

Wood & Steel



Tommy Shaw

Gets his bluegrass on

Spring Limiteds

Macassar 12-Fret & T3

Walnut Double Feature

All-Mahogany Roots

Doyle Dykes & the Lights

Inside his new book

Expressionism

The art of the ES

**NAMM
Notes**

QUALITY
Taylor
GUITARS

Letters



80 Years of Expertise

My *Wood&Steel* (Vol. 66/Winter 2011) arrived in the mail yesterday. Your "Guitar Guide" feature is the most attractive, superb and comprehensive presentation (print or live) of a line of guitars I have ever seen. Taylor folk be proud – you produce fantastic products!

I'm now 92 years old. So, through the years I've looked at more than a few guitars in more than a few guitar shops and industry shows since I was 12, when I began to learn to play. I've owned a Taylor 750 12-string for nearly 15 years. It's a superb partner to play with my harmonica. Keep up the good work! Your company's contributions to the guitar are most significant!

**Lynn K. Huffman
Henry, IL**

Lesson Plan

I am a guitar player of about 40 years, an owner of a beautiful 2004 610ce L-7, a real estate broker, and a huge Taylor fan. I just finished reading Bob's book, *Guitar Lessons*, and wanted to let him know it is not only a great story; it's also quite well-written, and a remarkably inspirational recipe for success. It has lit a fire in my gut and set me on the path of self-improvement in my business and even in my personal life. I suppose the fact that I've always been impressed with Taylor Guitars as a company in general, and with my 610 specifically, is the reason the book had such a profound effect on me. I have already begun recommending it to business associates and guitar players alike.

I just want to say thanks for the book, Bob. I am planning on making the trip to El Cajon in the next couple of years, perhaps to see in person how my next Taylor guitar is made. Thanks for your shining example to anyone in

any business or field of endeavor. You and Kurt have lived what is best in the human spirit, with vision, passion and perseverance.

**Lance Morgan
Austin, TX**

Out of the Woodwork

Bob, I related to your "Book Report" story ["BobSpeak," Vol. 66/Winter 2011] in many ways. I remember NOT reading *The Grapes of Wrath* during Ms. Seagel's class but managing a B anyway. But what I really want to comment on is your statement that schools don't offer wood shop classes anymore. You are right that many schools don't offer "shop," but there are still a few of us out here teaching woodworking. The class might be marketed as something else, but we are still here, and the kids are still benefiting from the curriculum. I have even had a couple kids try their skills on making guitars. Who knows, maybe I taught the next Bob Taylor in one of my classes. As a wood worker, shop teacher and Taylor owner (I don't play very well yet), I have a complete appreciation for the craftsmanship that goes into building a guitar. I have also taught my students how to use CNC equipment, which I know you use in your manufacturing processes. In fact, I have used your website to show examples of how CNC is used in "real world" manufacturing.

I just wanted to let you know that while the ranks of shop teachers have dwindled over the years, we are still out here teaching useful, marketable skills to high school kids. Maybe someday you can give one of my kids a job making Taylor guitars.

**David Weber
Rocky Mountain High School
Fort Collins, CO**

Bob responds: David, thanks for the encouraging letter. I'm so glad to hear that you're pouring great experiences into your students' lives. My shop years were the foundation of Taylor Guitars, and no doubt you are teaching the next "somebody."

One-Way Trip

My 18-year-old son went to a Third World country last month to help an organization that feeds and ministers to orphan, homeless children in Asia. He took his guitar so he could sing and play for them. While dropping him

off at our local airport, I lectured him (it's the mother in me) not to lose or let his guitar get stolen.

At the organization there was a talented young man in his mid 20s who has the job of leading music to the children, with his old guitar of extremely poor quality. This young man was overtaken by the fact that my son owned a Taylor guitar, which is equivalent to five years wages for this man. My son let him play the Taylor and was impressed by his talent. During their visit they had so much fun singing and playing guitar together for the children. On the last day of my son's trip, he realized how blessed he has been. He knew he could work for a few months to buy another guitar, yet his new friend would probably never be able to own a guitar like this, and he felt that there was too much talent there to bring the guitar home.

When I picked up my son at the airport, I realized he didn't have his guitar! On the drive home, I heard one of the most beautiful stories of how a Taylor guitar changed two men's lives.

B. Rice

Pickup Mixup

I am the proud owner of a 2009 cherry burst SolidBody Standard. What a beautiful guitar! The HD pickups are incredible. I also recently purchased the HG pickups to test-drive them and see how they worked for me. While I love both, the HDs have unmatched clarity and really work well with gain. The HGs are also great in their own right, and are summed up very nicely in your videos – a little darker with even more rawness.

I e-mailed last week with a question on running a full-sized HD in the neck position and an HG in the bridge position. Well, I just couldn't wait and had to try this combination. To my delight, it's perfect for me – great clarity and great gain. To me, it's the best of all possible combinations. The three positions where coils from both pickups are used are still fantastic, albeit just a little different than either two HDs or two HGs. Maybe one of each should be an option on your guitars and loaded pickguards. I think there are many players out there who would love the combo as much as me.

It really is a privilege to own such a beautiful and thoughtfully designed guitar. Taylor has truly been an innovator over the years, and the SolidBody is no exception.

**Tray Huff
Columbia, SC**

Ed. Note: Thanks for sharing, Tray. Many electric players like a hotter

bridge pickup, and we agree that the configuration will appeal to others. We'll keep it in mind as a loaded pickguard option for the future.

One Size Fits All

I just purchased a GS Mini that fits right into my lifestyle. I've been looking for a travel guitar since I perform in a variety of locations across Africa. I used to travel with a Baby Taylor with a pickup in it. That guitar worked well when I could plug in, but as a straight acoustic, it lacked volume in groups of 10-20. With the GS Mini, this problem has been rectified.

The sound is comparable to a full-sized Taylor. I am very impressed with the way the guitar tunes up. I've had trouble with other guitars tuning up properly, but this tunes up just like my 714ce. It stays in tune across the fretboard and remains in tune for an extended period of time.

The GS Mini is the perfect match for my itinerant lifestyle, allowing me the freedom to create and perform in virtually any situation I find myself in.

Bob Bartz

A Good Deal of Fun

I'm basically an acoustic player and love my 2004 614ce, which I bought used a few years ago. This past summer, a local charity was having a fundraising online auction, and the star item up for bid was a brand new Taylor T5-S, which had been donated by our local Taylor dealer, Canyon Music, in Durango Colorado. Even though I've never been much of an electric guitar fan (not a light enough touch), I have always been a sucker for a great deal, and I became the successful bidder, winning the guitar for a very good price. All I can say is WOW! I've been laying down simple rhythm patterns on my looper with the T5 in the acoustic position, then switching to one of the other settings and playing lead. This is so much fun, plus my overall playing abilities and techniques are progressing faster than I ever imagined possible. Thank you, Taylor folks and Canyon Music!

Denny Finn

Upside-Down, Left and Just Right

Last August, I took the plunge and bought a BTO GS. I figured that after 30 years in the Air Force I'd treat myself. I have been playing guitar since junior high school. The Beatles had just shown that chicks dig guitar players, but I had one problem that always reared its head: I'm left-handed and

learned guitar by picking it up upside-down. Over the years it only caused a few problems since I could play most right-handed guitars. Since I couldn't afford a good right-handed guitar, going through all the trouble to get what was essentially a custom-built guitar was never a real option. Until recently.

While visiting Oklahoma Vintage Guitars in El Reno, Oklahoma, I learned about the BTO program and took the plunge. It was a little intimidating to make all those choices knowing that I was going to be living with the outcome, forever probably, but it all came together. I traded my trusty 2000 310 (the one with the pickguard on the "wrong" side) for a beautiful ovangkol and Adirondack spruce GS. I've owned a few Taylors, and I think this one sounds less bright than I expected – which I like. I went light on the embellishments: abalone rosette, a cross-like inlay on the headstock, and no pickguard. I won't try to describe how it looks, sounds or plays because, much like my wife, I learned a long time ago that such words don't exist.

I'd like to add that the staff at Oklahoma Vintage Guitars was terrific and that the guitar was delivered about 10 days ahead of schedule. There was even a pickguard thrown-in in case I changed my mind. Or maybe that was a hint.

You guys are a class act. Don't let success tempt you away from your core.

John Harris

Secret Ingredient: Love

I don't quite know how to put this into words, but sitting here playing my GS Mini (my second Taylor), I can feel the love and care that's gone into this instrument. There are some very nice guitars available today, and with overseas manufacturing, prices are lower, but I can tell that everyone who touched this instrument, from the R&D to final packing, truly cares what they do. I'm not rich, I've lived with a painful disability most of my life, and music is my way of dealing with the pain and limitations that come with it. Thank you again for making instruments that are reasonably priced, sound fantastic, and, most of all, come with love built in.

James Shepherd

We'd like to hear from you

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



On the Cover

12 Tommy Shaw

Styx rocker Tommy Shaw sheds light on the making of his debut bluegrass record, *The Great Divide*, and sizes up his new custom Dreadnought.

Features

6 Doyle's Storied Life

Our fleet-fingered friend Doyle Dykes talks about his new book, his new guitar, and why we all should be happy he took piano lessons.

9 Service Spotlight: The Paisley Guitar

Due to a tragic twist of fate, a custom paisley guitar built for Prince never quite found its home. One auction and 22 years later, it arrived at the factory for service.

18 The Spring Limiteds

Macassar and walnut dole out double delights, while an all-mahogany looker strikes a neo-vintage chord.

22 The Expression System

With eight years of gigging to its name, the ES continues to set the standard for amplified acoustic tone and ease of use. We revisit the innovative design that has made players happy to plug in.

26 The Irrational Fretboard

For those who've ever felt stymied by guitar theory, Shawn Persinger has your back. He breaks down scales to help you navigate the fretboard.

28 The NAMM Report

Our little corner of the annual trade show was the scene of good things: industry awards, the double cutaway debut, and memorable performances.



28



18



6



9

Departments

2	Letters	5	Editor's Note	25	Mixed Media
4	Kurt's Corner	10	Ask Bob	31	Calendar
5	BobSpeak	16	Soundings	32	TaylorWare



Kurt's Corner

Playing a Part

Several of us were in Nashville at the Country Music Hall of Fame recently to attend the launch party for Doyle Dykes' new book, *The Lights of Marfa*. The lights of Marfa are an unexplainable phenomenon of paranormal lights that can be seen in the night sky outside the southwest Texas town of Marfa. Some friends of ours from Europe read about these years ago, and have been to Marfa several times since then during their U.S. travels to witness the lights. Doyle heard the stories and decided he had to see these lights for himself. He visited Marfa in 2010 with his daughter Haley, and they, too, experienced the lights.

Like the lights of Marfa, many things in life are unexplainable, and Doyle's book is full of accounts of events and people he met that positively altered the course of his life, guiding him to where he is today.

One of the stories in the book, which Doyle told the audience at his party, was about "Barry the Sailor." Doyle was a young man learning guitar, trying to play Merle Travis and Chet Atkins tunes he heard on records, and couldn't figure out how they did it. Barry the Sailor came to their church, asked if he could play Bubba Dykes' guitar (Doyle's dad), and proceeded to play the tunes Doyle had been struggling to learn. Barry could play the tunes because he knew how to fingerpick...something Doyle had never

experienced! Barry taught Doyle how to fingerpick, and the rest is history.

Throughout the evening, Doyle told stories about people who had made a difference in his life, and people came up to the stage and told their stories about Doyle. Bob Taylor quipped that Doyle got to hear all the nice stories that people would normally tell at a funeral. There were several great

help, and try to make the best possible decisions and take the best possible actions that do the most good. To hear from someone that you really made a difference in their life is both surprising and satisfying. Especially when you hear from them many years after the fact about something you did or said that made a difference for them. It's easy to underestimate the positive

To hear from someone that you really made a difference in their life is both surprising and satisfying.

musical performances, as different people shared the stage with Doyle, including Barry Lackey (the Sailor). A personal treat for me was David Pack performing "Biggest Part of Me," accompanied by Doyle and Larry Carlton.

Doyle and his family were very gracious in thanking me and Bob and Taylor Guitars for everything we've done to help him and his career. David Pack also thanked us for helping him several times with projects he's been involved with.

I'm sure a lot of people can relate to what I'm going to say, but I'm usually surprised and a little bit taken aback when someone tells me how much I or the company helped them or positively influenced them. We just naturally

impact one person can have on others.

Doyle, you've earned every bit of your success, and we appreciate everything you've done for us!

— Kurt Listug, CEO

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Vice President of Sales & Marketing / Brian Swerdfeger

Director of Brand Marketing / Jonathan Forstot

Editor / Jim Kirlin

Senior Art Director / Cory Sheehan

Art Director / Rita Funk-Hoffman

Graphic Designer / Angie Stamos-Guerra

Photographer / Tim Whitehouse



Contributors

Jonathan Forstot / David Hosler / David Kaye / Kurt Listug / Shawn Persinger
Shane Roeschlein / Bob Taylor / Corey Witt / Glen Wolff / Chalise Zolezzi

Technical Advisors

Ed Granero / David Hosler / Gerry Kowalski / Andy Lund / Rob Magargal
Mike Mosley / Brian Swerdfeger / Bob Taylor / Chris Wellons / Glen Wolff

Contributing Photographers

Rita Funk-Hoffman / David Kaye / Steve Parr

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Katrina Horstman

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2011 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 our reception desk in the lobby of our main building by 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/factorytour. We look forward to seeing you!

Holiday Closures

Monday, May 30

(Memorial Day)

Monday-Friday, July 4-8

(Independence Day/company vacation)

Monday, September 5

(Labor Day)

Friday, October 14

(Taylor Guitars Anniversary)



Bob Speak

Stretching Out

Doyle Dykes is writing books, Tommy Shaw is playing bluegrass, and Taylor Guitars is deep into prototyping classical and flamenco guitars! The next thing you know, our company dog and cat will be hanging around together.

Doyle's book, *The Lights of Marfa*, shares stories like the ones he shares in concert, but expanded with more background. Many of you have heard Doyle's concerts and listened in amazement to stories that make you go "Whoa!" afterward. In Marfa, Texas, there are lights in the sky, a complete spectacle of moving lights that nobody understands. But they are there, there's no denying it. There are lookout points along the highway to stop and watch, so even the highway department knows they exist. It's just that nobody really knows what they are. Doyle tells stories of his strange encounters where God has paved a way for him, all centered around guitars. You'll be amazed and entertained.

From Styx and 80s rock to bluegrass, Tommy Shaw has jumped off the deep end and landed safely. I mean, no kidding! What a brave move, and what an incredible musician he is. You can imagine that voice of his, from the Damn Yankees hit "High Enough," singing tenor bluegrass ballads. Tommy knows how to play, and he knows the difference between a good song and a ho-hum song. He writes good songs.

In an upcoming issue I'll tell you more about Andy Powers, who has joined us at Taylor Guitars as a master guitar builder. Andy is talented not only as a builder but as a player. He and I are working to design a quality classical guitar, most likely with a flamenco guitar in there as well. Andy is doing the lion's share of the work, but we're working closely together.

people try something new and don't stop until it's good.

The same thing goes for Taylor Guitars. We ventured into making the T5, pickups, the SolidBody and the T3, and now we're working on classicals. I've read comments where people warn us to "stick to our knitting," but I don't let those people impose their will on us. We have a need to create, and

I've read comments where people warn us to "stick to our knitting," but I don't let those people impose their will on us. We have a need to create.

I believe we have a real chance to do a superb job and introduce something that Taylor hasn't done yet, and do a fine job of it!

So, what's the tie-in? The tie-in is that here are three examples of people (or a company) who've mastered one form of their craft and added something different to what they want to do. It's not easy, but it is possible. Reading Doyle's book and hearing Tommy's bluegrass songs makes me smile because they're doing it for their own reasons. There's no guarantee of success; they have to do a good job. And so they buckle down and do a good job. It's impressive. I love it when

in fact, that is our knitting. To create good guitars and bring them to the market so that players can have a great playing experience along with a great ownership experience. I think you need both the product and the support from the company in today's world to get complete value for your money.

So, we work toward that end, even if it's not something we're known for. I'm not ready to announce a release date yet, but like Doyle and Tommy, we feel like conquering new horizons. I'm happy to stick my neck out, but at the same time, we're serious about getting it right.

— Bob Taylor, President

Editor's Note

Growing New Roots

Roots revivals seem to sweep across the musical landscape in regular intervals, and it feels like we're in the midst of one right now. You've got shining talents like the Punch Brothers, or Mumford & Sons and the Avett Brothers – both of whom ascended to the mainstream radar with Grammy nominations this past year – who go back to the rich wellspring of folk music, drink deeply, and then infuse fresh, envelope-pushing ideas into the music they create. Then you have older, established rock & rollers like Robert Plant, Mark Knopfler, and as we share this issue, Tommy Shaw, who, later in their careers, circle back to the musical roots that gave birth to rock & roll and their own musical passions in the first place.

What is it about roots music that captivates us in such a powerful way? The sweet and plaintive cries of acoustic instruments? Organic vocal harmonies? Urgent emotion? Personal stories?

Whatever it may be, it seems grounded in something that feels real, that comes from the soul.

For Doyle Dykes, there was something about hearing pickers like Merle Travis and Chet Atkins and the powerful strains of gospel music that enveloped him growing up in the South. For fingerstylist Chris Proctor (see "Soundings" this issue), he soaked up the blues, then Celtic folk, and then acoustic interpreters like Leo Kottke and his propulsive 12-string. After steeping themselves in their influences, artists have to decide whether to set out on their own paths. Doyle certainly has, bringing sophisticated new fingerstyle arrangements to the songs he embraces. Chris has dedicated himself to his own adventurous acoustic alchemy. And as Bob Taylor points out in his column, Tommy Shaw ventured out of the rock world to craft a cycle of fresh story-songs in the bluegrass vein.

These days, as Tommy mentions in his interview, people have instant access to virtually any style of music, right from their fingertips. And when modern life seems over-fabricated or over-hyped, and people crave music that feels a little more real, and that moves them, they have the means to dig down and discover it on their own. Maybe that's why this latest wave of roots acts brings so much to the table. And why these new strains of roots music are likely to serve as a tap root for the musicians who follow them.

— Jim Kirilin

Correction: In last issue's Guitar Guide (p.27), a photo showing the Taylor Balanced Breakout Box was actually a photo of an earlier prototype and not the final product.

Wood&Steel **Online**

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

A man with long, light brown hair is playing an acoustic guitar. He is wearing a brown, long-sleeved shirt with intricate red and white floral embroidery. The guitar is a light-colored acoustic with a dark fretboard and a black headstock. The background is a brick wall with some greenery. The overall scene is outdoors and brightly lit.

Pickin' with a Purpose

Armed with a new book, a new guitar, and a TV show in the works, fingerstyle phenom Doyle Dykes looks back and surveys the road ahead

By Jim Kirlin

Photos by Holli Brown

“Everyone has their stories,” asserts longtime Taylor ambassador Doyle Dykes in that sweet Southern lilt of his, the kind that can make a complete stranger instantly feel like a dear friend. The one-man guitar orchestra certainly has plenty of colorful tales to share, which he delivers with a raconteur’s warm, inviting manner, as many people know from Taylor workshops, concerts, church services and conversations over the years. The only problem is that Doyle’s heavy touring and busy schedule leave him with limited time during each appearance.

“I rarely ever have the opportunity to visit and share my heart,” he confesses in the introduction to his new book. “As far as I’m concerned, that’s what this book is for.”

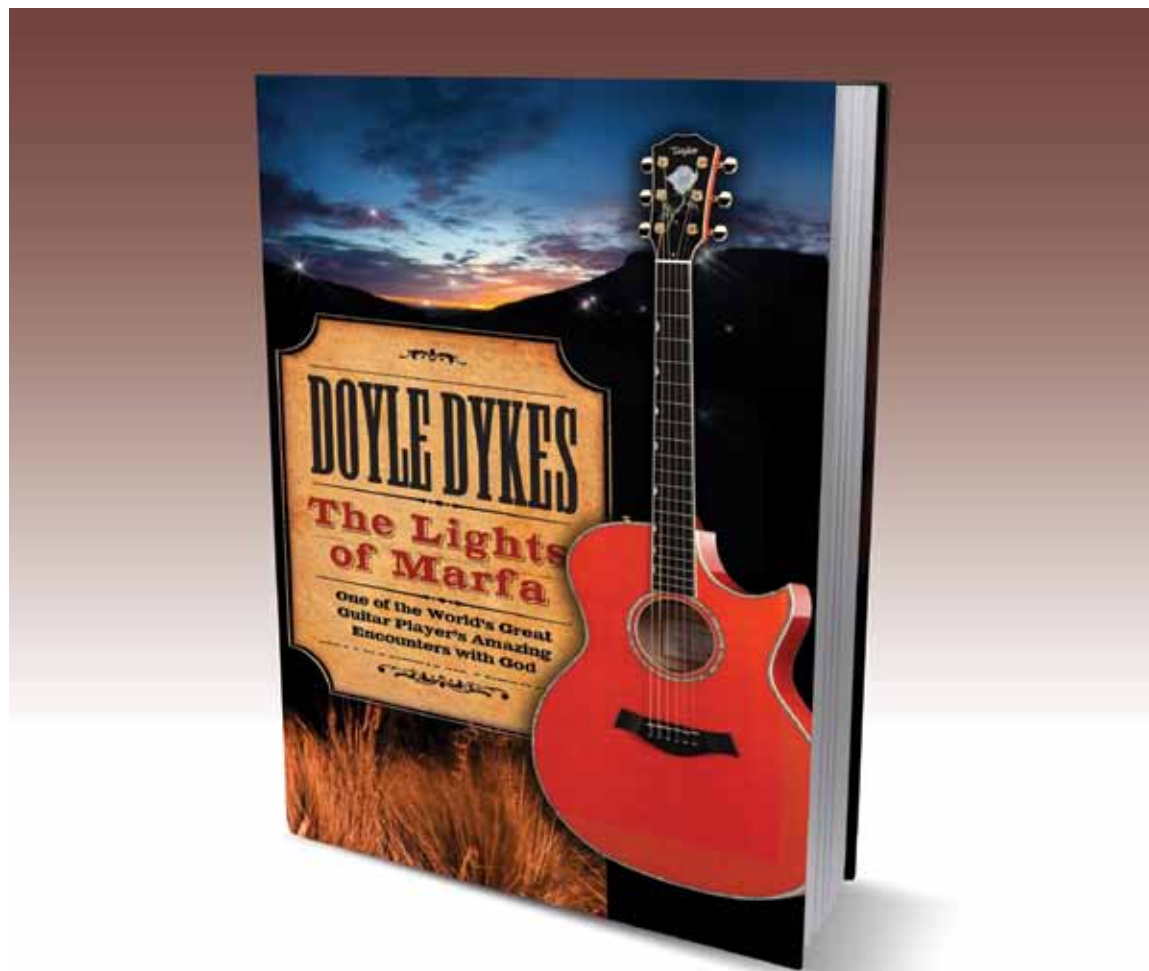
The book is *The Lights of Marfa: One of the World’s Great Guitar Player’s Amazing Encounters with God*. The subject matter, as the title suggests, is both musical and religious, because the two have been deeply intertwined in Doyle’s life for a long time. Music is his gift, but he’ll tell you that God came first, and that the two are a package deal. In his book, Doyle shares an account of the summer revival he attended as an 11-year-old in 1965, when his passions for God and guitars were born. In exchange for the guitar-playing talent and desire he was given, he made a deal: “Lord, if you’ll give me a job to do I’ll always tell people about you,” he recalls pledging that summer night. Given Doyle’s soon-to-blossom fingerstyle prowess, his account almost sounds like a reverse take on iconic bluesman Robert Johnson’s mythical crossroads deal with the devil.

The metaphorical glue that binds the book’s stories are the Marfa lights, a mercurial phenomenon just east of the west Texas town of Marfa, in which lights inexplicably appear in the desert air on random nights, changing color, sometimes spinning and dancing, only to disappear. Though different theories have been floated to scientifically explain them, they remain a mysterious attraction. Likewise, Doyle’s stories key in on remarkable encounters, often chance meetings with strangers – a sailor, a state trooper, a soldier, a hospital president, a doctor on a plane, even Elvis Presley (although that was technically a non-encounter). For Doyle, the strange coincidences of these connections, like the Marfa lights, can’t be explained in a conventional way, and he relates them to the mystery of religious faith that illuminates his life.

Doyle says he was approached about writing a book five years ago by Moody Publishers, whose editorial

focus is the Christian sector.

“It was a back burner thing,” he says. “Every now and then I’d get on a plane and write a few things down, familiar things like the ‘White Rose for Heidi’ story, but I didn’t take it seriously until [last February] when Bob Taylor told me about Marfa. I actually sat down and wrote, ‘The Lights of Marfa, by Doyle Dykes,’ and then wrote the whole introduction before I had ever gone out to see Marfa yet, so I knew the concept was there.”



Like Bob Taylor’s book, Doyle’s format is less a straight autobiography and more a collection of personal stories. The tales do follow the trajectory of Doyle’s early life, painting a picture of his conservative Christian upbringing in Jacksonville, Florida, and the way family, faith, and music all blended together in his young life.

“In our house, hardly a day went by that we didn’t hear the music of Chet Atkins, Merle Travis, and Les Paul and Mary Ford on the stereo,” he writes. His father, “Bubba” Dykes, sang and played guitar, his mother sang at church, and Doyle and his brother Aubrey would join their parents to sing four-part harmony around a microphone at church. His dad loved gospel quartet

music, and it would surely be a proud moment years later when Doyle would join the Stamps Quartet as a guitarist.

Regardless of your religious persuasion, if you’re a fan of Doyle’s, reading his perspective on how faith has guided his life offers compelling insights into who he is and provides context for his fusion of the sacred and secular through music. At the end of each chapter, he cites his favorite scripture verses that relate, though he’s just as likely to include musical tidbits

who used to play at the Grand Ole Opry, Del Wood. My aunt played much like Del, just with a little lighter touch. I always admired that, and the dynamics that my Uncle Ronnie would get [on piano]; he was our Jerry Reed. In fact, I was talking to Merle’s son, Thom Bresh, and he said, ‘Y’know, Jerry Reed always said that instead of a piano player he played like a gospel organist, which is a whole different approach on the keyboard. When I wrote ‘Jazz in the Box,’ I wrote that in the same way,

first time,” Doyle says. “I’d been trying to do that with a flatpick. It turned the light on for sure.”

Part of what makes the book enjoyable is the natural, conversational way that Doyle’s personality and voice come through as he shares his soul – his Southern charm, his sense of humor, his depth of conviction, and his deep respect for the legendary musicians who influenced him, many of whom he was fortunate to develop friendships with.

Doyle reflects on his time playing with *Hee Haw* star Grandpa Jones and his guest appearances on the Grand Ole Opry; the period he spent away from music working as a church pastor in Florida; his return to music as a full-time profession; and his first visit to the Taylor factory in 1994, which would redirect his approach to the guitar. Because Doyle is best-known as an acoustic player, it’s easy to forget that he was predominantly an electric player up until then.

“I’ll never forget that first Taylor guitar they placed in my hands,” Doyle recalls in his chapter about the beginning of his relationship with the company. “I almost cried.” That experience would cause him to change his whole approach to playing. “The dynamics and clarity, as well as the versatility...and ease of playing, moved me to write new songs and even play differently. People took notice.” He sums things up thusly a little later: “I don’t play a Taylor because I play the acoustic guitar, but I play the acoustic guitar because of Taylor!”

Doyle reserves a chapter of the book (“Hero Sandwich”) to talk about the special relationships he has enjoyed with some of the guitar world’s most influential players, including the “big three”: Merle Travis, Chet Atkins, and Les Paul, along with longtime friends James Burton and Duane Eddy. While he acknowledges that meeting one’s heroes is a letdown for many, it wasn’t for him.

Doyle even wrote and recorded a theme song of sorts for the book, inspired by his trip to Marfa. It’s part of a companion DVD that comes with the book.

“When I first started the song, I was writing this sort of ethereal-sounding, out-there, John Fahey type thing,” he says. “So I thought, what is Marfa? Where is Marfa? How would I describe Marfa? The whole west Texas thing came to me, and I thought, I’ll do it like a Texas movie theme because *Giant* was filmed there, and *No Country For Old Men* and *There Will Be Blood* were shot in that same area.”

like his favorite guitars, players and tunings for particular songs.

Guitar fans will enjoy reading about Doyle’s early musical development. In one chapter, he recalls suffering through piano lessons as a boy, but also of the impact of those lessons on the fingerstyle guitar techniques he would later master.

“I didn’t realize the direct correlation with piano until years later,” he elaborates by phone. “Merle Travis told me he was just a honky tonk piano player on the guitar. And I remember Chet [Atkins] saying, ‘I’m just playing stride piano,’ where he’s playing the 1 then the chord, then the 5 then the chord. The way Merle was doing it was similar, but it was more like this lady

as far as the feel...kind of a gospel, sawdust-and-folding-chairs tent revival on the organ. That’s where all that came from.”

One of the book’s most touching chapters is the story of Barry Lackey, a guitar-picking sailor who fatefully met Doyle’s dad at church, was invited to the Dykes house for a home-cooked meal, and in one afternoon changed 14-year-old Doyle’s life forever by showing him the mechanics of Travis-style picking. Though Doyle had been listening to Merle and Chet, he’d never actually seen how they played.

“When Barry was playing and I saw the bass and the rhythm going at the same time as the melody, that’s when I understood what was going on for the



Doyle recorded the tune with many of the same players who anchored his *Live Sessions: People...Places...and Pickin'* DVD from 2010: Dave Pomeroy (bass), John Gardener (drums), his brother Aubrey (piano), Jimmy Capps (rhythm guitar), Duane Eddy (electric lead), and daughter Haley (vocals). Wanting to incorporate a triple-fiddle, old Western sound, he brought in Andy Leftwich (Ricky Skaggs), Aubrey Haynie, and Kenny Sears.

"They're all Grand Ole Opry guys," Doyle says. "They did all their own parts. Then Haley showed up at the session and I said, 'Haley I'd like you to sing this,' and she said, 'Dad, there are no lyrics,' and I said, 'There are now; I wrote 'em on the way.' So we got in there and she just nailed it, and of course Duane sounded like Duane Eddy."

The DVD also includes an interview with Doyle about the book, along with performances of several other songs that were inspired by stories, including "The Visitation" and "The Changing of the Guard."

The DDX, Revamped Taylor Events and a TV Show

Doyle's book is just one of an array of new offerings this year. At Winter NAMM, he formally introduced his new Doyle Deluxe (DDX) model, and says he's excited that it brings something different to ride alongside his signature model. The black, maple laminate/solid Sitka Grand Auditorium features a standard scale length and 1-11/16-inch nut, compared to his short-scale, 1 3/4-inch DDSM.

"I love that this guitar is different," he says. "Bob [Taylor] and I have been talking about this guitar for years, and Bob had thought we should make it a totally different guitar. And I was really impressed with the result. With the laminated body it projects really well. If it were a short scale, I don't think it would have the punch it has. I have all kinds of other guitars, and I'll go back to my older Taylors, and to me, this just has a different feel than any of those. I've just enjoyed the heck out of it. I'm excited for young people and people who can't afford a more expensive

So far it's working out great."

Another major project that's been in development is a guitar-centric TV show hosted by Doyle. He and business partner Neal Ferry have been in discussions with cable TV networks to broadcast the program, and while a lot of details were still being worked

plenty of others. He's also enlisted his longtime friends Steve King and Johnnie Putman, hosts of the popular overnight radio program *The Steve & Johnnie Show* on Chicago station WGN, as announcers for the show.

"The show will be about the guitar, but the hope is that, if your



out as of our press deadline, the hope was to have the program in production by the summer and airing in the fall. Doyle says he envisions the show as a guitar-playing showcase that features legendary players and that will entertain, educate and encourage people. Doyle hopes to have a house band or rhythm section comprised of studio musicians, including some of the players from his *Live Sessions* and "Lights of Marfa" outings. The guest list keeps growing, as Doyle rattles off the names of musical friends who are onboard: Ricky Skaggs, Steve Wariner, Roy Clark, Tommy Emmanuel, Johnny Highland, Eric Johnson, James Burton, Sonny Landreth, Larry Carlton, and

grandmother's not a guitar player but wants to turn on a good show, she'll watch ours because it's entertaining," Doyle says. "I've found that when I go out and play guitar, I'm not playing to just guitar players anymore. Tommy Emmanuel and I talk about that a lot. Our audience is broader these days. We're entertainers who use the guitar!"

W&S

The *Lights of Marfa* is currently available through Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and other book retailers. For a complete list of retailers and other news about the book, along with Doyle's concerts, master classes and other events, visit DoyleDykes.com.



Watch a video clip of Doyle playing his DDX at NAMM.

The Paisley Prince Guitar

Built for a late '80s Prince tour that never happened, this eye-catching Grand Concert was recently restored to prime playing form

When this paisley Taylor A-12ce arrived at the factory for service in late 2010, we recognized it as a one-off made for Prince in the late '80s. Taylor had started making maple guitars with translucent color finishes in 1984 (thanks to the experiments of Taylor's Larry Breedlove), which led to a purple-stained maple Jumbo 12-string made on spec for Prince after a discussion between Kurt Listug and Glenn Wetterlund from Podium Music, a Taylor dealer in Minneapolis. The purple guitar became a minor plot point in Taylor lore when the guitar was featured in a couple of Prince videos, including "Raspberry Beret," albeit without the Taylor logo in the headstock due to an anti-brand stipulation by Prince.

The purple guitar helped stimulate greater interest in colored acoustic guitars among electric-playing rockers who liked the flashier, more modern look, especially for the stage or in music videos, and who were eager to separate the acoustic guitar from its sepia-toned folk heritage. Other established artists

were soon placing orders for colored acoustics from Taylor (including Alabama's Jeff Cook and Billy Idol guitarist Steve Stevens), prompting us to introduce our color-stained maple Artist Series in 1985.

The paisley guitar was commissioned for Prince by Wetterland in 1988 to match a new black-and-white paisley design motif Prince had embraced as he geared up for a major European tour. But when a bomb exploded on Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland in December of that year, Prince canceled his tour, and the guitar would languish in limbo. Wetterland eventually acquired the guitar, and it was later sold at a guitar auction.

The cutaway Grand Concert's maple back and sides feature a translucent black finish, while the soundboard and headstock showcase a screen printed paisley design. Note the missing logo from the headstock, the original "Artist Series" fretboard inlays, and the Taylor "smiley" bridge pin arrangement that was used at that time. An after-market pickup, an L.R. Baggs AGP-2, had also been installed.

The guitar's current owner, Mark Henkin, from New York City, filled us in on how it came to be his.

"A friend of mine was at a charity auction in New York, learned that the guitar was made for Prince, offered a bid, and ended up taking it home," he says. "He doesn't play guitar — he just thought it was a cool thing to have. Essentially, I took it from him about five years ago," he laughs. "I said, 'You don't play guitar, so I'm keeping this.'"

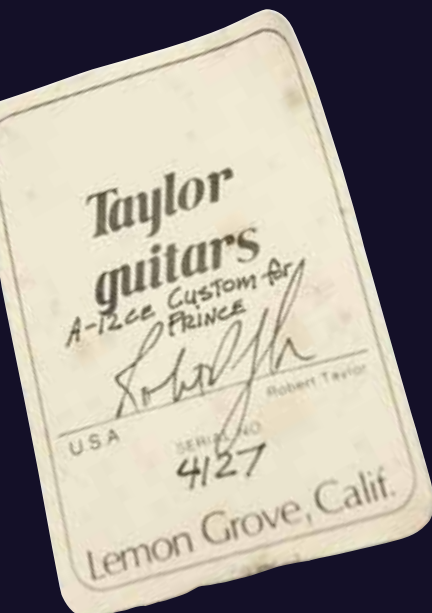
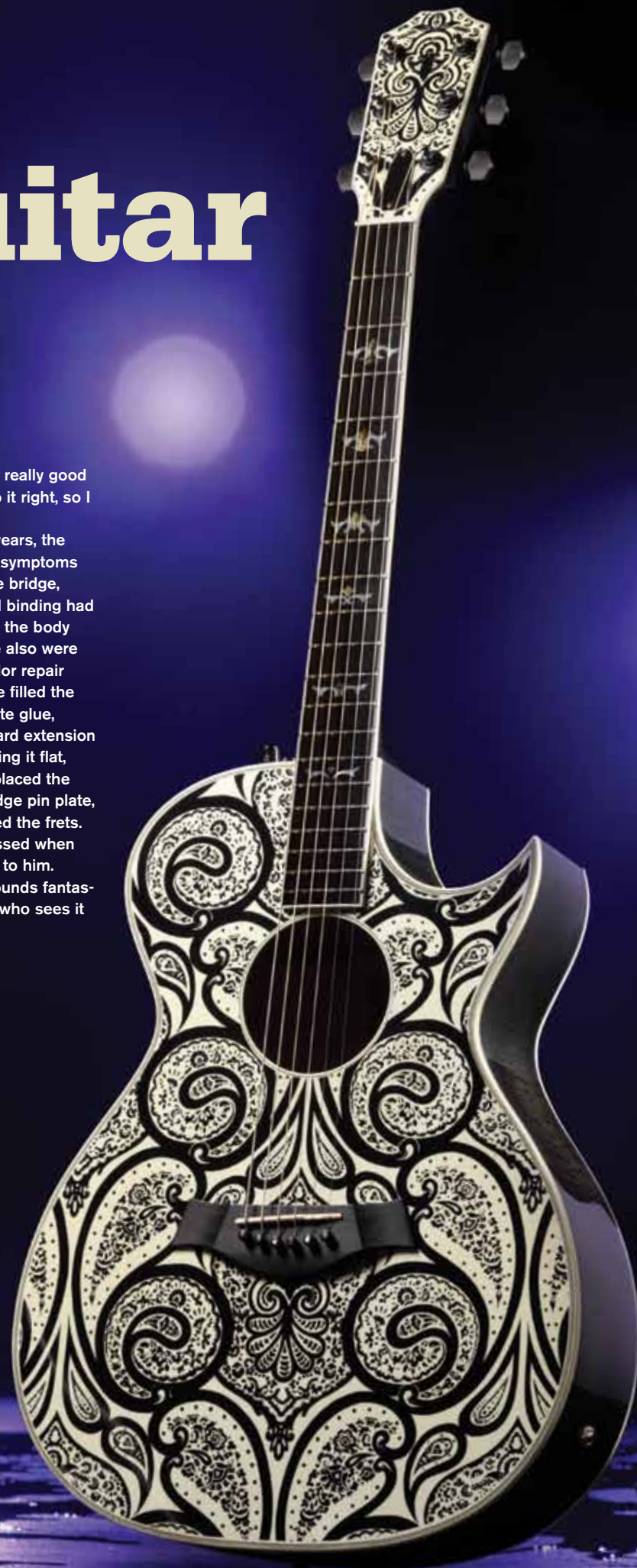
Henkin says he's not a "guitar freak," but mainly a living room player who owns a few guitars and enjoys jamming with friends.

"One of my friends is a guitar aficionado who owns 70 guitars, and after messing around with this one,

he said, 'This is a really, really good guitar.' He told me to do it right, so I sent it to you guys."

After more than 20 years, the guitar displayed visible symptoms of extreme dryness: The bridge, fretboard extension and binding had begun to separate from the body due to shrinkage. There also were cracks in the finish. Taylor repair technician Dave Staudte filled the cracks with cyanoacrylate glue, straightened the fretboard extension by heating it and clamping it flat, reglued the binding, replaced the bridge, repaired the bridge pin plate, and cleaned and dressed the frets. Henkin was duly impressed when the guitar was returned to him.

"It looks cool and sounds fantastic," he says. "Everyone who sees it comments on it."



Ask Bob

Soundhole size, bone tone, satinwood and a DIY humidifier

What would happen to my 2008 GC8 if I were to switch to bone for my nut and saddle? I mostly use it for fingerstyle playing.

Anson Haugsjaa

Anson, bone strikes me as producing a more solid, rounder tone. Tusq accentuates the highs better.

I have been playing and reading about guitars, both acoustic and electric, for over 40 years, but I have never — I mean NEVER — heard or read anything about soundhole size and its effect on acoustic guitars. Given all the other minute variations that guitar builders and players discuss, why no mention of soundhole size or rarely so?

Mark Smith
San Jose, CA

Mark, there is a lot of talk about it in builder circles. It can change the resonant frequency of a guitar. There is the famous Clarence White Martin guitar that is now owned and played by Tony Rice. That guitar was made famous because the soundhole was worn out so Clarence enlarged it to the first rosette ring to make it round again. The tone changed slightly. It's a good guitar, regardless of the soundhole size, but many builders copy that guitar, making a larger soundhole like it now has. Bottom line: It's easier to make a guitar with a standard-size hole and work changes into the guitar elsewhere. Thus, people don't talk about it much.

I was fortunate enough to spend time at your factory and pick out wood for what turned out to be an amazing BTO. I chose sinker redwood because it has tonal properties similar to cedar but with more volume, bringing it a bit closer to the volume spruce delivers. (I added Adirondack spruce bracing in the hope of adding a bit more zing as well.) I wanted to know more about this wood, such as its break-

in time. I'm guessing it's a softer wood like cedar and shouldn't take the time that woods like koa would take to come to fruition. I realize redwood/sinker redwood is reserved for BTOs, and I've seen some R. Taylors with it, but exactly how scarce is it?

Jeff Burg
Savannah, GA

Well, Jeff, I think redwood's break-in time is about the same as spruce and cedar. If you play it, and as time goes by, it will get better. To me, these are moot points, because if a wood sounds different when it's new, it will sound different when it's broken-in, too. The journey to break-in isn't really important to me, because it's all good, all along the way. As far as scarcity is concerned, this redwood we've been using all comes from one tree. It's a big tree, and the wood comes to us from a supplier near the source. I'm not completely sure how scarce it is, because they keep cutting wood from it and sending it our way. There have been at least a thousand sets from it so far.

I've got a beautiful 814ce-LTD (spruce top with walnut back and sides) that I purchased new just over three years ago. When I bought the guitar I thought the action was a little high, but the sound of the instrument was too compelling to leave it in the shop. Three years later the sound is actually getting stronger, but I think the playability could be improved by adjusting the action. I'm wondering about the wisdom of having the saddle filed down versus having a new one made. There is a very good Taylor-authorized repair technician not too far away, who I'm sure could do either job, but before I go to him I'd be interested in your thoughts.

Geordie Hendrie
Toronto, Ontario

Geordie, the great thing about your guitar is your NT neck. That neck can be reset to lower your action, and

also be put back to where it is now. So experimentation is allowable. Your question is legit, and your idea has merit. I've actually suggested this setup for some people in the past who want a different feel. I've suggested that they tip their NT neck into the bridge and lower the saddle. So, go ahead and have the luthier do this for you and live happily ever after. And if one day you change your mind, or the next day you don't like it, take it back to him and have him try something else. It's the beauty of the NT neck.

I have a mint condition JKSM [Jewel Kilcher Signature Model]. Can you tell me about the wood this great instrument was made of?

Charlie Boxwell

It's called satinwood. It comes from Africa. That was a particularly nice batch. It makes a nice guitar, but isn't typically used, thus is hard to find a second time around. Sometimes a batch of wood just falls in our laps and we go with it. That's what happened with this wood.



When will the GS Mini be available for us lefties? Also, will the pickup designed for the Mini work in a left-hand guitar since the strings are 180 degrees different?

Terry G. Hoffman

We're very committed to left-hand versions of all our guitars. I imagine we'll get the tooling done for GS Mini lefties later this year. The pickup will work just fine, no problem.

Could the moisture emitted from a soundhole-covering humidifier, over time, damage the electronics of the ES or the exposed circuit boards that are part of many pickup amplification systems? Are the electronics coated to prevent rust?

Paul Allen New

Paul, only if you over-humidified your guitar. With the normal amount of humidity there will be no damage. That said, don't use a soundhole-covering device. Let the humidifier condition the entire space inside the guitar case, as the whole guitar needs moisture, not just the interior of the body.

Given the importance of the soundboard, is there any indication that pickguards on acoustic steel-strings adversely affect tone? I ask because I really love the look of your models without pickguards, and my style is almost exclusively fingerpicking.

William Mays

William, the pickguard is part of the package of the sound. A guitar that has a pickguard sounds like itself, and a guitar without a pickguard sounds like itself. We make a lot of guitars without pickguards, not so much for sound, but for looks. Either way, the guitars sound good. One could argue that a pickguard inhibits sound, and I won't argue that point. You won't have any problems with your guitar if it has no pickguard, so you should feel good about getting one.

As I anxiously await the arrival of my custom GA thru the BTO program, I have a question regarding humidification. I've been using Dampits with my 810 and 714. Is tap water OK, or should I use distilled water?

**Brian V
Burlington, NJ**

Tap water is just fine. No reason to make it more difficult to humidify your guitar.

I have an all-koa, custom GS 12-string that has a three-piece back with a flamed maple center wedge. It is gorgeous, of course, and the guitar sounds exceptional. I seem to remember reading once that three-piece backs mostly had to do with extending precious

supplies of rare and expensive high-end tonewoods. Please help settle this.

Ed Mehollin

Ed, you're right, a three-piece back is typically made to use narrower back panels and make them wide enough. With our mini wedge, it's there only for cosmetic reasons, and often the wood used on a mini-wedged guitar was wide enough for a two-piece back. It's all cosmetics, or use of wood, and has nothing to do with tone.



3-piece
back with
mini-wedge

I currently have three Taylors: a Taylor T5-S, a Taylor 614ce that my wife bought me as a birthday present, and a wife with the last name Taylor. In "Ask Bob," I have a keen interest in reading all about managing humidity on these guitars, as the winters in Canada are bone dry, and humidity levels can drop to below 35 percent. Most of the suggestions have been to keep the guitar in the case with all kinds of bits in the soundhole and neck, but I found that particularly frustrating when I wanted to play them, as I had to unpack them each time and repack when done. I found that my playing time dropped, and I played my '52 Telecaster, as I don't need to

worry as much with it. So I wanted to share with you how I solved this issue.

Recently we moved, and our new house had a large bookcase in the basement with three sections that had glass doors. I removed several shelves inside those cabinets and placed the guitars on stands. I then placed a large sponge in a container with some water and closed the doors. The hygrometer placed in the cabinet reports a consistent 50-53 percent all day long. All I need to do is refresh some water in the sponge every couple of weeks to make this work. Now the guitars are not only easily accessible, but they are on display for all to see. I think that others can merely buy an IKEA cabinet and do the same.

**Jason McDermott
Caledon, Ontario, Canada**

Jason, that's a perfect solution. Make sure your hygrometer is digital. And put two of them in there. The needle-based, old-school hygrometers can literally glue themselves to some number like 50 percent and give you a false sense of security. Digital hygrometers work better, and two will always help, because if they read the same you probably have a good indication that they're telling the truth. That's all I'd add to your wonderful solution. You da man!

I am a proud owner of a Big Baby and share it with my college-age daughter – we both love it! My latest love is with the ukulele. I had never seen a Taylor ukulele and was under the impression that no such beast was available. Well, I looked at the new *Wood&Steel* (2011 Guitar Guide) and to my delight I saw two ukuleles on the wall in the picture on page 60. Does Taylor make a ukulele, and if not, do you have plans to offer one in the future?

**Chris Palmer
Northbrook, IL**

Lots of the guys at Taylor have been building ukes for themselves lately, either from kits or from scratch. We do have plans for a ukulele. I can't say when, because it's unclear, but we will do it.

Is there a difference between Indian rosewood and East Indian rosewood? I've noticed that some guitar makers specify that they use East Indian rosewood on their

guitars, and I've always wondered if there is a recognized, qualitative difference between the two, or if this is just an alternative designation for the same wood.

Moyer Hubbard

They are the same, just different ways of saying it.

I currently own a 614. I love the bright, crisp sound, but it is a little short on the bass. What products in the Taylor line will keep the bright sound of maple and provide more on the low end? I'm not interested in pushing the bottom end to the point that the guitar sounds "boomy."

Douglas Hudgens

That's simple. A 616ce. The larger body will give you more bass. The maple and the Taylor design will give you the bright sound you like.



616ce

I own eight Taylor guitars and love them all! It will be nine as soon as I can get my hands on a GS Mini. They each have their unique voice, from the DN to the GS. I'm primarily a fingerstyle player with a classical background and enjoy

learning the blues as played by the original artists. This brings me to wanting to design a BTO blues guitar with an old-fashioned, soulful voice. I'm thinking a 12-fret with an Adirondack spruce top (tobacco sunburst, of course), mahogany back and sides, mahogany neck with ebony headstock overlay, and cream binding and purfling. I think this would deliver the instrument I'm looking for. However, I would like the neck to be as wide as possible at the nut, 1-7/8 or more. Your thoughts?

**Tom Rusiecki
Port Richey, FL**

Tom, the neck width isn't a problem. If this were mine, I'd consider a mahogany top. Just consider it. Don't let me talk you into anything, but compared to a spruce top it will have a darker sound and would sing the blues a little mo' betta.



Mahogany top

**Got a
question for
Bob Taylor?**

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

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

The *Wood&Steel* Interview

High Harmony



Tommy Shaw talks about the co-writing chemistry that brought his new bluegrass record to life

By Jim Kirlin

Tommy Shaw understands the twinge of skepticism some might feel upon hearing that he's releasing a bluegrass album. After all, he's a veteran rock star, known the world over for his work with Styx, Damn Yankees and Shaw Blades. Traditional bluegrass is different turf, where electric guitars are *verboten*, and drums border on heresy. Then again, when you factor in Shaw's Southern heritage, his love of acoustic roots music, and the thin-air vocal lines that have gilded hits like Styx's "Crystal Ball" and Damn Yankees' "High Enough," maybe he's not straying far from his wheelhouse after all.

That said, Shaw himself wasn't sure what to expect when he first dipped his toe into the bluegrass creek back in 2003. His friend, singer-songwriter, slick-picker and producer Brad Davis, who's played with country luminaries Marty Stuart, Earl Scruggs and Sam Bush, asked him to sing high harmony on one of his bluegrass tunes ("Tell Me Son" from his album *I'm Not Gonna Let My Blues Bring Me Down*). Things clicked, and the two agreed that they should block out more writing time together.

They did, bearing creative fruits that included several song demos they loved, but years would pass before the two could synchronize their busy schedules again. When they finally did, starting in late 2009, the outpouring was prolific. On the eventual result, Shaw's new record, *The Great Divide*, the two unfurl a heartfelt homage to the bluegrass spirit, guided by lyric-rich story-songs that marry a compact song structure – the tunes rarely stray from the three-minute mark – with soulful, intricately woven acoustic instrumentation flavored with tasty bluegrass breakdowns. Shaw and Davis co-produced (along with singer-songwriter and Shaw Blades member Will Evankovich), and Shaw also co-wrote a few tunes with songwriting stud Gary Burr (815c, 612c), who's penned hits for the likes of Randy Travis, LeeAnn Rimes, and George Jones, and co-written with Ringo Starr, Carole King, Mary Chapin Carpenter, and John Levanthal.

For the recording sessions, Shaw and Davis enlisted a Nashville dream team, including Sam Bush (mandolin), Byron House (bass), Rob Ickes (Dobro), Scott Vestal (banjo), Stuart Duncan (fiddle), and Chris Brown (drums), with a guest spot on Dobro from Jerry Douglas and vocal cameos from Dwight Yoakam and Alison Krauss.

Chatting by phone from his home in the Hollywood Hills on a mid-

morning in early March, Shaw reflects on the wellspring that informed the project – the roots-rich music he heard on the radio growing up in Montgomery, Alabama, including Grand Ole Opry broadcasts from the AM station WSM in Nashville.

"Back in the '60s, cars had the big bench seats before the days of seat belts," he remembers. "I would stand up on the seat and lean over the front and listen to the radio and hear all this great music. This record was like my version of what the radio felt like back then."

With its old school sounds and narrative lyrical bent, *The Great Divide* taps straight into the marrow of life, as episodes of love, hope, heartbreak, hard labor, death, and cross-generational bonding unfold. The churning, upbeat opener, "The Next Right Thing," is fueled by Shaw's high-spirited vocals, followed by the playful pleas of the double-entendre-laden "Back in Your Kitchen." In "Sawmill," Shaw draws from his father's account of working as a water boy at a logging camp and witnessing a logger's gruesome, accidental death. The title track is a poignant waltz in which finding a grandfather's old letters to his wife helps salvage the narrator's own troubled relationship. In "Shadows in the Moonlight," secret love meets tragic consequences. The earthy porch-stomper "Umpteen Miles" chronicles Davis's rock-hauling father. The re-affirming "Afraid to Love" is another multi-generational tune buoyed by a beautiful harmony from Alison Krauss. The quirky wild card of the batch, the spare, fingerpicked "Give 'em Hell Harry," channels vintage John Prine.

The fact that the album packs such evocative musical stories into less than 40 minutes is a tribute to Shaw and Davis's ability to distill down to a level of simplicity without losing the richness of the vocal and instrumental arrangements. Blending timeless themes, personal stories, and indelible melodies helps these songs resonate in a way that, like other great roots music, is built to live on.

In our conversation, Shaw elaborates on his musical roots, the importance of co-writing chemistry, and his rekindled love of vinyl records.

Congratulations on getting the record across the finish line. It must have felt good after having been in the works for a few years now.

It did. You know, it just kept picking up momentum. It started out with just Brad and me doing these demos, but then as the songs came together, all

of a sudden we had enough to make a really good record, and then we kind of overwrote it once my friend Gary Burr became available. We even knocked some of Brad and my songs off because they just kept getting better. It just kept demanding that we be the stewards and usher this thing along, so it was like it was leading us. Those are the best records – the ones where you wake up and you know the next thing to do.

In your blog documenting this project, you wrote about nursing songs along: "One of the things I enjoy most about creating an album's worth of songs is to have a big batch of songs in various stages of completion, and let them tell you what's next." Can you elaborate on that?

Well, when I start getting a batch of them together, I like to get the foundations set up so you kind of know what the song's gonna do, so you can really follow your heart and what's inspiring you that day. With me, I'll wake up and just be lying there, and all of a sudden I'll hear what the song needs to do – this is the lyric;

"To hear Ralph Stanley and that high voice when I was a little kid, then you'd hear guys in gospel groups and hear the guy with the high voice. It always fascinated me, all the harmonies."

this is what needs to happen next; this is what I wanna play. So, you go out and focus on that one until it settles down, and then you'll hear an idea for another song, so you can just switch from one to another, like you're building this little neighborhood and you've got all the little foundations that you have the luxury of not having to submit any plans for. You just go out there and free-form build these little works of art.

Take me back to your formative days. What kind of musical environment did you grow up in?

My family loved all kinds of music, so we never heard, "I hate that kind of music." I think the first time I ever heard that was from my father when he heard the Four Seasons do "Sherry" – that falsetto was the one thing that put him over the top [*laughs*]. But everything else, we just loved all kinds of good music – the Grand Ole Opry, Johnny Cash. We would watch *The Ed*

Sullivan Show. I always loved Sammy Davis, Jr. I was never stuck in one kind of music. Later, I'd be in bands where one would be playing lounge music, and one would be playing soul music, and I just loved all of it, because I was never restricted. So, to hear Ralph Stanley and that high voice when I was a little kid, then you'd hear guys in gospel groups and hear the guy with the high voice. It always fascinated me, all the harmonies.

Did other people in your family sing?

My mother liked to sing gospel; she liked to sing the hymns and things like that. She plays piano a little bit by ear and actually plays harmonica, too, by ear. She and I will still get together and jam with her on harmonica. She's my musical muse from the family.

You sang high harmony with Brad back in 2003 on a bluegrass tune of his. How did you guys first get together?

I met him after I went to the Hank Williams tribute concert at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame museum in 2002, and Billy Bob Thornton was there and

there was this hole in my schedule, same with Brad, so our wives said, "You should both do this now." And when the girls say that, you know you're in good shape. Once we did that, the floodgates opened up, and it was like this record was just dying to be born.

Story-songs are often a strong component of roots music. The "Sawmill" tune comes out of your own family history. What about some of the other stories?

Well, Brad had the first verse written for the song "Umpteen Miles," and that really struck a nerve with me, but that's a story of him and his father. That was the third thing that we did. I helped him finish that one. And that's still one of our favorites. "Umpteen" is one of those words that's kind of made up, but both of us absolutely knew what it meant. So those songs just kept coming.

Another good one is "Shadows in the Moonlight"

Yeah, that was when Gary Burr came into the picture. I've known Gary since 1995. We went to Jakarta together and did a songwriter festival there, and Jack [Blades] and he and I got together at some point and co-wrote a song, and we'd always meant to get back together again, but it never happened. I finally sent him some of the demos and he got back to me and said, "I'm in!" It still took a while for him to find some time to come out here, but once he did, "Shadows in the Moonlight" was the first thing we wrote.

You had an interesting comment about working with him on the song "Back in Your Kitchen." I think you got stuck at one point. Can you talk about how you guys worked together and how co-writing with a good partner can help you get a song done?

I had the song idea, but it just didn't have the right feel. And Gary is such a genius. I had some of the lyrics written out like that, and he took it all in, then said, "What if we did it this way?" and he just sat down and played it with that kind of two-step beat, and all of a sudden, there's the song that you hear. It happened so fast because he didn't have any preconceived notions. I'd kind of spun it around in my head too many times. And he heard it fresh and basically played it back to me in a way that made sense. When you have chemistry with a songwriter, that's what you do with each other, you kind



Tommy working out a part in the studio

of finish each other's sentences. All of a sudden you sound like a very smart person. That's why I like getting into a vibe where you're co-writing and writing, because you'll wind up doing both better, I think.

It seems like some artists have reservations about co-writing. Of course, if you don't gel with them, it's probably not going to amount to much.

Most of the time it doesn't work out. And every once in a while, you'll have done it, and it's like, man, we just nailed it; let's get something to eat. That's how Jack Blades and I got together, and how the song "High Enough" that we did in Damn Yankees happened. John Kalodner [a record label executive] was trying to put us all together to see what could happen. Jack showed up on my doorstep in

New York City with a suitcase full of dirty laundry from the road, and the laundry room was down in the basement from our apartment. He was down there loading up the machine, and I heard him down there, singing, [sings] "I don't wanna hear about it anymore / It's a shame I've got to live without you anymore," and I kept listening, and I was like, well what's the rest of that? [laughs]. So I went over to the piano and I did the chorus, and within five minutes we had that song written. And that chorus was not something I had stuck in my head; it just seemed like that was where it should go.

Tell me about the root of the story for "The Great Divide"

Remember Ferlin Husky? He was this songwriter who had this great voice – he could sing up high and then he

would go down low. I wanted to do something in waltz form, so I just set a little template with a rhythm so I could play along with it, and this song started writing itself, and it got to that little refrain, "Like a message across the Great Divide," and all of a sudden I was hearing this thing that reminded me of hearing that kind of music on the radio in the '60s. And I had kind of this, "La-la-la, the Great Divide" [melody]. I knew I wanted it to be about finding my letters from my grandparents and that they were a message across the Great Divide, but when we got to that part [sings the melody], Brad said, "That sounded like you were gonna yodel there. Why don't you go ahead and do it?" I'm like, "I am *not* gonna yodel." And he said, "Just try it." So I tried it, and it worked. It wasn't corny yodeling. To me, that's the ultimate – when you try things that you'd never in a million years

think would work, and then they work, and you go on from there.

But at this point we had about 18 songs going, and we were trying to finish up, and I just couldn't ever get myself separated long enough to figure out how to tell that story – it's only a couple of verses. And Brad said, "I know someone named Paula Breedlove who I think would be great on this. She's written a lot of great songs; she's a lyricist." And I'm not hung up on having to write every single thing. So we sent her an mp3 of what we had, and I explained the rough story to her on the phone. And she said, "I think I got it." The next day she sent us back one sheet with the lyrics in it, and I got it out of the printer and was reading the lyrics heading downstairs to the studio, and it just wrecked me. I go into the studio and I've got tears in my eyes, and Brad turns around and said,

"Are you OK?" And I was like, [crying voice]: "Here, read this." And he reads it, and I look over, and *he's* crying. So, for that very reason, I almost didn't put the song on the record. I didn't want to make people mad because I blindsided them with this little tearjerker.

The song "Give 'Em Hell, Harry," about Harry Truman, has an interesting narrative twist on it. Where did you come up with the point-of-view for that?

My wife brought her friends out to hear us play one night in the studio. When we were finished, she said, "You should do a John Prine kind of song, but do a bluegrass version of that." I had just finished reading David McCullough's biography on Truman, so I thought, if there's one thing I know about right now it's Harry Truman. But the song that occurred to me was

one of my favorite John Prine songs, called "Jesus the Missing Years." So, it's not necessarily based in fact, but it's very entertaining. He's the ultimate storyteller.

Were you in the studio with the Nashville session guys when they were recording?

No, because we only had them for three days. My parts are kind of a template for everything, so actually I took it home and we post-produced it there, then we took the time to think, what needs to be here, and I did a lot of sweetening – doubling some parts, adding some acoustic things, a solo here and there. When they were there, these guys got it done so fast and at such high quality, I didn't want to slow the process down. It was incredible to be in the midst of them because they've known each other for years. So, just to hear the stories...for me to be a part of that was really cool.

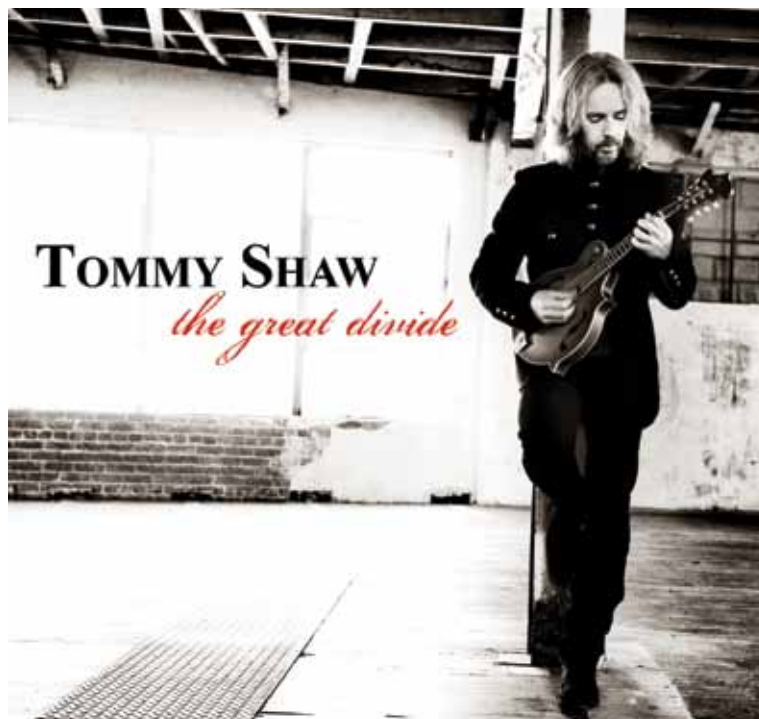
You played a lot of resonator guitar on the record. What Taylors did you use for steel-string acoustic parts?

Actually the thing I used a lot was my Taylor 12-string [655], but with just the high strings on it. It's on "I'll Be Coming Home" and I believe in "The Great Divide," we mixed it in on the second verse, so it becomes kind of a 12-string. And I played my Dreadnought. [He owns both an 810 and 610ce.]

It was interesting to learn that you're releasing this on vinyl, too. It seems like a format that would really suit the music.

My friend Mike Mettler is the editor-in-chief at *Sound and Vision* magazine, which used to be *Stereo Review*. He's just insane about vinyl. He's been on my case for years, and he wouldn't let up on me. At that point I'd made up my mind that I was gonna do it. And it was great. This guy, John Golden, he did his internship at Wally Heider [Studios, in San Francisco], he's a perfectionist when it comes to calibration. He's got what he calls his "perfectly aligned half-inch two-track machine." What we did was we took our Pro Tools mixes and ran them through and across the tape heads of that perfectly aligned two-track machine and took the output into the mastering. So it's got a really nice top end that's got a bit of an analog feel to it, even on the CD. But on vinyl it's really good. I love it. I did a slight change on the song sequence, too.

That would make sense because you have to flip the record over.



It's a different experience. It is.

There's been a bigtime revival of traditional sounds in roots music lately. A lot of young bands – Mumford & Sons being the current poster boys – are really embracing that. What's your take on why artists are drawn to it and why it's resonating with listeners?

I think these days [people] are driven less and less by taste makers, because everything's at your fingertips. Everything you want, you can decide whether you like it or not, and I think people take pride in discovering something on their own. And you can read someone's own personal comments about it. So you're not getting things that were churned out by publicists and focus groups and things like that. I just happened to hear something on the radio one day about Mumford & Sons, and then I heard the song and I was like, "Holy ____!" So I went home, went on Amazon and downloaded the CD, and I bought the vinyl, because I wanted to have that experience, too. What I love about them is they didn't have any kind of ideas of what the norms were; they just went with what they felt was right, so now this rhythm guitar player is playing the bass drum, you've got a banjo, a keyboard, horns, and it just all works because it's so real. When you see those guys, they're just like, let me at it. And you can't manufacture that.

Do you plan to tour in support of the record?

Well, I've been invited to play the Grand Ole Opry. [He played on March

26.] Things move a little slower in the bluegrass world. With rock music, you kind of come out with guns blazing. With bluegrass it seems to be a more gradual unveiling of things, and I'm fine with that. I think people need time to live with it, and get a little word-of-mouth going with their friends. I'd love to go play some dates, and I've got a couple of different ideas on how to do it that I know will work because I've talked to the people. But it's a big undertaking to put a lot of bodies in motion.

What else do you have on tap for this year?

With Styx, we're about to announce a summer tour with another group that we've never toured with, so that'll be cool. Then we're going to England, Scotland and Sweden in May I believe, for the first time in a few years. We have a DVD in post-production of our theater tour we did last November/December, and we're re-recording some of our masters in a series called *Regeneration*. We did Vol. 1; we're getting ready to do Vol. 2. So we're very busy. The band's playing better than ever. New, young fans are discovering us. There are teenagers out there singing songs – there were no albums when they were born. **W&S**

You can read Tommy Shaw's blog about the *The Great Divide*, listen to song samples, and order the music, at www.TheGreatDivideMusic.com. For updates on Styx, visit www.Styxworld.com

Shaw Things: Tommy's New Dreadnoughts

In March, Taylor artist relations rep Tim Godwin delivered a pair of custom, short-scale Dreadnoughts that he, Tommy, and Taylor Build to Order guru Joe Bina had designed together with bluegrass in mind. The guitars were built as twin models, each featuring a back and sides of beautiful Madagascar rosewood (with a matching peghead overlay), an Adirondack spruce top with Addie CV bracing, abalone top trim, white binding, a V-carve neck profile, aged toner finish, small diamond fretboard inlays, and Gotoh 510 Antique Gold tuners. After spending a few moments admiring the wood and appointments, Tommy gets down to business, picking, strumming, and tuning in to the playing nuances.

"Nice bottom," he says. "The neck's really nice on the hand."

The A/B comparison between the two guitars proves to be interesting, as the guitars share identical specs, with only the wood sets varying. He's playing with a Red Bear pick, which he was turned on to during the *Great Divide* project. They're made from a polymerized animal protein (no animals are harmed to make them). The picks apparently share the physical properties of real turtle shell. He says a lot of the Nashville bluegrass players use them.



"This one's a little throatier," he decides after a back-and-forth test-drive.

If the afternoon's first impression is favorable, another day with the guitars sends the romance into full bloom.

"These are the best sounding Taylor guitars I have ever heard," he e-mails Tim the following day. "Will Evankovich is here in the studio. We're cleaning up my live tracks for a Styx DVD, and every chance we get we pick them up and jam out. They sound so good it's unreal. All the TLC and attention to details really paid off. I just love them. They will see a lot of action."



Watch Tommy sample his new guitars.

Soundings

Grammy Grabs

The 53rd Annual Grammy Awards were presented February 13 in Los Angeles, and a healthy sampling of Taylor players were nominated, some of whom walked away with statuettes. Previous Grammy winners **Train** (414ce, 614ce, 655ce, 810ce SolidBody Classic) scored Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals for “Hey, Soul Sister,” while **Neil Young** (855) won Best Rock Song for “Angry World” from his critically acclaimed 2010 release *Le Noise*. Young was also nominated for Best Rock Solo Performance and Best Rock Album, along with **Pearl Jam** (DN8e, GA8-12e, 615ce, SolidBody Classic).

Last year’s Best New Artist winner, the **Zac Brown Band** (NS74ce, 910, 614ce, 612ce, Baby Taylor, SolidBody, T3), was nominated in four categories this year, and won Best Country Collaboration with Vocals for “As She’s Walking Away,” featuring **Alan Jackson** (K24ce, 910ce, Custom DN). Also representing Taylor in the country categories were **Jewel** (612ce, 614ce, 714ce, T5, JKSM) for Best Female Country Vocal Performance, **Chris Young** (GSRS, GS8-E, T5, SolidBody Standard) for Best Male Country Vocal Performance, and **Trace Adkins** (615ce, T3) for Best Country Collaboration with Vocals for his part in the radio-hit “Hillbilly Bone.”

Israel Houghton (T5) won Best Pop/Contemporary Gospel album for his 2010 release *Love God/Love People*. **Steven Curtis Chapman** (SCCSM, 714) was also nominated in the category for *Beauty Will Rise*. In the category of Best Rock or Rap Gospel Album, **Switchfoot** (514ce, 516ce, 614ce, 810ce, 814ce, T5) was nominated.

Other Taylor contenders included **Katy Perry** (814ce, 512ce, Baby Taylor) for Album of the Year, Best Female Pop Performance, Best Pop Collaboration and Best Pop Vocal; **Rod Stewart** (714ce) for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album; and **Dave Matthews** (DMSM) and Tim Reynolds for Best Rock Instrumental Performance. **Ledward Kaapana** (810, T5) was nominated for Best Hawaiian Music Album, and the nominees for Best Musical Album for Children included **Justin Roberts** (514, 410) and **The Battersby Duo** (K26ce, 916ce).

Country Contest

If you’re a fan of country music and *American Idol*-type contests, you’ll want to fix your remote on the new music competition program *CMT’s Next Superstar*. Set to premier in April, the show will feature undiscovered singer-songwriters who think they have what it takes to make it in the music industry. Contestants will compete while living together in Nashville, along the way writing, recording, rehearsing and performing with a variety of acoustic, electric and specialty-model Taylor guitars. Rumor has it that the opening credits will see one or two Taylor models exploding. www.cmt.com

For the Love of Taylor

A musician’s relationship with their guitar is a very personal one, but it can be especially meaningful when wielded for the good of others, as in the case of **Abby Miller and Taylor Love**.

A few years ago, Abby, at only 12 years old, learned of the story of a little girl named Taylor Love. Taylor had been diagnosed in 2006 with a rare form of fast-growing childhood cancer called neuroblastoma and was literally in a fight for her life, as doctors only gave her a 30 percent chance of survival. Moved by her story, Abby decided to use her Big Baby to draw attention to the story of Taylor and neuroblastoma. She started small, busking on street corners and playing community events, and then moved into the online world, posting a series of cover videos and encouraging people to donate to Taylor’s website. Their story, which has since been covered by the local NBC affiliate and *The Washington Post*, has united a community and led to a significant number of donations to help Taylor’s parents offset the health-related costs not covered by insurance.

Fast-forward three years, and the girls are still best buddies, musically and otherwise. Abby has since graduated from her Big Baby into a stage-ready 512ce. To show her appreciation, Taylor Love presented Abby with the guitar on Valentine’s Day. While Taylor continues to battle serious health problems, Abby is determined to continue helping the little girl she’s come to regard as her “sister” using her guitars.

“I am really thankful that I was given the gift of music,” she says. “It is something that I love and that I can give out to others and bring them happiness. You can change a lot of things if you use your gifts to try and make a difference. I have proven to myself that small acts can make huge things happen.”

To learn more about neuroblastoma, you can visit the American Cancer Society online at www.cancer.org, www.taylorlove.org or www.abbymiller.com

Square Feat

It took 15 years for the husband-and-wife musical duo of Keifer and Shawna Thompson (GS8e), better known as **Thompson Square**, to land their first top-10 hit. The act was recently certified as RIAA Gold for their cheeky song, “Are You Going to Kiss Me or Not” from their self-titled debut, released in early February. Since then, it’s been a whirlwind of exposure, from profiles in *USA Today* to a performance on Jay Leno.

Keifer says the tipping point for the country-rock duo came in 2009 when Nashville veteran Shawn Pennington caught their performance at local music venue 3rd and Lindsley. Less than two weeks later, the band signed with Stoney Creek Records, the sister label of Broken Bow Records. A self-taught guitarist, Keifer finds his Taylor to be a reliable song partner. “It feels great and sounds even better,” he says. “I know when I pick it up that there is a real quality instrument in my hand, and that is peace of mind!”

The band heads out on tour with Jason Aldean this summer. www.thompsonsquare.com

Ward Up

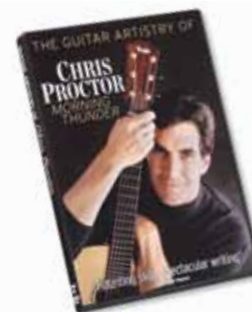
Young YouTube sensation **Tyler Ward** (714ce, GS8e, T3) has amassed a mountain of online followers – over 430,000 subscribers, in fact, with uploaded views in excess of 110,000,000 – by peppering his original music with catchy covers of today’s most popular songs. With an arsenal of talented friends to provide backup vocals, great camera presence, and a savvy sense of online marketing (over 265,000 fans on Facebook), Ward has successfully parlayed his YouTube popularity into widespread mainstream recognition elsewhere. As the first independent musician to be charted on Billboard’s

new SOCIAL 50 Chart, Ward is currently ranked #30 in the world, rubbing shoulders with Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Justin Bieber and more. He also ranks #5 on the Billboard Uncharted.

Now Nashville is calling. With publishing and creative deals from today’s biggest agencies on the table, Ward is contemplating his future as a both a singer and a songwriter. In July and August, he and his band will take their online show on the road to present original material and covers on a tour of both coasts. In late fall, they venture to Europe for several dates in Germany. www.youtube.com/user/TylerWardMusic

Thunderstruck

Watching Taylor fingerstylist and original workshop clinician **Chris Proctor** in his new DVD *Morning Thunder* is an enlightening exercise. Proctor has always been an intrepid guitar explorer, and his expansive approach to guitar composition and playing is likely to leave your head percolating with fresh ideas to apply to your own fretboard excursions.



In the DVD, released through Stefan Grossman’s Vestapol Videos (www.guitarvideos.com) as part of Grossman’s “Guitar Artistry” series, Proctor intersperses solo performances, played on his signature model rosewood Grand Concert and maple 12-string, with interview segments as he shares his influences and evolutionary steps as a player. He talks about the merits of composing with one’s head versus one’s hands, explains his approach to arranging and interpreting, and highlights the tools he uses to bring new textures to the acoustic guitar, like partial capos, the EBow, and alternate tunings.

Proctor’s rich aptitude for so many different styles of music, from blues and traditional Celtic to classical and jazz, inform his “New World” approach, which synthesizes different idioms in fresh ways, much like fingerstyle mavericks Leo Kottke and John Fahey,

both of whom are significant influences. The DVD performances include a sweet version of Kottke’s “Revisiting the Sailor’s Grace” and Fahey’s “The Last Steam Engine Train,” along with Celtic medleys and Proctor’s original compositions, including the new tune “Gecko Drive.”

Though the DVD doesn’t adhere to a traditional-style instructional format, any guitar lover is bound to come away inspired to dig deeper into their own personal musical inspirations and use them to create something fresh. If only we all had Proctor’s spidery reach on the fretboard. www.chrisproctor.com

Listening to the Music

Doobie Brothers guitarist **Pat Simmons** visited the factory on February 3 with his guitar tech, Joe Vallee. Simmons had borrowed a Taylor 815ce when the band was in New York City for some TV and radio performances last year, in support of their latest release, *World Gone Crazy*, and liked it so much he wanted to test-drive some other models. By the end of the afternoon he was leaning toward a GS-K.

Sarah & Friends

Also in February, Canadian singer-songwriter and three-time Grammy winner **Sarah McLachlan** brought her “Sarah and Friends” tour to San Diego, where she played to a sold-out crowd at the Spreckels Theatre. Earlier that day, Taylor artist relations rep Tim Godwin dropped by the venue after the band had rolled into town to collect McLachlan’s PS14ce for a quick tuneup back at the factory, and had it back at the venue in time for sound check.

Instead of an opening act, two artist friends who were touring as part of McLachlan’s band, **Butterfly Boucher** and **Melissa McClelland**, played mini sets during the show, performing their own songs with the band. McLachlan led her band through two sets, treating the crowd to nearly a three-hour show. Besides crowd favorites like “Possession,” “Building a Mystery,” and “I Will Remember You,” McLachlan pulled songs from all of her albums, including her latest, *Laws of Illusion*. In an interesting twist, audience members were invited to submit questions to McLachlan in a hat in the lobby, and she answered many of them throughout the show.



Clockwise from top left: Sarah McLachlan (photo by Steve Parr), Doobie Brother Pat Simmons, Keifer and Shawna Thompson of Thompson Square, Tyler Ward (photo by Sean Hagwell), (L-R) Abby Miller and Taylor Love



photo: Sean Hagwell

Spring



*This page (top down):
Macassar ebony 12-Fret-GA-LTD, 12-Fret-GC-LTD
Opposite page: Macassar ebony T3/B*

ing Boards

A double dose of walnut and Macassar, plus an all-mahogany roots revival, make for a rousing spring serenade.

Spring's arrival provides the perfect excuse to delve into our wood reserves in search of fresh inspiration. This year, walnut, Macassar ebony and mahogany beckoned. With walnut, we tapped two different grades, allowing us to offer a value-packed 400 Series and a premium class featuring highly figured sets. In the case of Macassar, crafting Build to Order models with it inspired a pair of our own "chef's specials." One is a lively Macassar/cedar 12-Fret; the other is an eye-catching T3/B with a Macassar top. Rounding out the spring collection is our first batch of all-mahogany acoustics in more than five years. Look for the Spring Limiteds in stores starting in May. For more photos and complete specs, visit taylorguitars.com.

Macassar Ebony 12-Fret

Woods: Macassar Ebony / Cedar

Models: 12-Fret-GC-LTD, 12-Fret-GA-LTD

Unique Features: 12-fret, slothead, Macassar backstrap, figured koa binding and back strip, edge burst top, bone nut/saddle, inlay-free fretboard

Macassar ebony's density produces strong, clear highs and lows, while a cedar top adds sparkling midrange overtones. Make it a 12-Fret and you've got yourself a guitar with mucho mojo. The lower bridge location of the 12-fret neck, together with the cedar top, yields extra warmth and woodiness. Responsive to a light touch, these beauties are ideal for a serious fingerstyle player looking for a darker, richer tone. Strummers will be inspired by the depth and sustain. And they're no less visually inspiring, with Macassar's beautiful variegation, koa binding, a slotted headstock, and an edge burst top.

Macassar Ebony T3/B-LTD

Woods: Sapele / Macassar Ebony

Unique Features: Figured koa binding, maple/rosewood purfling, edge burst, inlay-free fretboard, Vintage Alnico humbuckers with bezel mounts

Macassar's dark, exotic beauty creates a striking façade on our T3/B LTDs. Striped amber and espresso hues are highlighted by richly figured koa binding that also traces the f-holes, fretboard and headstock, while chrome hardware adds a cool contrast to its dramatic backdrop. If you need extra inspiration while playing this guitar, just look down.



Spring Limiteds

continued

The Walnut Series

Woods: AA Grade Walnut / Sitka Spruce

Models: W10ce-LTD, W12ce-LTD, W14ce-LTD, W16ce-LTD

Unique Features: Ivoroid binding, Gotoh tuners, bone nut/saddle, former 900 Series inlay

There's walnut, and then there's *walnut*. This is the rare-air kind, boasting rich colors and magnificent figure that together look mesmerizing as a bookmatched back. Clean ivoroid binding, our former 900 Series inlays, and Gotoh tuners supply a supporting touch of vintage sophistication.

This page: W14ce-LTD

Opposite page (L-R):

Walnut 414ce-LTD, All-mahogany GS-LTD

The Walnut 400 Series

Woods: Walnut / Cedar

Models: 412ce-LTD, 414ce-LTD, 416ce-LTD

Unique Features: Figured maple binding and mini wedge, "Pipeline" inlay

Back by popular demand, we reprise last spring's walnut limiteds, but with a few twists. This year we've opted for cedar tops over spruce for a splash of extra warmth; a mahogany neck in place of maple; and the "Pipeline" inlay that debuted with the 2010 Fall LTDs. Like last year, these LTDs are sharply appointed with figured maple binding and a matching back mini wedge.

The Mahogany Series

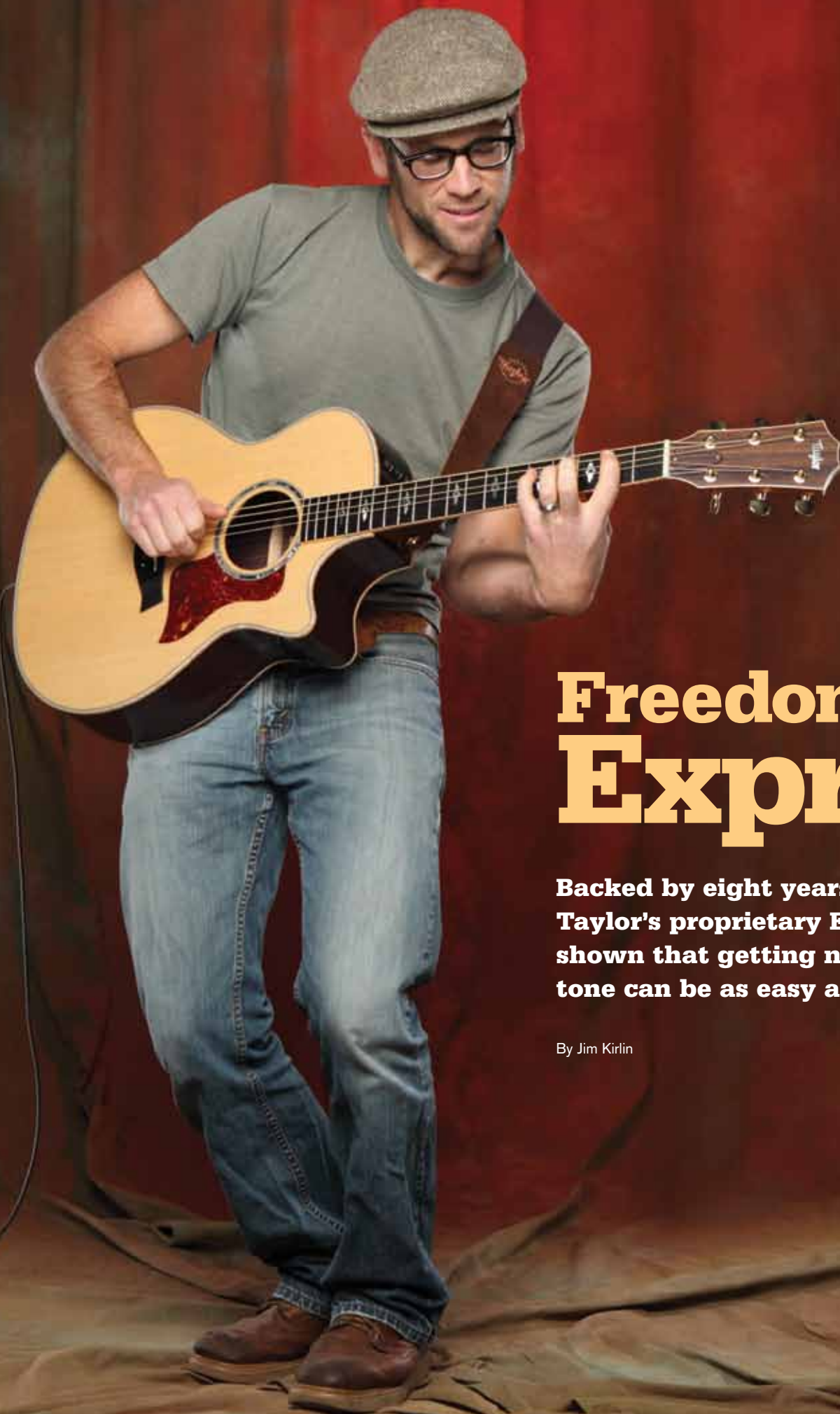
Woods: All Mahogany

Models: Mahogany GC-LTD, Mahogany GA-LTD, Mahogany GS-LTD, Mahogany DN-LTD

Unique Features: Traditional mahogany stain, tortoise shell binding, diamond fretboard inlays

Tonally, an all-mahogany acoustic will respond with an earthy sound that has long been associated with blues and other roots music. Players can expect a dark, throaty midrange punch when digging in, yet there's also an underlying sweetness in that same register that can complement a single-note line. Visually, we've created a look that evokes a throwback Americana style, starting with a traditional mahogany stain, which gives the guitar a luminous deep-red tint. Tortoise shell binding adds the perfect touch of color harmony, while white purfling and an abalone rosette supply crisp counterpoints.





Freedom of Expression

Backed by eight years of real-world performance, Taylor's proprietary Expression System has shown that getting natural amplified acoustic tone can be as easy as plugging in your guitar.

By Jim Kirlin

Taylor luthier Andy Powers grooves on an 814ce

In his book *Guitar Lessons*, Bob Taylor dedicates a chapter to innovation, highlighting three key development breakthroughs that transformed the company and its guitars for the better. One was UV-curable finish. Another was the NT neck. The third was the Expression System.

"It was innovation at its best," he writes of the ES, "and one of the more important improvements we've made to our guitars."

In explaining its development, Bob cites a fundamental Taylor philosophy that has guided so many of the company's pursuits over the years, and one that underscores the drive to produce the ES.

"We believe that the leader in an industry has the responsibility to innovate and we're happy to take that position," he writes. "It helps us, it helps the player, and it helps the industry."

The realm of acoustic amplification gave Taylor a unique opportunity to grow into an industry leader. When Bob first started down that road, Taylor had never thought of making a pickup. But it wouldn't be long before that would change.

From Aftermarket to Hafta Make It

One of the defining traits of the modern era of acoustic guitars was the installation of onboard guitar pickups for amplification. The way people used acoustic guitars for performance was changing.

"People needed more volume and more freedom to move around the stage than a microphone provided," Bob remembers.

But guitar makers weren't in the business of making pickups. If acoustic players wanted a pickup, it was usually an aftermarket transaction, where they would go to a guitar shop and have one installed. As the market for pickup-equipped acoustics first began to take shape, it was mostly the cheaper acoustic guitar models that sported them – a cheap pickup could be added for next to nothing, adding a selling point to the guitar. But Bob recognized the value to the customer and embraced pickup installation as a legitimate aspect of building a quality guitar for the modern world.

"We were the only high-end, high-quality guitar maker putting pickups onboard as a standard feature," he says.

The old-line companies were slower to the table, no doubt held back in part by the acoustic guitar's traditional heritage. By the time they came around, Taylor had taken advantage and established a solid reputation for



Anatomy of a pickup system: The ES features a strategically placed Dynamic Body Sensor to capture soundboard vibration; a Dynamic String Sensor (not visible); and a studio-grade preamp. Our patented Fused String Ground protects players from being shocked as a result of faulty grounding.

making quality acoustic-electric guitars that were "plug-and-play" ready. By the mid-'90s, Taylor was a major player in a robust new market segment.

After years of relying on aftermarket, piezo-based pickup systems

from other companies without seeing much improvement in the quality of the pickups and amplified tone, Bob and his product development team decided that they would need to develop their own. Bob saw the advantages of

designing and manufacturing them in-house: Taylor could exercise its own judgments about quality; the pickup system could be more seamlessly integrated into the design of a Taylor guitar; and refinements could be

made at will without having to rely on someone else. In other words, it would allow Taylor innovation to drive toward a better playing experience.

As we've detailed in past ES stories, Bob and his design team embarked on a development project led by David Hosler. In their design exploration, they were inspired by the fuller, more authentic-sounding amplified tones of magnetic sensors, which were used in microphones and record player cartridges. Hosler's team studied soundboard, body and neck vibration; explored accelerometer technology; and figured out how to capture and optimize the sound of the body, neck and strings with factory-designed magnetic body and string sensors. They worked with legendary pro audio designer Mr. Rupert Neve, the father of the analog mixing console, to develop a studio-grade preamp that would boost the signal cleanly without adding noise. The goals were to make the pickup as transparent as possible in capturing the tonal nuances of the guitar and the player, and to make it easy to control. Basically, the better the under-the-hood design, the greater the likelihood that issues like feedback could be resolved for the player, allowing the tone-shaping controls to be simpler, and giving them the freedom to focus on their performance. The Expression System debuted in the spring of 2003.

In the very beginning, Bob remembers, there were supporters and detractors. But he knew that would happen. It's the natural first-response to innovation. He'd experienced it when incorporating the bolt-on neck, with the NT neck, and with UV finish. In the case of amplified tone, the piezo sound had been around so long that it had established its own legitimacy, even if it sounded different from authentic acoustic tone. In many cases, player techniques had adapted to the nature of the piezo sound.

"[The ES] helped spawn an entirely new division in guitar players' opinions," Bob notes in his book. "Before, everyone was in the same boat. Now there was something competitive and it energized the community. It's frightening, but also exhilarating, to a company when you innovate a new solution and some people love it and some don't. Before, they neither liked nor disliked it. Because there was no competition of ideas."

Even before ever making its first pickup, Taylor already had established a strong foundation for great amplified tone: a great-sounding guitar. A Taylor guitar's natural acoustic voice was

continued next page

clear and balanced across the tonal spectrum, especially with the arrival of the Grand Auditorium in the mid-'90s. Taylors were already known among studio engineers for being easy to record with.

By all accounts, there are now close to 150,000 ES-equipped Taylors out in the world. Last year alone, 25,000 were built at the factory, according to Taylor electronics department manager Jeff Houck. By controlling the manufacturing, installation and servicing of the pickup systems at the factory, Taylor has been able to maintain a high level of quality assurance, and if customers ever do have an issue with their pickup, Taylor can diagnose the problem and service it efficiently.

"From a manufacturing standpoint I get to see the nuts and bolts of what goes into the ES," says Houck. "All the ingredients are top shelf – materials, processes and the people that build it. Every employee in our department has worked with the ES program for at least seven years. That translates to a group of people who really know what they are doing."

The Good Kind of Feedback

One of the most important tasks associated with introducing the ES was simply to help live sound engineers undo the habits they'd developed over the years, since working with piezo-based pickup systems had given them a preconceived idea of how to EQ an amplified acoustic guitar. Once they understood the simplicity of the ES, it created a positive situation for everyone involved, from the player to the front-of-house person to audiences.

"We've gotten great reviews on the acoustic guitar sound," says David Morgan, front-of-house engineer for Cher's Las Vegas show at the Colosseum Theater at Caesars Palace. Morgan's mixing duties include an ES-equipped 714ce that guitarist Dave Barry (k.d. Lang, Janet Jackson) plays in the show. "It's a really natural sound. We've had no problems bringing it out in the mix and it sits very well. I've been really pleased with the ES. It's easy to EQ, it's got nice resonance, and all I do is add a little Gold Plate [reverb] to it for a little body and it sounds great."

On stage, Dave Barry, who also owns an 812ce, says he loves the live tone and ease of use.

"One of the things I fell in love with right away was the natural tone without having to use a lot of extra outboard gear," he says. "The way I have it set up now is I use the tip, ring, sleeve [TRS] into the Taylor Breakout Box with the mute switch on it, and that goes directly into the PA. And we're using in-ear monitors, so everything is very

microscopic, more so than a wedge monitor. [I like] the way the guitar responds dynamically when I play soft on it, and when I get after it. It doesn't have that – I guess it's about 500 hz or so – but there's a quackiness that can happen, particularly with piezo or bridge-style pickups, that this guitar and this system really sort of butter over. The other thing I love is that I hear myself contacting the body of the guitar. So if I'm tapping on the top of the instrument while I'm playing, I can hear all of that, and I like that, especially in an in-ear scenario. I think it's especially good because it gives a little room to the instrument. So I've really enjoyed it. It's very simple to use. You've got your volume, you've got your bass, and you've got your treble, and I basically run it pretty flat. It works great."

Ohio-based rock band Hawthorne Heights (916ce, GS8e, K20ce, K4) usually brings a live sound engineer on their full electric tours, but they left him at home for the stripped-down acoustic tour they did in 2010. With the ES, they had nothing to worry about.

"Almost every front-of-house engineer in the clubs said it was the cleanest signal they've ever had," says singer/guitarist JT Woodruff. "I always find that's pretty impressive – anytime anyone says you're giving them a clean signal means your instrument is amazing and the pickups are great. Otherwise, there's only so much the front-of-house can do with it."

Mark Sheehan, the guitarist from the popular Irish band The Script, which has opened for the likes of U2 and Paul McCartney, has played a Taylor most of his career and has come to rely on the ES.

"The pickup system is amazing because if you do decide to plug in, which I have to an awful lot when I'm doing acoustic shows, you're gonna want a system that's really reliable and, honestly, is basic," he says from London during rehearsals for a 2011 tour in the U.S. "The old pickup used to have a notch switch and blend and all this stuff. I find, if anybody who's doing what I have to do, this is the man right here."

Putting the ES in Western Music

Western music singer-songwriter Jon Messenger has seen a tremendous influx of Taylors among the Western music community in recent years. He attributes this to both the pure acoustic playing experience and the ease of use of the ES. He was already a longtime Taylor owner himself – he has a 1984 Brazilian rosewood 710 – and a veteran of a variety of different acoustic

amplification scenarios from over the years. When he used to perform with a bluegrass band he would play the 710 into a microphone, and had to contend with feedback issues. Eventually he had another brand of pickup installed, which he could dial in because he also has experience running sound for live performances. After the Expression System's debut, he had a chance to plug in an ES-equipped 614ce at a music store in Arizona.

"Right away you could hear a quality best described as transparency," he says. "The claim was that you were going to accurately be able to translate not only tone but the feel – like when you sit alone in a room playing your guitar and bend a note or you squeeze the wood just so, and you get that tonal quality coming out of a guitar that you can capture with a really good microphone. The claim was true."

That 614ce is currently Messenger's main guitar, and he says it's saved him on more than a few occasions, unlike other acts that don't have the ES.

"You know very well that when you go to play out, you're completely at the mercy of the sound guy," he says. "Sometimes we'll get a sound guy from another genre who doesn't have any conception of what acoustic guitars are supposed to sound like. We always have good sets when other people have all kinds of trouble. Whether I'm playing by myself or in a trio, all I need to do is take the Taylor cable, plug it into a mic [XLR] cord, and run it through the PA board. And for playing rhythm, I set my volume knob at about 9 o'clock. The soundman can't screw you up. All you have to do is have it flat and on."

For a tight-knit musical community like the Western Music Association, the positive word-of-mouth about the ES among musicians has been substantial.

"I got people to buy Taylors just based on hearing what the guitar sounded like sitting around picking, and that was even before the ES," he says. "Once people started showing up with the ES, when people heard what it sounds like and discovered the ease of operation – how many headaches in your life just disappeared in live performance – every time I turned around, somebody else has got a Taylor guitar in their hands who used to play something different. The things sell themselves. The group effort that you guys have put into this has really created a wonderful world in the modern era for making music. And that works across the entire spectrum of genres." **W&S**

The ES at a Glance

The Expression System was designed to blend seamlessly into the anatomy of the guitar. The 2011 iteration features two magnetic pickups – a body sensor mounted to the underside of the soundboard to capture the nuances of the top movement, and a string sensor embedded beneath the fretboard extension (near the neck pocket) to register string and neck vibration. A studio-grade preamp boosts the signal cleanly without adding noise. Three soft-touch roller knobs (Volume, Treble, Bass) make it easy to shape your tone, and each features a center detent, which comes in handy in low-light conditions. There's also a switch on the preamp board that allows you to turn off the body sensor, which gives you flexibility in different performance situations. With a fresh 9-volt battery, you can expect about 40 hours of amplification. One additional safety feature is a fused string ground, which will protect you from being shocked as a result of a faulty electrical ground.

Sound Advice

The Expression System features a different design from many other pickup systems. Here are a few tips that will help the sound engineer help you sound good at a gig.

Plug in: Most other pickup systems produce an "unbalanced" signal, meaning that the amplified tone can only travel a short distance without tone loss. They are also more subject to noise, distortion and ground-loop issues. To minimize those issues, the signal is usually run through a direct input (DI) box, which converts the unbalanced signal to balanced. The ES was designed to have a balanced signal, so no DI box is necessary. Just use a TRS to XLR cable straight from the guitar to the snake or mixer.



Tune up: To maintain the balanced signal from guitar to amp/PA and use a digital tuner, we recommend our Balanced Breakout Box. Your signal passes through the box with XLR in and out jacks. There is a 1/4" jack that you plug your tuner into, and your signal is tapped and fed to your tuner. There is a mute switch on the Balanced Breakout Box that silences the XLR output for silent tuning.



Turn up: Many sound engineers have a preconceived idea of how to EQ an acoustic guitar based on their experience with piezo pickups in acoustics. Their "go-to" acoustic setting can have some pretty radical EQ adjustments. With the ES, you want to start with the ES controls at their center detents and have the sound man start with the channel adjusted flat. If the PA is EQ'd for the room, you'll have a great sound with the settings flat. He can then fine-tune to taste.



Mixed Media



Gear BENCH TEST

Taylor GS Mini
TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

Guitar Player EDITOR'S PICK

Taylor originally debuted its "take anywhere" guitar with the Baby Taylor, a 3/4-sized instrument with a short-scale (22 1/2") neck that was optimized for alternate tunings. Following on the success came a more substantial larger model called the Big Baby, which featured a full-sized 25 1/2" scale neck. Taylor's most recent entry into the travel guitar arena is the GS Mini, which falls between the Baby and Big Baby by sporting a 23 1/2" scale neck that requires standard tuning, which will keep the overall length at a compact 36". The intent of the Mini is to be a step above the "travel" guitar in sound, performance, and functionality, and, as you'll see, it quite nails these marks.

All of the GS Mini's elements are in keeping with the quality of standard Taylor guitars. The satin-finished, slightly v-shaped neck feels great and the nicely rounded frets and low action make it a delight to play. The nut is perfectly installed and the intonation solid and careful. Careful examination consists of great forward lean, a multi-ring nut

with white fiber center and black/white/black binding around the perimeter of the top. A tortoise-colored pickguard and a black Lotus headstock (flying around on the opposite group) from the smooth-rising tuners with their sculpted real buttons close up the ribs of this guitar.

Suffice to say that Taylor has indeed a lot about making small guitars that sound big, and the GS Mini is by some impressive performer to date. The proportions and light weight of this guitar might lead you into thinking that the size

is will be 100 scale, but all it takes is one strum to realize that this is no ordinary compact acoustic. In fact, the GS Mini delivers amazing depth, fullness, and precision. The tones are crisp and detailed with a blossoming overhang and draw-out low end, and whether you play with your fingers or use a pick, the dynamic responsiveness is startling. Even when lightly plucking the strings the sound has surprising body and dimension, yet you can play this guitar hard without feeling much compression.

If you need to amplify, the optional ES-Go (pickup/pick) (100 dollars) installs quickly and easily in a pre-mounted receptacle at the front of the soundhole. The system is based on the type of single-pick pole and on backplate and output gear and it works beautifully. I didn't even have to remove the strings to fit the pickup! The ES-Go comes with a wired output jack that is also easy to install. You simply remove these small screws that hold the original output in place, use the ES-Go jack through the hole, re-

104 MARCH 2011 GUITARPLAYER.COM

When the GS Mini debuted at Summer NAMM 2010, enthusiastic fans, dealers and media clamored to get their hands on one. Since then, the guitar has gone on to win Product of the Year honors from *Music and Sound Retailer* magazine and has earned more than a few glowing reviews. Although you'd probably rather be playing a Mini than reading about one, we've gleaned a few comments from industry publications.

The Editor's Pick

Guitar Player
March 2011

After a thorough test-drive and review of the GS Mini, *GP* gear editor Art Thompson tagged the guitar with the magazine's coveted Editors' Pick Award. "The satin-finished, slightly v-shaped neck feels great and the nicely trimmed frets and low action make it a delight to play," Thompson writes of his initial impression. "The nut is perfectly installed and the intonation solid and tuneful." On its performance, he lauds the guitar's projection and versatility: "Suffice to say Taylor has learned a lot about making small guitars sound big.... The GS Mini delivers amazing depth, fullness and presence. The tones are crisp and detailed with a blossoming

midrange and abundant low end, and whether you play with your fingers or use a pick, the dynamic responsiveness is startling." Thompson also plugged in with the ES Go™ pickup. He liked its "rich, clear sound" and its ability to be "played quite loudly without incurring feedback."

An Electric Feeling

American Songwriter
January 2011

Jake Kelly of *American Songwriter*, who is primarily an electric player, felt that his fellow electric pickers will love playing the GS Mini. "[The] reduced scale makes light gauge acoustic strings feel like extra light electric guitar strings," he explains. "Electric players will also love the way the sound naturally compresses when strummed or picked hard, but still has the volume and cut to stand out when playing with others using full-sized guitars." He calls the ES Go a functional and cost-effective solution for those looking to seamlessly plug in and play, and highlights the Mini's overall fun factor: "Everyone smiles and exclaims their love for it... it's small enough to be stashed in the trunk of a Smart Car but big enough to be heard in any acoustic situation, and it accomplishes what every instrument

should: One can't resist picking it up, and it has the playability and tone that makes one never want to put it down."

Pure Platinum

Guitar World
March 2011

"It's not impossible to build a small guitar that sounds good," writes *Guitar World's* Chris Gill in his review of the GS Mini, "but the real challenge is to build a small guitar that has a big sound." Not surprisingly, the Mini fits the bill. Gill echoes the sentiments of other reviewers, toasting the Mini's "expressive, dynamic response," along with its "rich sustain, impressive volume and satisfying bass." In the end, Gill awards the GS Mini the magazine's Platinum Award for Quality and Design.

Slick and Quick

Premier Guitar
April 2011

With a look that's "slick and black as night" and a playing style that's "fast and easy," *PG* gear editor Charles Saufley proceeds to put the new Doyle Deluxe (DDX) model through its paces. "The combination of light strings, low action and long scale beckon you to play fast and throw around bends,

hammer-ons and legato runs," Saufley assesses, noting that the guitar also responds well to "nuanced fingerpicking with a thumbpick or bare fingers." He equates the guitar's tone with that of other Taylors – "exceptionally present in the midrange" with a "lovely balance between muscular and delicate" playing. He also liked the responsiveness of the DDX's ES-T® tone controls. His final verdict: "The Taylor Doyle Deluxe is one of the quickest-feeling flattops I've played in a while. What's more, it's voiced to take advantage of lighter strings and fingerpicking – reactive in the high and mid range with plenty of sustain....The construction is flawless... and is a Taylor through and through. This guitar really begs to be played and that kind of relationship with a guitar is not always one you can buy at any price. In that sense, the beautifully built Doyle Deluxe is worth every penny."

Lessons Reviewed

Positive reviews of Bob Taylor's book, *Guitar Lessons: A Life's Journey Turning Passion into Business*, have been rolling in. *Guitar Player's* Art Thompson named the book one of his "GP Editor's Top Three," describing how "Taylor shares epiphanies and hard-earned lessons that led to ultimate success, and the result is a revealing take about craft, business and the pursuit of happiness."

Industry peer Jason Verlinde, publisher of *The Fretboard Journal*, wrote a full review of the book, noting how he can relate to "sweat equity," and calls the book "a breath of fresh air." He elaborates: "Unlike seemingly every other business book being made today, Taylor is not out to preach a four-day workweek or ask you to mull about what Google might do in a certain situation – there is no get rich quick scheme here. Instead, he simply shares stories – both positive and negative – that took place behind-the-scenes at Taylor Guitars since its founding in the early '70s. It's fascinating and enlightening and, more than anything, it's real..."

ABA Banking Journal added the book to their roster of reviews, advising their readers who work with small business clients to use the stories in *Guitar Lessons* to encourage and relate to those they work with. Writer Charlie Moon calls for fellow bankers to "look like a hero in the eyes of your small business customers. When your customers are busy building their businesses they may not take the time to read a book. Do them a favor, read the book, tell them the stories, and help them persevere to build their vision, deliver their product, and repay their loan."

SolidBody Solidarity

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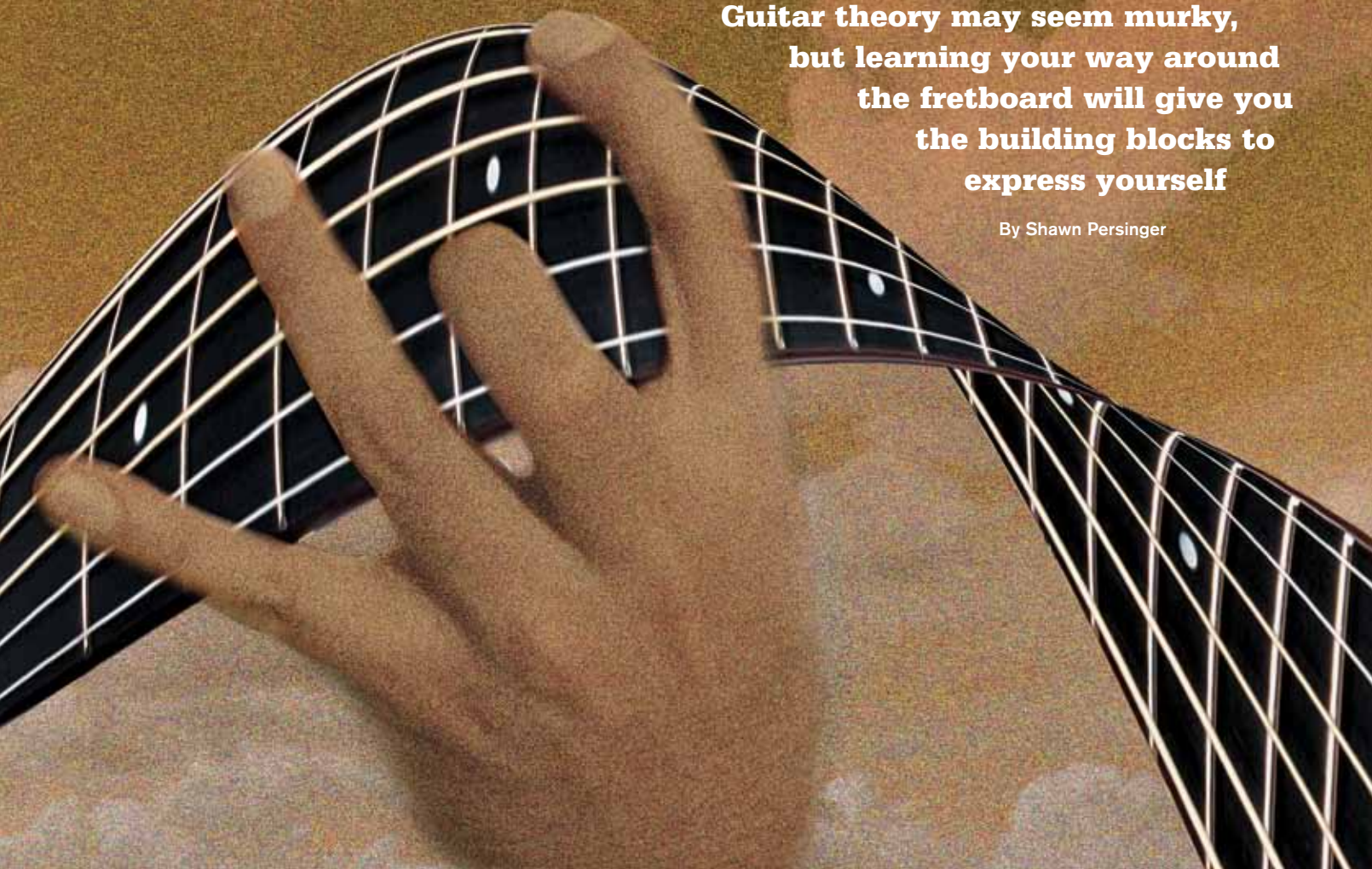
The world has been eagerly awaiting the arrival of Taylor's new double cutaway SolidBody, especially those who experienced it firsthand at Winter NAMM. Peter Hodgson of IHeartGuitarblog.com calls the guitar "one of my favorite things at NAMM," and goes onto say, "I've made no secret of having a serious crush on Taylor guitars. You saw my SolidBody Custom review a while ago? Well imagine that but sleeker, sexier and more rockworthy." One of his fellow bloggers, Jonathan Bloomer of Guitar Noize, agrees: "I was fairly confident my bank account was safe... uh oh, I feel a G.A.S. attack coming on... It's beautiful and because it is based on the singlecut version it has all the amazing features like the plug & play solderless Loaded Pickguards with any combination of pickups you can think of, or you can go for the Standard without the pickguard."



The Irrational Fretboard

Guitar theory may seem murky, but learning your way around the fretboard will give you the building blocks to express yourself

By Shawn Persinger



For some guitar players, the idea of music theory might conjure images of white-wigged old men hunched over writing desks and scribbling madly on parchment paper – an activity more akin to math professors than rock stars. But any musician worth his salt knows some music theory, whether he realizes it or not. Knowing that a G chord is called a G chord is music theory! You don't have to know that a G chord is made from the pitches G, B and D; that's just slightly

more advanced theory. Counting off a song, "1, 2, 3, 4!" is music theory. That count establishes a rhythm of 4/4. You don't need to know that each measure can be subdivided into smaller groups of twos and threes or filled up with eighth notes, triplets or rests. That is simply more advanced theory. You probably know other theoretical concepts, too, and either don't realize it or have trouble explaining it, especially on your instrument of choice.

You see, the guitar fretboard's

layout is not a logical one. This is because the guitar has evolved over thousands of years (the so-called "Hittite Guitar" dates back to roughly 1300 B.C.), and as a result, the playable functions started for practical rather than logical purposes. In other words, they sounded good, so they didn't have to be mathematically valid. Unlike the piano, which was designed to perform as the ultimate reasonable and coherent instrument, the guitar is more of a wild animal that has been

tamed to a point, yet still preserves its feral nature, which can cause it to bite in the most unexpected and irrational ways.

If you've ever felt the sharp teeth of the guitar's design gnawing into your understanding of what you are technically doing when you play your favorite songs, you are not alone. So, just relax and get ready to fill in some blanks in your constantly growing knowledge of the guitar, music and its underlying principles.

Guitar Theory's Rival: The Piano

A major problem guitarists face when plunging into even the most basic rules of music theory is the convoluted way the guitar is laid out. For instance, there is no other instrument that has six different places to play the exact same note (Ex. 1, p. 27). In many ways, these multiple versions of E are a true blessing for a guitarist when playing, but when it comes to theory they just cloud the issue. The piano is the music theorist's best friend; the guitar plays runner-up.

I'm not suggesting you all drop your Taylors and start subscribing to *Steinway Monthly*. On the contrary, I'll show you how to take advantage of the guitar's unusual layout. However, I would recommend that if you have access to a keyboard (and given the fact that most toy stores carry miniature pianos for as little as \$10, there is no excuse not to), then you might double-check your theory work by referring to the keyboard. Let's start here and demonstrate some of theory's most basic principles by comparing the different points of view of a pianist and a guitarist.

On the keyboard, basic theory is usually discussed in the key of C. This is because all the white keys on the piano are pitches in the key of C. This makes naming the pitches easy (Ex. 2), naming the intervals easy (Ex. 2), and even playing chords easy. The F chord is no harder to play on the piano than the E minor (Ex. 3 and 4). Are you starting to second-guess your instrument choice yet?



Ex. 2: Note names and intervals



Ex. 3: E minor chord



Ex. 4: F chord

In contrast, on the guitar we have several different and equally confusing ways to play the C major scale (Ex. 5, 6 and 7), and these examples are only three of virtually endless possibilities. Now let me reassure you why the guitar is still a good instrument choice. Once you've learned the pattern shown in Example 7, you'll actually know all 12 major scales! All you need to do is start the pattern on a different fret. If you want to play the G scale, then start the pattern shown in Example 7 at the third fret. E-flat major? Same pattern at the 11th fret. Got it? Antithetically, piano players have to learn 12 different patterns for all 12 major keys. I point this out to illustrate that all instruments have their advantages and disadvantages.

Now let's move onto some essential building blocks of music theory: scales.

Which Scale Do I Use?

Knowing that the guitar's layout is lacking in divine logic, let's tackle a salient question: "Why are the scales laid out in so many different ways on the guitar?" Before I tell you why, let me explain how scales are made.

All scales – major, minor, pentatonic, etc. – are simply a series of ordered steps, starting on any given pitch and ending on the same pitch an octave higher or lower. For our purposes we'll stick with the major scale because all Western music theory is based on this scale. Example 8 shows the C major scale and the series of steps that it contains (W = whole step; H = half step): W – W – H – W – W – W – H. (Note: Many theory books also use the terms Tone [T] for a whole step and Semitone [S or s] for half steps.) This is how all 12 major scales are made. Example 9 shows the G major scale. As you can see, it contains the same order of whole steps and half steps but starts and ends on the pitch G. It's that easy! Now that we understand the construction of this essential element, let's use it to address the issue of fingering options and why they exist.

Our various choices regarding where we can play the scales come back to the fact that we have multiple places on the guitar where we find the same notes (Ex. 1). What at first seems like the dilemma of too many options should really be viewed as personal alternatives for each individual player. It is arguable that moving up and down the scale on only one string (Ex. 9) is an awkward way to utilize the fingerboard, but I would disagree (so would most sitar players, as this is one of the fundamental movements in that instrument's performance vocabulary). But, for the

sake of argument, let's find a more expedient way to play the G major scale (Ex. 10). Once again our W – W – H – W – W – W – H pattern is still intact, but it is difficult to see because we are changing strings so frequently. While this is an excellent pattern to know, particularly for bluegrass and classical music, the fact that it exploits all of the open strings makes it a difficult pattern to move around the neck. In contrast, Example

11 falls comfortably on the fretboard, utilizing one finger per fret (first finger at the second fret, second finger at the third fret, third finger at the fourth fret, fourth finger at the fifth fret) and it is readily moveable. Example 12 demonstrates a fourth fingering option with the convenience of using three notes per string. And just for fun, I've included a version of the scale in natural harmonics (Ex. 13). You'll have to bend behind the nut to get the C.

The Irrational Fretboard

Ex. 1 Ex. 5: C Major scale with open strings Ex. 6: C Major scale with one string Ex. 7: C Major scale in a closed position

Ex. 8: C Major scale Ex. 9: G Major scale

Ex. 10: G Major scale, open position Ex. 11: G Major scale, closed position

Ex. 12: G Major scale, three notes per string Ex. 13: G Major scale in harmonics

So which pattern is best? You decide. Personally I believe there is no best way to play anything on the guitar. If there were, everyone would sound the same, and quite frequently, I find that players with the most unorthodox approaches produce some of the most interesting music. So, don't get too hung up on these choices, because that is all they are. You don't need to learn all of them, just the ones that suit you best. **W&S**

Shawn Persinger, a.k.a. Prester John, is a self-proclaimed "Modern/Primitive" guitarist who owns Taylor 410s and 310s. His latest CD, Desire for a Straight Line, with mandolinist David Miller, showcases a myriad of delightful musical paradoxes: complex but catchy; virtuosic yet affable; smart and whimsical. www.PersingerMusic.com



Winter NAMM

January 13-16, 2011 Anaheim, California

The GS Mini wins Product of the Year, the double cutaway scores a double thumbs-up, and a great artist lineup rocks the house

Nearby Disneyland may have staked its claim as The Happiest Place on Earth, but if you're a music gear junkie, the Anaheim Convention Center, home of the Winter NAMM Show, was a better bet for four days in January.

With Winter NAMM as the official buzz-building launching pad for new products in the MI industry, the record-setting attendance numbers were no doubt an encouraging sign for exhibitors and retailers. The show certainly opened on a great note for Taylor, as the GS Mini was named Product of the Year by *The Music and Sound Retailer*, a major trade publication. It marked the second year in a row that Taylor has won the award (the T3 won last year) and, remarkably, the fourth time in six years (other previous winners were the T5 and GS). The award is chosen by a vote of dealers, who also gave us a vote of confidence as the Acoustic Guitar Line of the Year in *MMR* magazine's Dealers' Choice Awards.

Other Taylor accolades to note from the show: *Bass Gear* magazine presented Bob Taylor with the Summer NAMM (2010) Best of Show award for the V-Cable™. And on Sunday, Taylor and GE Capital earned an Honorable Mention from NAMM's Wanna Play? Foundation, which recognizes non-NAMM members for using music and musical instruments as a means to encourage music education. As both Taylor and GE are members, neither was eligible for an actual award, but NAMM wanted to give special recognition to the commercial.

The Room

Our showroom layout in general resembled that of last year, though we changed the way we presented the acoustic line. Instead of organizing guitars by each series, we arranged them by each acoustic shape to reflect the way we've been talking about the line at Road Shows. We also designed a special display to highlight the Expression System® for our acoustics, which helped dealers and customers key in on its design and performance benefits compared to other acoustic pickups in the market (see story on page 22). Another wall showcased a gorgeous array of Build to Order models that were crafted especially for the show, offering a tasty sample of the custom options available through the BTO program.

Our presentation of the electric line featured the new double cutaway SolidBody and a mix of vibrant color options for the quilted maple top Standard, both of which made a big splash with dealers. For any dealers who'd been slow to embrace the SolidBody as a legitimate line of electrics, seeing the beautiful curves of the double cutaway with the colorful figured tops of the Standard was a game changer. Brent Moss from The Guitar Shop in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada was a prime example. He's seen modest customer interest in the SolidBody as it established its place in the electric guitar market over the last couple of years, but he felt the new design options would give the line more

traction in the market and spur sales growth.

"When I saw those double cuts, I told [Taylor Canadian Sales Manager] Steve Parr, 'Dude, you guys just officially entered the electric guitar business,'" said Moss, who placed a healthy order for them at the show. "I think it'll do really well, and it'll make the other SolidBody guitars move as well because you kind of have a bit more of a line. To have a guitar that looks that hot with the trem working the way it does, with or without a pickguard, at that price point, that's good."

The Stage

This year's performance lineup covered a lot of musical turf. The music kicked off Thursday with a solo acoustic set from acclaimed Japanese guitarist **Hirokazu Ogura**, who'd been scheduled to perform in the duo **Yamagen**, but his musical partner, **Yoshiyuki Sahashi**, fell ill and couldn't leave Japan. Not to worry. Ogura used guitar looping gear to accompany himself and wove layers of guitar lines into his melodic fingerstyle compositions.

Next up, **Plain White T's** treated the crowd to a harmony-rich performance, including acoustic-centric hits like "1,2,3,4" and "Hey There Delilah," along with "Hate (I Really Don't Like You)," the up-tempo "Our Time Now," and a few tunes from their new release *Wonders of the Younger*, including "Irrational Anthem," "Rhythm of Love," and "Boomerang."

Longtime Taylor signature artist and crowd favorite **Doyle Dykes** proudly debuted his new Doyle Deluxe model, which was named one of *Guitarist UK* magazine's top 10 products from the show. Doyle dazzled the crowd as usual with his acrobatic fingerstyle arrange-

ments and was joined for a few tunes by singer-songwriter, producer and former Ambrosia member **David Pack**. Pack shared fond memories of playing with Chet Atkins, and he and Doyle played a tasty set that included the soulful Pack tune "Tell Her Goodbye," a twangy cover of "Lay Down Sally" (with Pack on a T3), and a medley of songs in the key of A, including the Doors' "Break on Through (to the Other Side)," the instrumental classic "Tequila," and Percy Mayfield's "Hit the Road Jack." Doyle took over on a cool mash-up of "Classical Gas" and Chicago's "25 or 6 to 4," played on an R. Taylor 12-string.

On Friday, L.A.'s **The Airborne Toxic Event** led the day's performances with a spirited acoustic set featuring material from their forthcoming release, as they warmed up for their European Residency Tour. **Ed Robertson** and **Kevin Hearn** of **Barenaked Ladies** played next, entertaining the room with witty banter about NAMM in between songs. To close out the day, **Night Ranger** returned after last year's strong unplugged performance, this time rocking an electric set that featured hits like "(You Can Still) Rock in America," "Don't Tell Me You Love Me," and "Sister Christian," plus a couple of Damn Yankees tunes and a surging cover of AC/DC's "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap." Guitarists **Joel Hoekstra** and **Brad Gillis** shredded on the SolidBody, and the overall performance prompted *Orange County Register* pop music columnist Robert Kinsler, who was in the house, to rave: "This NAMM showcase marked one of the most rocking sets I've witnessed at the trade show. Big hits were delivered with unbridled power..."

Saturday featured a dark-hued acoustic set from Knoxville, Tennessee

rockers **10 Years**, with guitarists **Brian Vodinh** and **Ryan "Tater" Johnson** on 6-and 12-strings, respectively. The day's middle set brought the powerful and moving contemporary Gospel sounds of multiple Grammy and Dove Award winner **Israel Houghton**, accompanied by his band **New Breed** and also joined by his friend, liturgical post-rock artist **Michael Gungor**. Houghton and Co. packed the house and delivered a knockout set colored by soaring vocals, tight gospel/funk grooves, and a vibe of celebration and hope. **Coheed and Cambria** capped the day with a stripped-down acoustic performance that started with just **Claudio Sanchez** and **Travis Stever** on a couple of tunes before being joined by the rest of the band.

Honorable mention goes to kid-rockers **Skick**, comprised of three siblings and a friend (average age: 12!), who played an energetic set on Sunday.

One other performer who wasn't formally scheduled but who entertained the room in-between sets each afternoon was flamenco guitarist **Marija Temo**, whose playing was featured in last year's GE Capital commercial with Taylor Guitars. Bob Taylor introduced Marija on stage by noting the effect the commercial and her playing had on renewing his interest in making pure classical guitars.

Like last year, we brought a video crew in to record high-def footage of the performances, along with other exclusive backstage artist video content, which we'll be editing and posting online. (Several video highlight clips were posted to our NAMM page on the Taylor website during the show.)



Clockwise from top left:

Plain White T's during their acoustic set; Night Ranger's Joel Hoekstra and his hair-raising riffs; Israel Houghton and his T5; The Airborne Toxic Event; Doyle Dykes playing his new Doyle Deluxe model



TAYLORCODE



COHEED NAMM

Watch a NAMM
performance clip from
Coheed and Cambria.



Other notable guests who dropped by the room to hang included longtime Paul McCartney guitarist **Brian Ray** (who loved the Baritone 8-String), acclaimed rock guitarist **Earl Slick** (David Bowie, John Lennon), Shinedown's **Zack Myers**, **Matt Scannell** (Vertical Horizon), **Lisa Loeb**, singer/guitarist **Andrés Giménez** of the Argentinian rock band **D-Mente**, Cheap Trick's **Rick Nielsen**, Rod Stewart guitarist **Don Kirkpatrick**, and former New York Yankee **Bernie Williams**, an accomplished guitarist who took time to jam and do a video interview with Taylor's Andy Powers.

NAMM also marked the pre-release of Bob Taylor's new book, *Guitar Lessons*. Barnes & Noble handled sales in the Taylor room (more than 300 books were sold at the show), and Bob did a few book signing sessions for happy buyers.

All in all, it was another great show, with heaps of traffic in the Taylor room. Artists thanked us for the hospitality, we thanked them for sharing their talents, and our guests left happy to have had a great "up close and personal" experience with our guitars and our people. One of the coolest aspects of our presence at NAMM is the way it brings so many facets of the company together with dealers, customers, vendors, members of the media, and other friends. As Taylor District Sales Manager Mike Ausman summed up afterward, "It was more hugs than handshakes." **W&S**



Clockwise from top left:

Coheed and Cambria's
Travis Stever and Claudio
Sanchez; Hirokazu Ogura
of Yamagen; 10 Years;
Barenaked Ladies' Kevin Hearn
and Ed Robertson

Calendar

For the latest event listings, including Road Shows, Doyle Dykes events, festivals and other Taylor events, visit the Taylor online calendar at www.taylorguitars.com/calendar.

Our award-winning Road Show tour rolls out again this spring, as our guitar experts bring you the latest and greatest from the Taylor complex in El Cajon, California. This year we'll be hitting some new locations, and we look forward to presenting our "Shapes & Woods" guitar demo to fresh faces. You can expect to see the GS Mini, along with a fresh batch of cool custom guitars, for our hands-on "Petting Zoo." Admission to the Road Show is free, and each attendee will have the chance to enter to win a custom guitar. We hope you'll join us for a fun and informative event.

North American Road Shows

Omaha, Nebraska

Tuesday, April 12, 6:30 p.m.
Russo's Guitar & Drum Center
(402) 493-2116

Brookfield, Wisconsin

Tuesday, April 12, 6 p.m.
Cream City Music
(262) 860-1800

Lincoln, Nebraska

Wednesday, April 13, 6:30 p.m.
Dietze Music
(402) 434-7454

Crystal Lake, Illinois

Wednesday, April 13, 7 p.m.
The Players Bench Music Store
(815) 459-8614

Kearney, Nebraska

Thursday, April 14, 7 p.m.
Yanda's Music & Pro Audio
(308) 234-1970

Champaign, Illinois

Thursday, April 14, 6:30 p.m.
C.V. Lloyde Music Center
(217) 352-7031

Greenwood, Indiana

Friday, April 15, 7 p.m.
Guitarworks
(317) 885-1510

Portland, Maine

Monday, April 25, 6:30 p.m.
Buckdancer's Choice
(207) 774-2219

St. Cloud, Minnesota

Tuesday, April 26, 7 p.m.
Bridge of Harmony
(320) 252-0511

Concord, New Hampshire

Wednesday, April 27, 7 p.m.
Strings & Things
(603) 228-1971

Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

Wednesday, April 27, 7 p.m.
Schmitt Music
(763) 566-4560

Worcester, Massachusetts

Thursday, April 28, 7 p.m.
Union Music
(508) 753-3702

Neenah, Wisconsin

Thursday, April 28, 7 p.m.
Island Music
(920) 725-9000

Edmonton, Alberta

Tuesday, May 3, 7 p.m.
Avenue Guitars
(780) 448-4827

Raleigh, North Carolina

Wednesday, May 4, 7 p.m.
Harry's Guitar Shop
(919) 828-4888

Red Deer, Alberta

Wednesday, May 4, 7 p.m.
53rd Street Music
(403) 346-4000

Calgary, Alberta

Thursday, May 5, 7 p.m.
Guitarworks
(403) 216-8525

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Tuesday, May 10, 7 p.m.
Grandma's Music & Sound
(505) 292-0341

Columbia, Missouri

Wednesday, May 11, 6:30 p.m.
Blue Guitar Music Co.
(573) 441-0055

Santa Fe, New Mexico

Wednesday, May 11, 7 p.m.
The Candyman Strings & Things
(505) 983-5906

Columbia, Missouri

Wednesday, May 11, 6:30 p.m.
Blue Guitar Music Co.
(573) 441-0055

Aztec, New Mexico

Thursday, May 12, 7 p.m.
Main Street Music
(505) 334-5210



St. Louis, Missouri

Thursday, May 12, 7 p.m.
Music Folk
(314) 961-2838

Kahului, Hawaii

Sunday, May 15, time TBD
Bounty Music
(808) 871-1141

Gloucester Point, Virginia

Monday, May 16, 7 p.m.
Winter Sound
(804) 642-6434

Hilo, Hawaii

Tuesday, May 17, 7 p.m.
Hilo Guitars
(808) 935-4282

Westminster, Maryland

Tuesday, May 17, 7 p.m.
Coffey Music
(410) 876-1045

Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey

Wednesday, May 18, 7 p.m.
Music Central
(609) 383-2900

Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Thursday, May 19, 7 p.m.
Robert M. Sides
(570) 326-2094

Honolulu, Hawaii

Thursday, May 19, 7 p.m.
Island Guitars
(808) 591-2910

Kalaheo, Hawaii

Saturday, May 21, time TBD
Scotty's Music
(808) 332-0090

Gonzales, Louisiana

Tuesday, May 24, 7 p.m.
Alison's World of Music
(225) 677-9299

Lexington, Kentucky

Tuesday, May 24, 7 p.m.
Willcutt Guitar Shoppe
(859) 276-4070

Lafayette, Louisiana

Wednesday, May 25, 7 p.m.
C&M Music
(337) 989-2838

Kenner, Louisiana

Thursday, May 26, 7 p.m.
C&M Music
(504) 468-8688

Dickson City, PA

Monday, June 6, 6 p.m.
Northeast Music Center
570-483-4184

Carlisle, Pennsylvania

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

Wilmington, Delaware

Wednesday, June 8, 6:30 p.m.
Accent Music
(302) 999-9939

Trenton, New Jersey

Thursday, June 9, 6 p.m.
Russo Music Center
(609) 888-0620

Catonsville, Maryland

Friday, June 10, 7 p.m.
Appalachian Bluegrass Shoppe
(410) 744-1144

Orlando, Florida

Saturday, June 18, All Day Event
Orlando Science Center
(407) 514-2000

International Road Shows

Newcastle, United Kingdom

Monday, April 18, 7 p.m.
guitarguitar
0191 261 1568

York, United Kingdom

Tuesday, April 19, 7 p.m.
Banks Musicroom
01904 658836

Hampshire, United Kingdom

Wednesday, April 20, 7 p.m.
Oasis Music
07703 439978

Mons, Belgium

Tuesday, May 10, 7 p.m.
Omega Music
32 6535 5171

Boekel, Netherlands

Wednesday, May 11, 7 p.m.
Guitarking
31 49 2324 038

Sint-Niklaas, Belgium

Thursday, May 12, 7 p.m.
Key Music
32 3 766 6393

Rotterdam, Netherlands

Friday, May 13, 7 p.m.
Feedback
31 10 211 1003

Halmstad, Sweden

Monday, May 23, 6:30 p.m.
Musikalen
0046 35 123720

Malmö, Sweden

Tuesday, May 24, 6:30 p.m.
Malmö Musikaffär
040-12 81 92

Helsingborg, Sweden

Wednesday, May 25, 6:30 p.m.
Halmen Musik
042-21 51 39

Göteborg, Sweden

Thursday, May 26, 6:30 p.m.
Andreasson Musik
031-7114711

Festivals/Events

Dallas Guitar Show

Dallas, Texas
April 14-17
www.guitarshow.com

Merlefest

Wilkesboro, North Carolina
April 27-30
www.merlefest.org

MIAC Show

Toronto, Ontario, Canada
May 15-16
www.miac.net

Fuzz Guitar Show

Gothenburg, Sweden
May 21-22
www.fuzzguitarshow.com

Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festival

"Maui-Island Style"
Maui Arts & Cultural Center
Amphitheater
June 26
www.slackkeyfestival.com

Tokyo Guitar Show

Tokyo, Japan
June 25-26

Summer NAMM

Nashville, Tennessee
July 21-23
www.namm.org

Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festival

"Oahu-Island Style"
Kapiolani Park, Waikiki
August 21
www.slackkeyfestival.com

Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festival

"Kona-Island Style"
Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort & Spa, Hawaii
September 4
www.slackkeyfestival.com

London Acoustic Guitar Show

London, Great Britain
September 10-11
londonacousticguitarshow.com

Walnut Valley Festival

Winfield, Kansas
September 14-17
www.wvfest.com

TaylorWare®

CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS

Spring 2011



Suede Taylor Guitar Straps

(Black Suede, Honey Suede, Chocolate Suede, \$35.00)



Our **Sketch T** hearkens back to Taylor's freewheeling early days. 100% combed cotton. (Navy; S-XL, \$22.00; XXL, \$24.00)



Tattered Patch Cap

Our newest cap sports a vintage, distressed look with a frayed-edge screen print Taylor patch on brown, with contrasting light stone stitching. Soft structured, garment-washed six panel design. Flex fit. Two sizes. (Brown S/M, L/XL, \$25.00)



New

Men's Headstock T

Our stylized peghead graphic traces Taylor's heritage back to the beginning on this 100% cotton T, featuring heathered fabric for a fitted look and soft feel. (Deep Heather, S-XL, \$22.00; XXL, \$24.00)

Luis from our Finish department swears he's not related to Wolverine from X-Men.



Front Pocket Wallet

Crafted from genuine leather, this Fossil wallet is tastefully embossed with the Taylor logo. Features three card slots, two slip pockets, and a money clip. Fossil tin included. (Brown, \$35.00)



Taylor Pub Glasses

20-oz glass, set of four. (\$25.00)



New

Infant/Toddler Icon T

Whether the wee ones are crawling or wobbling toward your guitar, they'll look extra cute sporting a little Taylor peghead. 100% cotton, ribbed neck. (Royal or Raspberry; Infant: 6, 12 and 18 months; Toddler: 2T, 3T, 4T, \$15.00)



Taylor Water Bottle

Stainless steel, 24-oz, threaded loop cap. Taylor logo on back. Hand wash only, not suitable for microwave, cooking, freezing or hot liquids. (Black, \$15.00)



Taylor Logo T

Short-sleeve, sizes: S-XXXL. (White, Blue Dusk; S-XL \$15.00; XXL-XXXL \$17.00)



New

Taylor Stack Guitar T

Everything stacks up just fine as the Taylor name gets the split-level treatment, anchored by a guitar. 100% cotton, slim fit, featuring a round logo on the back. (Brown, S-XL, \$22.00; XXL-XXXL, \$24.00)



Antique Logo T-shirt

Short-sleeve, pre-washed, 100% cotton. Slim fit. (Green/Tan, Red/Gold, Navy/Gold; S-XL, \$20.00; XXL, \$22.00)



Military Cap

Enzyme-washed 100% cotton chino twill, Velcro closure. One size. (Black, Olive, \$22.00)



New

Tri Blend Polo

Comfort and style converge on our cotton/poly/rayon polo, featuring screen-printed Taylor guitar necks in two shades of cool gray. Structured collar will hold shape through repeated washings. Short-sleeve, single front pocket, 3-button placket. Slim fit. (Tri Black, S-XL, \$39.00)

Shannon is Taylor's web strategist, as you can probably tell from the artsy eyewear, facial hair and hipster cap.



Taylor Guitar Beanie

100% acrylic. Choose from three colors. One size. (Black, Maroon, Charcoal, \$16.00)



Vintage Peghead T

100% combed cotton. (Black, S-XL, \$22.00; XXL-XXXL, \$24.00)



Taylor Silver Dial Watch

Our men's Fossil stainless steel watch sports a clean, classic look that fits any occasion. Silver dial with silver strap, raised hour markers, luminous hands, and the Taylor Quality Guitars logo in cool gray. Water-resistant to 5 atm. Taylor-branded tin gift box included. (\$99.00)



Taylor Swift Guitar Strap

Two-inch-wide adjustable strap, brown suede and polyester. (\$25.00)



Taylor Porcelain Cup

11-ounce thermal cup, flexible silicone sipping lid, Taylor peghead icon on one side, Taylor round logo on the other. Microwave and dishwasher safe. (\$15.00)

New

Ladies Short-Sleeve Floral Guitar T

Floral embellishments bring the acoustic bloom to a guitar on this soft and comfy scoop-neck T, accompanied by a few songbirds, including one on the sleeve. 100% organic pima cotton, narrow rib collar, satin garment washed. Regular fit. (Ocean Blue, S-XL, \$25.00)



Becky from Sales Administration supports her own cause in our Floral Guitar T.



Taylor Bar Stool

30" high, black matte, vinyl finish. Easy assembly. (\$99.00. *Additional \$5.00 shipping charge for each bar stool ordered.*)



Loaded Pickguards

Swap out the pickup/pickguard unit for your SolidBody in minutes, without the need for soldering. Eleven different pickup configurations and six different pickguard colors. For a complete list of ordering options, go to taylorguitars.com/taylorware. \$195.00 (Single HG Humbucker: \$148.00)



Taylor V-Cable™

The V-Cable puts volume control at your fingertips anytime you plug in a guitar, bass, keyboard or other musical instrument that has a pickup but lacks active controls. Simply plug one end of the quarter-inch V-Cable into your amplifying device, such as a guitar amp, keyboard amp, or PA system, and the other end into your instrument. A volume knob located on the cable jack that plugs into your instrument makes it easy to adjust your volume anytime you need to. Together with the ES-Go™ pickup, it's the perfect plug-in accessory for the GS Mini™. 250K. (Note: The V-Cable is not intended for use on a passive piezo pickup.)

3 Ft., \$62.00, **6 Ft.**, \$63.00, **10 Ft.**, \$66.00, **15 Ft.**, \$68.00, **18 Ft.**, \$69.00, **20 Ft.**, \$70.00, **25 Ft.**, \$74.00

Visit our website for more information about the TaylorWare Gift Card.



Visit taylorguitars.com/taylorware to see the full line.



ES-Go™ Pickup

Designed by Taylor exclusively for the GS Mini, the ES-Go is a magnetic soundhole pickup that anyone can easily install in minutes with just a screwdriver. The pickup "floats" in the soundhole with the help of a connecting bracket that's pre-installed in every Mini. Just replace the guitar's endpin with the endpin jack and you'll be ready to plug in and play in no time. (\$98.00)



Flex Fit Cap

Taylor logo on front, matching color guitar embroidered on back. Two sizes: S/M and L/XL. (Maroon or Gray, \$22.00)



Taylor Guitar Picks

Marble or Solid. 10 picks per pack. Available in thin, medium or heavy gauge. (\$5.00)



Guitar Parts. Choose from an assortment of replacement parts like chrome or gold tuners, nuts and saddles, guitar cables, pickguards and bridge pins — with or without abalone dots.

New

Lone Guitar T

Cream and brown screen print on 100% preshrunk cotton. Traditional fit. (Camel, M-XL, \$22.00; XXL, \$24.00)

David, a 20-year Taylor vet and a key member of our product development team, has been right in the middle of many of our design innovations.





Mixed Sources
Product group from well-managed
forests, controlled sources and
recycled wood or fiber
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Wood&Steel

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Hot Blacktop

A crowd favorite at Winter NAMM, this double cutaway SolidBody Standard, in Gaslamp Black, is one of 13 new color options offered with the Standard this year. The translucent black finish adds shimmering dimension to the quilted maple top, with tones of silky moonlight gray and hints of deep brown. Contrasting highlights include white purfling and cool chrome hardware, with direct-mount humbuckers.

