's physical relationship with it. This can also impact the damping effect one's strumming arm has if it normally tends to rest against the soundboard.

"These 900s really are a story of bringing everything from the musically revoiced 800s to a dressed-up package for the person who wants that," Bob says. "We really feel like the buyer of this guitar needs to be honored with something truly special."



# The Art of the Armrest



Crafting a beveled armrest for a guitar demands special training, precision tools, and exacting attention to detail. Currently about a half-dozen seasoned craftspeople in Taylor's Body department are equipped to build one. The process begins in our Sidebending department after the sides are bent and glued together to form the outline of the guitar body. Normally, slotted kerfing strips are added to the interior edges of the sides to provide a wider glue surface for the top and back to be secured. For an armrest guitar, a CNC-machined piece of solid mahogany is glued in the area of the lower bout where the armrest will be located. This will supply the wood material that will later be carved into proper shape.

After the top and back are glued in place, the binding and purfling slots are routed into the body. Next, a pair of custom jigs — a separate set exists for each different body shape — is used to locate the exact position of the top and side purfling inlay slots that will border the armrest. One is used for the top cut; the other for the side purfling that will run along the bass side of the lower bout. Each jig is vacuum-secured to the body. Once the slots are routed, the slot edges are blended into the purfling slot previously cut for the rest of the body to create a smooth transition. The binding and purfling inlay processes are similar to our standard installation techniques, although the top inlay is more complex for the 900 Series, featuring several layers of material detail that include abalone framed on either side by black fiber and koa and then the ebony binding or armrest material. All the purfling lines will be inlaid before the armrest is sculpted.

A two-sided Japanese rasp is used to manually carve and shape the contours. The majority of the wood is removed using the coarse side; the finer side is used later in the process, followed by a round of nuanced shaping with a file. A straight edge is used to inspect the level of the armrest surface, and if necessary, a scraper is used to make any additional refinements. A sanding block is used to create an ultra-smooth final contour. From there, a laser-cut ebony veneer that has been color-matched with the ebony binding is glued in place. Any excess veneer material is then scraped away, followed by additional sanding.





Probably the most dramatic difference would be felt on a Dreadnought, Andy says.

“With that wide waist, a Dreadnought has a tendency to sit high on a lot of folks, and the armrest makes that a more comfortable guitar,” he explains.

**All-Natural Appointments:  
The Forest Meets the Sea**

Considerable thought went into refining the aesthetic treatment of the 900s.

“This was a design project where we went around the block a couple of times before arriving at ‘there’s no place like home;” Bob says. “We made early versions that were [strictly] wood bound, more of a luthier-working-alone vibe, but in the end we agreed that this guitar needs to also have abalone on the top.”

Andy wanted to honor what he considers the pedigree of elegant sophistication that has come to define the aesthetic of the 900s.

“These guitars should have a certain lavish feel,” he says. “They should feel

beautiful; they should feel luxurious, because they always have.”

The end result was a smooth fusion of wood and abalone shell trim. Andy liked the idea of an all-natural appointment package that brought together elements of the forest and the ocean, and he experimented extensively to find the right balance of weight and color among the inlay, binding and purfling materials.

“What people don’t see,” Bob notes, “is that the fistful of purflings that run around the rosette and the edge of the guitar are the final result of Andy doing 20 different versions of those. We explored whether it should it be bound light or dark, in rosewood or ebony. What we ultimately came up with was a combination of trim that we really liked.”

Calibrating the weight of the trim lines can be tricky, Andy says.

“If you make them overly bold, it can look primitive and undermine the luxuriousness that it’s supposed to have,” he explains. “But if they’re too thin, it can look frail and anemic.”

The guitars feature an ebony armrest and ebony binding along the body, soundhole, fretboard and peghead, with an ebony backstrap. For the purfling trim, Andy selected cinnamon-hued, non-figured koa and used it to frame the paua abalone top edge trim, including the fretboard extension. The rosette is paua framed in ebony and koa.

“The paua used for the rosette and edge trim is New Zealand paua, which has a stronger green/blue and even purple color flash,” Andy says. “I wanted that bright crispness of those colors to balance against the warmth of the reddish-cinnamon color I was using for the purfling.”

Andy designed a new fretboard and peghead inlay scheme, a progressive motif that Taylor inlay programmer Dave Jones said looked like it was ascending, and the name “Ascension” stuck. For that, Andy chose a shell combination with a more subdued color palette: mother-of-pearl and pink abalone, the latter of which was sustainably harvested from a well-managed fishery

**First Take:  
Christopher Cross on the 916ce**

One of the first new 900 Series guitars to find a home was a final prototype 916ce that went to Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Christopher Cross, a nimble guitarist and longtime Taylor player who owns a diverse arsenal of Taylor models. Cross had become interested in an armrest guitar after playing a few boutique armrest guitars owned by his friend, acoustic virtuoso Andy McKee. When Cross got wind of our plans to add an armrest to the 900s, he talked to our artist relations team, and Bob and Andy sent him a Grand Symphony, the body style he favors for recording. Not long afterward, Cross sent Bob and Andy a personal note of congratulations on achieving an inspiring blend of beauty and musicality. He shared the note with our marketing team, and we followed up with him shortly afterward to elaborate.

“I typically own a cedar top for finger picking and a spruce [top] for harder playing, but this guitar is so complete I would not need a cedar,” he says. “You feel the vibration and every subtle nuance in your chest. It is perfectly balanced, effortless to play. Whatever you ask of it, it speaks. It’s like the beauty of hearing a phrase translated into French.”

Cross says that as someone who’s been writing songs for a long time it becomes important to embrace new musical voices to expand one’s songwriting palette. It’s one reason he has been drawn to using modal tunings over the years and why his Taylor collection includes both 6- and 8-string baritone models, which helped spawn a lot of songs on his two most recent records, *Secret Ladder* and *Doctor Faith*. So far it sounds like the new 916ce is leading him down another inspiring creative path.

“When I picked up this guitar, within five minutes I had come up with a nice start to a new song,” he says. “That sort of inspiration only comes from a very special instrument. Through the evening I kept going into my studio to play it again and again. As my friend Kenny Edwards, rest his soul, used to say, the true test of a great guitar is when you put it in the case and immediately want to take it out and play it again. That’s the way it is with this one.”

Part of the inspiration, he says, is in the visual appeal of the aesthetic detail.

“It’s all just beautifully done,” he says. “The appointments are gorgeous with all the inlay around the fretboard. I love the antique [tuner] keys, the back of the headstock...everything is so thought out. I’ve had a lot of other guitars, kind of the high-end Holy Grail guitars, and this guitar is every bit equal to all of them.”

Beyond admiring the aesthetic beauty of the armrest, Cross says it has a lovely feel and with more time will probably influence his playing more.

“When my girlfriend played it she said, ‘I want one of these – this is so nice not having an edge on your arm.’ I think it will eventually affect my playing by making my arm a little more relaxed because there isn’t that edge pressing against it.”

Cross was also impressed with the sound of the Expression System® 2 pickup, which he first had a chance to experience after buying his girlfriend an 816ce for Christmas in 2014. He was never a fan of the original magnetic ES – he used to order his Taylor guitars without the ES and have an aftermarket pickup installed – so he’s especially excited about the implications of the ES2 for live performance.

“It’s articulate but warm, so responsive to the touch,” he says. “It’s just very balanced, very even; it really speaks well. My girlfriend played at the Bluebird [Café, in Nashville] the other night, and her guitar just blew everybody away.”

**New 900 Series Features**

- Customized wood thicknesses & bracing for each body shape
- Protein glues and thin (3.5 mil) finish
- Hand-built ebony armrest and binding
- Koa purfling along the top, back, sides, fretboard, peghead & back strip
- Koa/paua abalone edge trim along the top and fretboard extension
- Paua abalone rosette with koa/ebony edging
- Ascension fretboard/peghead inlay in pink abalone and mother-of-pearl
- Ebony backstrap

*Right: Ebony backstrap and Gotoh Gold tuners; Below: Abalone inlays and abalone/koa border trim around the fretboard extension*



*Binding and purfling*



*Rosette*



*Mitered back purfling*



*Sustainably harvested abalone shells from community fishing cooperatives based along Mexico's Baja California peninsula*

“We made early versions that were [strictly] wood bound, more of a luthier-working-alone vibe, but in the end we agreed that this guitar needs to also have abalone on the top.”





914ce

cooperative in nearby Baja, Mexico. For more on that, see our abalone sidebar.

The overall aesthetic, Andy says, feels very true to Taylor, and to what the 900 Series has come to represent.

"It has a natural, West Coast kind of sensibility," he says, "a balance of organic, woody warmth with the crisp brightness of the shell. It's like a recipe where you have something really rich and you mix it with something slightly acidic or a little tart to balance it."

The fact that the description of the visual aesthetic – a blend of warmth,

sparkle and rich detail – also perfectly describes the sonic attributes of a rosewood guitar serves to underscore the design harmony between looks and sound that Andy aspired to achieve with these guitars.

The new 900 Series will initially be released in two body styles, the Grand Auditorium 914ce and a Grand Symphony 916ce. At press time, models were scheduled to arrive at authorized Taylor dealers starting in early August. For complete specifications, visit [taylorguitars.com](http://taylorguitars.com).

## A Cooperative Approach to Sourcing Abalone

While much of our coverage of responsible sourcing in *Wood&Steel* has centered on tonewoods, the abalone shell that we use for inlays is another natural material whose consumption requires proper management in order to preserve its future supply. One interesting distinction of the abalone market is that abalone is harvested primarily for its meat, which commands upwards of \$90 per pound. The shell is essentially a byproduct, albeit one that has found a secondary market as a decorative material for inlays, jewelry and other luxury goods.

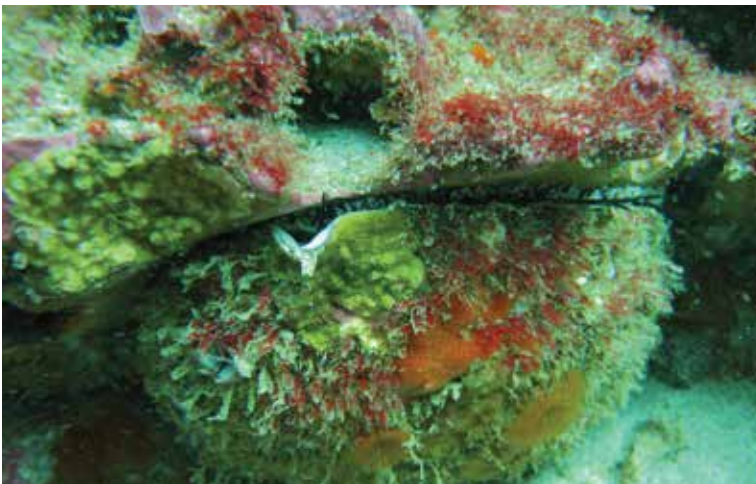
In some areas of the world, including waters along the U.S. Pacific coast, unregulated overfishing has depleted the oceans and threatened the long-term supply of fish and other marine species, including abalone, much like what has happened with certain timber species. Just as Taylor strives to be an active participant in our supply chain with a clear understanding of how trees are sourced, we want to know how the shell we purchase is harvested, and we want to support the most sustainable practices.

The pink abalone used for the fretboard inlay of our 900 Series was sourced from a small-scale, community-based fishery cooperative located off the Pacific coast of Mexico's Baja California peninsula about 300 miles south of San Diego. Based on Isla de Cedros (Cedros Island), the cooperative is one of 11 that harvest from clearly defined Pacific Ocean concession areas off the Baja coast. All belong to Fedecoop, a Mexican federation that provides technical and organizational support, plays a key role in fishery legislation at high levels, and serves as a liaison with the Mexican federal government agency that oversees fisheries. Strict quotas are set for each fishing season, along with clear specifications on acceptable shell sizes that can be harvested. (The cooperatives also have seasonal rights to harvest other marine species including lobster, turban snail and sea cucumber.)

Taylor had already started to research the cooperatives with the help of supply chain partner and independent shell supplier Andy Trakas, who has been cutting and processing



Group photo from Taylor's trip to Isla de Cedros last fall: (L-R) Gil Sanchez, an employee of the cooperative, shell supplier Chuck Erikson, Taylor's Charlie Redden, Celina Dominguez Garcia (Marketing Director for the cooperative), Angelica Davila (Materials Manager from our Tecate factory), shell supplier Andy Trakas, co-op employee Ramon Corona



shell on his own for the past 17 years. Trakas lives in the San Diego area and had visited a couple of the cooperatives in Baja to explore the prospect of buying abalone from them as well as some additional processing ideas. After an initial meeting with Fedecoop management, Taylor's Dave Jones was put in touch with Dr. Geoff Shester, California Campaign Director for Oceana, the largest international advocacy organization (nongovernmental) focused solely on ocean conservation. Oceana promotes

science-based fishery management programs to reduce the depletion of the ocean's resources and stimulate greater biodiversity to restore the world's oceans to better longterm health.

It turned out that while completing his doctoral studies, Shester had gathered extensive information about the cooperatives over a two-year period during which he lived among the local communities that fished their designated ocean concessions, to which they have exclusive rights. After studying the inter-

play between marine ecology and the economics of fisheries in Baja California, Shester concluded that the approach of the cooperatives, which have been in existence since the 1940s, is a model of sustainable management.

"While abalone is an extremely delicate resource to manage, these Baja California fishing cooperatives have developed a state-of-the-art management system that serves as a global model for how to do it right," Shester says. "Taylor's work to source abalone

from one of the best-managed fisheries in the world demonstrates their commitment to sustainability, promoting livelihoods in community-based fisheries for generations to come."

One of the keys has been that these cooperatives were set up with the local communities who rely on fishing as a primary source of their livelihood rather than foreign-owned commercial fishing and canning companies (which was the case prior to World War II). Not only do the local communities have a deep

understanding of the local marine habitat that they've been fishing for generations, they also have a vested interest in healthy management – if they overfish their concession, they hurt their own economic livelihood.

Last fall a group from Taylor visited Cedros Island to meet with the cooperative's employees and survey the operation firsthand. The group included our Director of Supply Chain, Charlie Redden, Dave Jones, and Angelica Davila, Materials Manager at our factory in Tecate, Mexico, who handles a wide range of business-related work from price negotiations to logistics. They were joined by Andy Trakas and another key shell supplier for the guitar industry, Chuck Erikson, a.k.a. the Duke of Pearl, a colorful and established figure with more than 40 years of experience.

Although the visit occurred during the cooperative's lobster harvesting season (abalone season starts in late April), the group came away impressed by the integrity of the operation and the people. The trip also gave members of the cooperative a chance to get to know two of our suppliers and learn more about how Taylor uses shell for its products. Charlie Redden emphasizes that establishing direct relationships with supply chain partners is an essential component of doing good, ethical business for Taylor.

"It's important for people to see that we know and care where our materials come from," Redden says. "Some supply chain managers leave that up to their first tier supplier to do, and that supplier leaves it up to *their* first tier supplier, and before long you're eight tiers back and nobody really knows where that stuff comes from. We want to know, all the way through."

Redden says that Taylor has no intention of getting into the shell business and becoming a shell supplier to other companies. The goal is simply to deepen overall awareness of good sourcing practices and to help cultivate healthy working relationships between supply chain partners.

"We want to ensure that our buyers are buying from sustainable sources and responsible people, and in this case we also want to recognize the good work of those cooperatives in Baja because what they do matters – to them, to us, and hopefully to the people buying our guitars."

At our press deadline, Redden, Jones and others were planning another visit to two of the Baja fishery cooperatives during abalone season in late spring. We'll be sure to share updates on new developments as they unfold. **W&S**



# Soundings

## With a Little Help From His Friends

Taylor fans who tuned in to the 57th annual Grammy Awards broadcast back in February saw former Beatle Sir **Paul McCartney** strumming his all-koa Taylor Grand Auditorium in a performance with Rihanna and Kanye West to debut Rihanna's single "FourFiveSeconds." (McCartney also plays the guitar in the minimalist video for the tune.) The guitar is a lefty **Richie Sambora Signature Model** that the Bon Jovi guitarist presented as a gift to McCartney back in late 2001. The guitar enjoyed another moment in the spotlight a week later when McCartney played it on *Saturday Night Live*'s star-studded 40th anniversary special, performing a snippet of the Beatles classic "I've Just Seen a Face" with Paul Simon during the show's opening monologue.

## Church Music

Soulful Irish singer-songwriter Andrew Hozier-Byrne, better known simply as **Hozier**, has been enjoying a pair of Taylor acoustics as of late – a new **816e** and a rosewood **baritone 6-string**. The past year brought the artist breakout success in the U.S., on the strength of his self-titled 2014 major label debut, led by the massive hit single "Take Me to Church," which earned him a Grammy nomination for Song of the Year. Taylor's Director of Artist Relations, Tim Godwin, spent some time with Hozier when he was in Los Angeles for the Grammy Awards broadcast (Hozier performed his hit with Annie Lennox). Hozier has several baritone electrics that he plays live, so he naturally gravitated toward the deeper musical register of the Taylor baritone for acoustic playing, and it has proved to be a good pairing for his rich voice. In March, Hozier used the guitar on a haunting acoustic version of "Take Me to Church" backstage in the music room of *The Tonight Show*; the video went viral. You can watch it on YouTube.com.

## LOUD/Songwriting in an Afternoon

Members of Taylor's marketing team participated in this year's annual SXSW Interactive + Film + Music conference, held March 13-22 in Austin, Texas. On

Wednesday night of the music portion of the event, Taylor Guitars, LOUD, an emerging artist platform, and Zac Brown Band's **John Driskell Hopkins** (bass/guitar/ukulele/banjo/vocals) hosted an in-the-round-style jam session at Austin haunt The Chuggin' Monkey. The group was joined by other acts, including **John and Jacob, Levi Lowrey**, and members of the Jimmy Kimmel house band.

Across town the following afternoon, Songcraft Presents, Acoustic Café Radio, and a selection of artists came together, with each artist embracing the challenge to write and record one song in an afternoon. New York City-based Taylor artist **Ben Arthur** was joined by the likes of Austin guitar slingers **Jon Dee Graham** and **William Harries Graham**, roots-rocker **Chadwick Stokes** of acts **Dispatch** and **State Radio**, and **Ben Ottewell** from the indie rock band **Gomez**. Videos of the songwriting sessions can be found on YouTube.com/SongCraftPresents, and at press time, all songs were available for purchase on iTunes.

## Maple Bacon

**Kevin** and **Michael Bacon** of the acoustic duo the Bacon Brothers grace the cover of the May/June 2015 issue of *Guitar Aficionado* magazine with another pair of acoustic siblings: a maple **616ce** and **618e**. The brothers talk about their



shared passion for music, resulting in a collaborative bond that has spanned 20 years and eight albums, and managed to thrive despite Kevin's prolific acting career and demanding schedule. The profile notes that Kevin kept a **GS Mini** in his trailer on the set of his most recent TV series, *The Following*, and

both acknowledged the support that Taylor's Artist Relations and Customer Service departments have provided over the years, especially in response to the grind of touring. "Taylor gives us a lot of support," Michael says in the interview. "Guitars will break. If one of our guitars dies, I don't know where they come from, but there's always a Taylor there for us, and that's a great help. They also play in tune. They're incredibly dependable guitars that always sound great."

## Baby Therapy

Late last year, while visiting Children's Hospital of Illinois, emerging country artist **Chris Rodgers** met a little boy by the name of Elijah. The young patient had already been in the hospital for six months and undergone nearly 30 surgeries. To brighten his day, Rodgers played him a few songs on his **314ce**, and by the end of his time with Elijah, Rodgers could tell the little boy was enthralled with his guitar. After a call to our offices, we were moved by Rodgers' story and wanted to help Elijah as well. In late 2014, with a Baby Taylor in hand, Chris made the trip to Illinois to present Elijah with his own Baby, and showed him a few chords to help start his journey on the guitar. We're happy to report that Elijah was released from the hospital earlier this year and is enjoying his guitar from the comfort of his home.

## Reviewers' Choice

Rave reviews have been pouring in for our new maple 600 Series models. From their industry awards at both the NAMM and Musikmesse trade shows, reviewers and critics have roundly embraced the guitar. Mick Taylor of *Guitarist* (UK) reviewed both the **618e** and **614ce**, and wrote that the 618e "has the biggest, strongest, clearest bass of any 'normal' acoustic guitar we've played in recent memory: it's absolutely colossal, rendered all the more surprising as it's not to the total detriment of the midrange or top-end strength." He called it "a preconception changer" and awarded it the Guitarist Choice award. The 614ce, he wrote, "sounds focused in the midrange, yet has oodles of bass," noting the "more piano-like depth and clarity to bass notes." In his final verdict he deemed it "a joy to strum and satisfying to pick."

At *Guitar Player* magazine, guitar authority Art Thompson was blown away with the expansive sonic range of the 614ce. In his review for the publication's March 2015 edition he wrote, "In all regards, the new 614ce is an impressive guitar that pushes the boundaries

both in its creative use of sustainable woods and its revolutionary pickup system. Taylor's Maple Series instruments should go a long way toward changing the mindset of people who think that maple is too bright sounding, and that great tones can only be attained using endangered tonewoods." Thompson awarded the guitar the magazine's coveted Editor's Pick Award.

Other awards to date include *Premier Guitar* magazine's Premier Gear Award, *Guitar World*'s Platinum Award, and Best New Acoustic Guitar from the Musikmesse International Press Awards (M.I.P.A.). For more on Musikmesse, see "Events," p. 30.

## Never Made NAMM

Fox News national correspondent **John Roberts** was recently interviewed and pictured with his 2001 Taylor **914ce**, which as he tells it, originally was slated for a different destination. "It says here that it was made for the NAMM Show in 2001, but the guy I bought it from at Washington Music Center, just outside of D.C., told me it never went to the NAMM Show," he explains. "Taylor thought that the guitar was so perfect that it would create unreasonable demand, so they supplied NAMM with a less-perfect guitar," he mused.

## Southern Stretch

Our friends **Zac Brown** and his band are out on tour this summer in support of their eclectic new record, *Jekyll + Hyde*. The title seems especially apt given the multiple musical personalities that coexist on the genre-hopping, 16-track collection – easily the group's most ambitious yet. As of this writing the release had spent several weeks in the No. 1 position on the Billboard Charts, and the band had made history as only the second act to have No.1 singles on both the Country Radio and Rock Radio charts – the former for their first single, "Homegrown," (the band's twelfth No. 1 hit on Country Radio); the latter on the strength of the sludgy electric riffing of "Heavy Is the Head," featuring guest vocals from former Soundgarden/Audioslave frontman **Chris Cornell**. The record still delivers plenty of the band's soulful Southern sound, but the acoustic guitar and banjo also find their way into the dance club to mingle with electro-pop grooves on songs like "Beautiful Drug" and "Tomorrow Never Comes," while Brown channels his inner Sinatra with guest vocalist **Sara Bareilles** on the jazzy duet "Mango Tree," brightly accented with a full horn section. On



the road, the band has pumped up their stage production in a big way for their tour, which will feature a number of stadium shows, including three nights at Boston's Fenway Park in August. To coincide with the album release and tour, we made a run of customized GS Mini guitars featuring black tops with the band's logo emblazoned across the lower bout. The guitars will be used by the band's record label for various promotions throughout the year. Zacbrownband.com

## Short Takes

Country superstar **Alan Jackson** and his band have been out on Jackson's 25th Anniversary "Keepin' It Country" Tour, with Jackson and his custom maple Taylor Dreadnoughts front and center on stage.... Prog-rock guitar virtuosos and multiple Taylor owner **John Petrucci** from **Dream Theater** recently picked up one of our new 900 Series models, a **916ce**, and has been using it on an all-acoustic album he's recording. He says he loves the armrest.... Another prog-rock hero, the uber-prolific **Mike Keneally**, borrowed a **616ce** for his latest acoustic project, *Scambot 2*. The guitarist/keyboardist/vocalist/composer and Zappa band alum is the consummate musical multi-tasker, and lately has also been playing shows with one of his former bands, **Beer For Dolphins** (with Bryan Beller on bass and Joe Travers on drums). Keneally was planning to perform and present instructional sessions with **Joe Satriani**'s G4 Experience in late June in California, and will be out on tour with Satriani across Europe starting in September....Hot young bluegrass picker **Trey Hensley** (**510e**) has been a fan of our acoustic guitars for a while now, and recently discovered our semi-hollowbody **T3**. He test-drove one during a live show at the Station Inn in Nashville this past spring with his music mate, Dobro master **Rob Ickes**, and afterward shared some love with our Artist Relations team. "I was absolutely blown away by the T3," he reported. "I loved playing it and had a ton of compliments on it. It really suits my music and playing."



**Clockwise from top left:** Sir Paul McCartney with his RSSM at the Grammy Awards (photo: Getty Images); custom Zac Brown Band GS Mini; Zac with his played-in Taylor nylon-string on stage in Toronto (photo: Southern Reel); **L-R:** Chris Rodgers with Elijah and Elijah's mom; Hozier with his 816e (photo by Dara Munnis); John Driskell Hopkins at SXSW; Alan Jackson on stage at the St. Augustine Amphitheater in Florida (photo by Steve Parr)





# Taylor Notes

## Remembering Pete Davies Jr.

Last December we were saddened to learn of the untimely passing of former Taylor employee Pete Davies Jr., a talented artist and designer whose inlay artistry graces some of Taylor's most visually striking guitars, including the Living Jewels (featuring a colorful koi fish inlay motif) and Liberty Tree

models. It was truly a family affair when Pete Jr. came to Taylor as a young man in 1999 — his father, Pete Sr., worked as a master machinist with us for many years, and his mother, Judy, managed our TaylorWare line of Taylor clothing and accessories. Pete Jr.'s arrival came at a time when Taylor was eager to explore new, contemporary

aesthetic territory with decorative inlay art, fueled in part by the ability to cut intricate shapes using computer milling and laser technology, and the availability of colorful material alternatives to traditional mother-of-pearl. Pete Jr. had been working in a stereo shop when Bob Taylor and our product design team asked him to do some drawings, as Bob recalled in a story on the design of Taylor's Gallery Series guitars back in the Winter 2000 edition of *Wood&Steel*.

"Right away he demonstrated a knack for being able to change his art so that it would be 'inlayable,'" Bob said.

Among Pete Jr.'s first sketches were of koi fish, whose vibrant mottled colors promised to make a bold visual statement on a guitar.

"We saw Pete's koi sketches and were like, 'hello!'" Bob recounted.

Pete Jr. soon joined Taylor's product design team on a full-time basis and churned out an array of indelible inlay artwork during his tenure through 2004.



Shortly after Pete Jr.'s passing, Bob remembered him in a blog post on the Taylor website, a portion of which we've excerpted below.

"Pete Jr., or PT, seemed to step right out of *American Graffiti*. Maybe PT didn't roll up his T-shirt sleeve like Harrison Ford in the movie, but then again he might have. He liked drawing hot rods.... His hair and sideburns were pure rockabilly. He laughed and was easy to get along with. Maybe we had to tell him what to do now and then, sit him down as a young man working here, but he would sit back down and draw things on paper and a

computer. Good things. Inlay art is akin to tattoo art. PT had a flair for it and filled our manila folder with pages of options to inlay on guitars. Koi fish, sea turtles, hot rod art, and so on. Liberty Tree art. Wow. That one. We loved him. Portland called him, and he wanted to leave San Diego, so it was a happy send-off. Good kid. Good family. He went to live in the rain."

As a tribute to Pete Jr., we wanted to share some of his memorable inlay art, which many longtime Taylor fans will recognize and appreciate. Pete Jr. is survived by his parents. He was 37.



The inlay art of Pete Davies Jr. **Above:** Flame inlays on our 2003 limited edition Hot Rod guitar; **Top right:** Koi fish on the Living Jewels model; **Bottom right:** Back of the Sea Turtle Gallery Series guitar; **Bottom left:** The Liberty Tree guitar



## Continuing Progress in Cameroon

Crelicam, the Cameroonian ebony mill co-owned by Taylor and located in the capital city of Yaoundé, continues to evolve as our team works to implement improvements in many areas of operation. Among the milestones over the course of last year and the first portion of 2015 were the construction of a new building and the partial paving of a driveway. We also added a well to provide a fresh water supply and increased the mill's electrical capacity. To bolster the mill's wood-processing capability, we built and installed three new table saws and a new jointer, and we con-

tinue to train employees on the safe and proper use of machinery. We also bought and imported two Mercedes Unimogs, which now enable staff to retrieve wood from the forest during the rainy season. An ebony tree nursery was also established on the property at the mill, and Cameroon's Secretary of MINFOF (Ministry of Forestry and Fauna) has granted formal permission to re-plant ebony in the forest.

"Each improvement in Cameroon is one that we're very proud of," Bob Taylor says. "We've solved a lot of problems to allow us to operate better.

We've also worked hard to make our staff happier and more cohesive."

In June of this year, Crelicam was recognized at the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) Conference held in Douala, Cameroon, for our ongoing work there. The non-profit organization is broad in scope, featuring some 70 partners, including African countries, donor agencies and governments, international organizations, NGOs, scientific institutions, and the private sector. Together, they work to coordinate efforts to sustain forest resources in the Congo Basin.



**Above:** Bob Taylor with a pair of Unimogs at the mill; **Below right:** a well provides fresh water; **Below left:** Ebony seedlings from the nursery at the mill



## Mid-Year Model Updates: T5z 12-strings and 200 Deluxe with ES2

We've made a few updates to the Taylor line. Two new 12-string T5z models have been added: the T5z-12 Custom (flamed koa top) and T5z-12 Classic (mahogany top). The Custom model features Taylor's Dual Compensated saddle, which aligns the height of the fundamental and octave strings in a single plane across the top to give players a smooth, even attack and sound. The T5z has also been added to our Custom program. We've also upgraded the acoustic electronics on our 200 Deluxe Series to the Expression System® 2.





# Calendar

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

We love spending time with Taylor dealers and fans so much that we're starting our fall Road Show season in mid-July this year. As usual, our Road Show team will be sharing the latest developments from the Taylor factory, including our overall design philosophy and the voicing refinements introduced

on our 800 and 600 Series. We'll cover the fundamentals of acoustic guitar tone based on different Taylor body shapes and tonewoods, featuring demonstrations of each, and share tips to help you find the right guitar for your playing style. We'll also be armed with a fresh batch of custom guitars for

guests to sample. You'll find a partial list of scheduled Road Show and Find Your Fit events below. For the most current schedule of Taylor events, be sure to visit [taylorguitars.com/events](http://taylorguitars.com/events). We hope to see you this summer and fall!

## Musikmesse, April 15-18, Frankfurt, Germany

Musikmesse, or "Messe," (German for fair or exhibition) is one of the largest music industry trade shows in the world and brings together makers of musical instruments and other music industry products with dealers and distributors from around the world. This year's event ran from Wednesday through Saturday, April 15-18, culminating in a day for non-industry visitors to walk the halls and explore the various booths. Walking around the "festhalle," one can hear just about every language in the world being spoken.

On Wednesday, Taylor Guitars started the show with two big honors from the media. In a poll of Facebook fans by the German magazine *Gitarre & Bass*, the 814ce was voted the "Best Acoustic Guitar." Later that evening, Taylor Guitars was presented with an award from PPV Media and *Guitar* magazine (Germany) for our efforts toward sustainability. The following night, the new 600 Series was named the "Best New Acoustic Guitar" as part of the Musikmesse International Press Awards (M.I.P.A.). The annual M.I.P.A. awards show honors the best in each musical instrument product class. 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. The prestigious award has been called the "Grammy" of the Musical Instrument/Pro Audio industry.

### Thousand Oaks, CA

Instrumental Music  
Wednesday, July 22, 7 p.m.  
(805) 496-3774

### Sherman Oaks, CA

Guitar Center - Sherman Oaks  
Thursday, July 23, 6:30 p.m.  
(818) 990-8332

### Hanahan, SC

Ye Olde Music  
Tuesday, July 28, 6:30 p.m.  
(843) 747-0014

### Asheville, NC

Musician's Workshop  
Wednesday, July 29, 7 p.m.  
(828) 252-1249

### Marietta, GA

Ken Stanton - Marietta  
Thursday, July 30, 7 p.m.  
(770) 427-2491

### Huntsville, AL

The Fret Shop  
Friday, July 31, 7 p.m.  
(256) 430-4729

### Pensacola, FL

Blues Angel Music  
Monday, August 17, 7 p.m.  
(850) 457-7557

### Santa Barbara, CA

Santa Barbara Guitar Bar  
Monday, September 14, 7 p.m.  
(805) 770-7242

### Napa, CA

Napa Music Supply  
Tuesday, September 15, 6:30 p.m.  
(707) 265-8275

### Redding, CA

Herreid Music  
Wednesday, September 16, 6:30 p.m.  
(530) 243-7283

### Reno, NV

Bizarre Guitar  
Thursday, September 17, 6:30 p.m.  
(775) 331-1001



North American Road Shows

### Spokane, WA

Hoffman Music  
Monday, July 13, 7 p.m.  
(509) 444-4140

### Rapid City, SD

Haggerty's Music  
Monday, July 13, 6:30 p.m.  
(605) 348-6737

### Memphis, TN

Martin Music  
Monday, July 13, 6 p.m.  
(901) 729-2466

### Helena, MT

Piccolo's Music  
Tuesday, July 14, 7 p.m.  
(406) 443-4709

### Nashville, TN

Gruhn Guitars  
Tuesday, July 14, 7 p.m.  
(615) 256-2033

### Pierre, SD

Pierre Music  
Tuesday, July 14, 6:30 p.m.  
(605) 220-3088

### Bozeman, MT

Music Villa  
Wednesday, July 15, 7 p.m.  
(406) 587-4761

### Grand Island, NE

Yanda's Music - Grand Island  
Wednesday, July 15, 6:30 p.m.  
(308) 234-1970

### Murfreesboro, TN

Music World  
Wednesday, July 15, 7 p.m.  
(615) 893-4242

### Billings, MT

Hansen Music  
Thursday, July 16, 7 p.m.  
(406) 245-4544

### Sevierville, TN

Music Outlet  
Thursday, July 16, 7 p.m.  
(865) 453-1031

### Kearney, NE

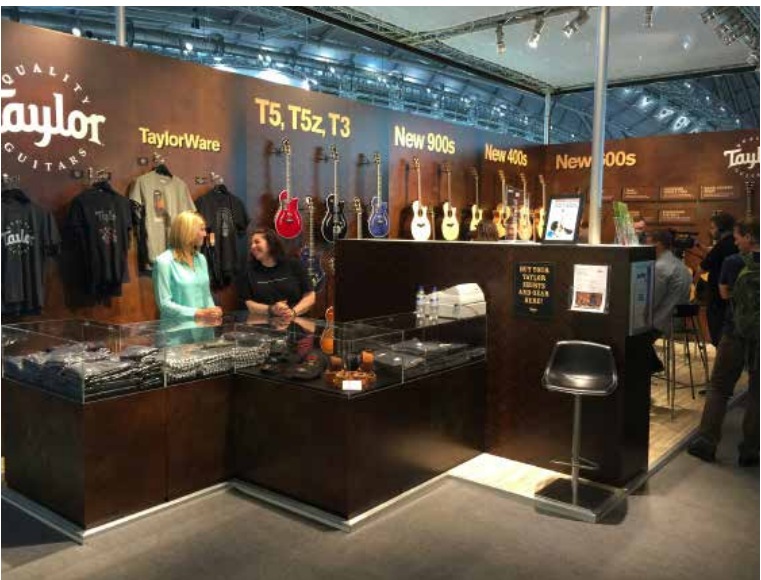
Yanda's Music - Kearney  
Thursday, July 16, 6:30 p.m.  
(308) 234-1970

### San Jose, CA

Guitar Showcase  
Monday, July 20, 6:30 p.m.  
(408) 377-5864

### Clovis, CA

Gottschalk Music Center  
Tuesday, July 21, 6:30 p.m.  
(559) 298-4400



## Travel and Guitar Care Tips for Summer

### Summer means warm weather, outdoor fun, and hopefully more time to kick back and play guitar. Wherever you and your guitar end up together, here are six tips to help you keep it in good playing condition.

#### 1. If traveling by car, treat your guitar like a pet.

If you wouldn't leave Sparky in the car, don't leave your guitar there either. On a hot summer day, prolonged exposure to high heat inside a car can cause a guitar's wood glues to soften and the bridge to come loose under the pull of the string tension. In extreme cases, other guitar components can even begin to separate. If you must keep your guitar in the car on a hot day, look for a shady parking spot or use windshield shades and crack the windows.

#### 2. Fly smart.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) recently updated its policy regarding the carriage of musical instruments on flights. The upshot is that small musical instruments can be transported as your one carry-on baggage item if there is room in the

overhead compartment when you board and the instrument can be stowed safely. Keep in mind that this policy applies only to U.S.-based airlines. Be sure to check with your airline carrier on specifics and limitations regarding these new rules, and give yourself extra time to check in at the airport.

As a service to instrument owners, the DOT has put together an online information guide with all the resources you need pertaining to flying with a guitar. In addition to a list of tips, you'll find links to advice from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) on carrying guitars through screening checkpoints, a central overview of the individual policies of most U.S. airlines, and Frequently Asked Questions. Here's the web page: [www.dot.gov/airconsumer/air-travel-musical-instruments](http://www.dot.gov/airconsumer/air-travel-musical-instruments)

#### 3. Get a handle on the humidity.

Awareness is the first step toward proper humidification. Depending on the summer conditions where you live, it may get really humid outside. Running an air conditioner tends to lower the relative humidity, which can help. Either way, be sure to use a digital hygrometer (they're more accurate than the needle variety). It can be kept in the room where you store your guitars, or, better yet, in a central location inside the guitar case, preferably Velcro'd to the outside of the accessories compartment (facing the heel of the guitar). You want to know where you stand so you can...

#### 4. Humidify or dehumidify if needed.

Among the humidification products we recommend are D'Addario's Two-Way Humidification System because the moisture-filled packets are formulated to either release or absorb moisture to consistently maintain a predetermined relative humidity (RH) level of 45-50 percent. In areas with extreme or year-round high humidity, place several silica gel or bamboo charcoal packs in the guitar case to absorb excess moisture and change them every few months. Another solution is to periodically remove the guitar and blow-dry the interior of the case with a hair dryer for 10 minutes.

One additional note on air travel: Several customers who have flown with their guitar as a carry-on item and with D'Addario's humidification packets in the guitar case have notified our Customer Service department that the TSA has made them remove the packets due to TSA restrictions on liquids. If you plan to check a bag in addition to your guitar carry-on, it might be best to pack the humidification packets in a plastic zip-top bag within your checked bag.

#### 5. Give your guitar a good wipedown.

Warm weather leads to more perspiration on your strings, neck and guitar body as you play. As you wipe down the strings, keep an eye out for the buildup of grime on the fretboard. This can be transferred to the *underside* of your strings and compromise their tone or ability to stay in tune. Consequently, in the summer months consider changing your strings more frequently depending on the frequency and environment in which you play. When you do, take advantage of the access to the entire fretboard to remove the grime. Which brings us to...

#### 6. Periodically clean and condition your fretboard.

Once you've removed the strings, cover the guitar's soundhole with a towel and clean the fretboard with .0000 gauge steel wool. Rub lengthwise with the grain. You can rub pretty hard without damaging the fretboard, but be careful not to let it touch the body. If the fretboard looks dry, consider adding a little fretboard conditioning oil. (We suggest using our Taylor Fretboard Oil or boiled linseed oil.) A small amount applied to a rag and wiped over the wood is all it takes.







### A Harmonious Whole

A well-crafted guitar offers a cohesive balance between tonal and visual details

When you look at a guitar, what do you see? When you listen to a guitar, what do you hear? These might sound like the type of questions a psychiatrist would ask a patient during an ink blot test, but I find it fascinating to ask these when I consider the relationship between a musician and their instrument.

From the time I first picked up a guitar until now, what I've heard as a player has changed. Actually, that's not entirely true. What has struck my ear probably hasn't changed

much. Rather, the way I pay attention to incoming sounds and what I interpret has changed. When I started interacting with the guitar as a kid, my impressions were very primitive. I liked the curvy shape of the guitar and that it was made of wood. I also liked the songs my parents played on our guitar. Pretty childish, I suppose, but first impressions are often rather basic. I began recognizing the differences between guitar sounds and those of other instruments, undoubtedly aided by seeing an instrument and associating the

sound coming from it. As I began playing our guitar myself, I took to listening to instrumental music by a slew of 1960s-era guitar-based bands in a style collectively known as surf music. It was the perfect music for a beginning guitar player. There were no lyrics to get in the way, and all the melodies were played with clear, twangy guitars, so it was very easy to pick up on the notes the guitars made. Over time, other styles crept into my repertoire as my musical horizons expanded simultaneously into rock, jazz, country, Hawaiian slack

key, bluegrass and beyond: musical styles with the guitar as a lowest common denominator.

Likewise, as a guitar maker, my listening started primitively. I was thrilled the first time I built a guitar that held together long enough to strum a few chords on the poorly intonated strings and realize it sounded like a guitar. With each new guitar I heard, my listening became more complex; I was paying attention to subtleties I was becoming capable of discerning. With time and hundreds of guitars, I started to listen to the guitar more as a collection of parts. I could hear the way a back was contributing, or the top, or which harmonics were being emphasized or muted. It was an exercise of interest, and helpful, especially when repairing instruments, as incorrectly functioning components could be identified fairly easily. But it was only helpful to a point.

In the analytical environment of music school, my classmates and I did a lot of listening. This environment is where I learned about ways of listening to notes. I'll venture that most people have heard about a fantastic ability known as perfect pitch, or more accurately, absolute pitch. An individual with this talent can recognize any pitch from any source at any time, or simply sing any pitch at any time. A few of my classmates had that ability. While I wasn't one of them, I discovered that my repeated exposure to instruments had left me with an ability to hear and recognize notes fairly easily, enabling me to replicate them on my instrument. More valuable still, I learned to recognize the relationship between notes, something my friends with absolute pitch couldn't easily do. They heard individual note identities with utmost precision, but I could hear how the notes functioned in context, because I heard the relationship between them, a trait known as relative pitch.

This distinction between absolute and relative pitch has application in my world as a guitar maker. While it's a wonderful thing to hear a particular rosewood back and a spruce top function as individual components in a completed guitar, a more beneficial approach for me both as a builder and player is to hear how the individual components of an instrument relate to each other in the creation of a pleasing instrument. Let's face it, as guitar players, we don't actually play a rosewood guitar back or a spruce top any more than I would drive only the engine or brakes of a car. No, I drive the whole car, hopefully with all its parts working well enough to contribute to the action. Likewise, I play the whole guitar, with each part contributing to the

sound emanating from that beautiful sculpture.

I wrestle with describing guitars in terms of their specific features. While calling out elements like the width of a neck or an instrument's material components can be helpful points of comparison between two instruments, I find the practice lacking in accurately conveying an instrument's personality simply because I don't listen to individual features when I play music. I hear the sum of those features; I hear the sounds made by the whole. I might switch on the analytical part of my hearing and pay attention to individual components if I'm evaluating an instrument for the first time, but listening in this way becomes too chaotic if I'm going to make some music. In the end, a cohesive instrument is a good instrument.

There is a visual extension of this idea as well. I can look at individual elements and appreciate them, but what strikes me in a more powerful way is when I take in the whole of an instrument. When all the aesthetic components – the shapes of the parts, the color and figure of the woods, the tiny details in the purfling or inlays – exist harmoniously and seem to affirm each other, the instrument seems wholly beautiful. It is as if there is a self-symmetry that makes an instrument in balance with itself. I was trying to explain this to a guitar-loving friend and described the aesthetic as having the basic feature of a fractal – a structure that can be scaled up or down and remain as the same basic structure. As an example, a close look at the curve of an inlay a mere fraction of an inch wide should reveal the same type of curve as seen in the outline of a guitar's shape. On a larger scale, the whole of a guitar's aesthetic should be in balance with the sound the guitar produces.

This season, we are unveiling a newly designed incarnation of our 900 Series guitars. These instruments are built within the mindset of this harmonious balance between the aesthetic and aural. The visual details are intricate and exact; crisp workmanship provides a setting for the organic and lavishly complex wood and shell materials. The sound is likewise complex and full of depth, yet unified in its ability to express the musical inspiration of the player. We're thrilled to be building these as well as the other instruments we are privileged to offer, and we hope you enjoy listening to them as much as we do.



Annette from Taylor's Finance department debuts our Ladies' Guitar String T with Amin, an AVAC technician on our Building Repair and Maintenance team, who's wearing our new Cross Guitars T.

**NEW**

**Ladies' Guitar String T** (above)

Ladies short sleeve 60/40 cotton/poly blend. Slightly heathered for a casual appearance. Slim fit. Sizing up recommended. (Olive #4410; S-XXL, \$25.00)

**NEW**

**Cross Guitars T** (above)

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

**California Original T**

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

**NEW**

**Logo T**

100% preshrunk cotton. Taylor logo. Short sleeve. Standard fit. (Heathered Indigo #1650, S-XL, \$20.00; XXL-XXXL, \$22.00)

**Aged Logo T**

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







**NEW**  
**Peghead Patch Cap**  
Easy fit stretch cap with sweatband. Ivory front peghead logo appliqué with ivory contrast stitching. Custom woven inner label. (Gray, \$25.00)

S/M #00165. Cap size- 22-3/8", 57cm, size 7-1/8.  
L/XL #00166. Cap size- 23-1/2", 60cm, size 7-1/2.



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



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

**Hoody Sweatshirt**  
50/50 cotton/poly blend with double-needle stitching. Doubled lined hood with drawstring. Orange Taylor logo and pouch pocket. Standard fit. (Sport Gray #2814; S-XL, \$39; XXL, \$41.00)



**Guitar Stamp Work Shirt**  
Permanent press, stain-resistant poly/cotton blend. Two front pockets. Taylor screen print over left pocket, guitar stamp image on back. (Black # 3090, S-XL, \$44.00; XXL-XXXL, \$46.00)



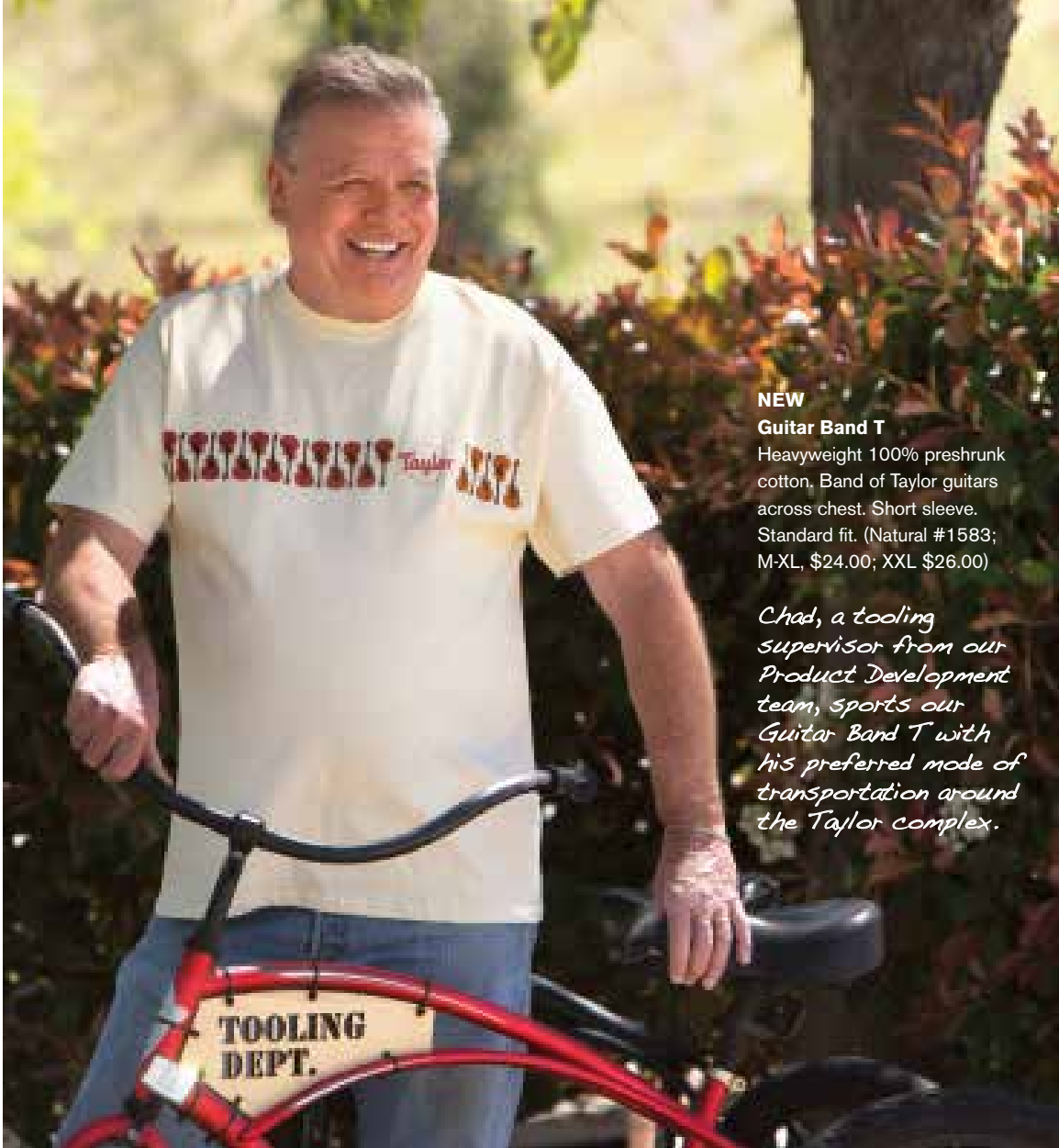
**Toddler/Youth Shield T**  
100% cotton jersey. Shield/crossed guitar design. Short sleeve. (Black. Toddler #1391; 2T, 4T, 5/6T, \$19.00; Youth #1420; S, M, L, \$19.00) Also available in an infant onesie (Black #1340, 6-18 mos., \$18.00)



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



**Men's Guitar Stamp T**  
100% ring spun cotton. Short sleeve. Fashion fit. (Black #1444; S-XL, \$25.00; XXL-XXXL, \$27.00)



**NEW**  
**Guitar Band T**  
Heavyweight 100% preshrunk cotton, Band of Taylor guitars across chest. Short sleeve. Standard fit. (Natural #1583; M-XL, \$24.00; XXL \$26.00)

*Chad, a tooling supervisor from our Product Development team, sports our Guitar Band T with his preferred mode of transportation around the Taylor complex.*



right sleeve print

**NEW**  
**Men's Factory Issue T**  
Lightweight 60/40 cotton/poly blend. Ultra soft, prewashed V-neck T. Taylor treatment on left side and right sleeve. Fashion fit. (Olive #1740; S-XL, \$28.00; XXL \$30.00)



*Tyler from our Body department's night shift, in our new Factory Issue V-neck T.*



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



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



**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)



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

**7) The D'Addario Two-Way Humidification System®** (formerly the Planet Waves Humidipak®) automates the humidity control process, making it easy to maintain proper humidification for your guitar in its case. The complete kit includes two pouches and three packets (#80356, \$30.00). Replacement packets (3) also available (#80357 \$20.00).



**8) Big Digit Hygro-Thermometer**  
Easy-to-read display shows temperature and humidity simultaneously. (#80358, \$44.99)



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



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



## Glassware

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

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

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

## Accessories



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# Wood&Steel

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## GO Figure

This custom Grand Orchestra casts a lustrous amber glow from behind, thanks to the beautifully rippling figure of the guitar's fiddleback mahogany back and sides. The bookmatched symmetry of the back is accented by a mini wedge and binding of vibrant bloodwood, while a sharp Florentine cutaway showcases the skilled hand craftsmanship required to bring this guitar to life. What's your dream Taylor? Our Custom program puts it within easy reach. For more details, talk to your preferred Taylor dealer.

