

Wood & Steel

SHADES OF SUMMER

**Blackheart sassafras
flavors our latest
limited editions**

QUALITY
Taylor
GUITARS

Changing Strings
on the GS Mini Bass

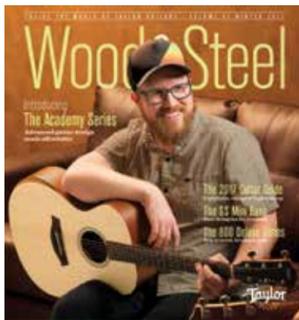
Custom Guitar Gallery

Rosewood/Lutz
GC 12-String

Letters

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



each employee is the quality control dept. speaks volumes about how committed you all are to your product. Keep up the good work.

Mike Fleckenstein

Waiting for the One

I recently purchased a new 712e 12-Fret. I simply cannot put this guitar down. I spent many months researching all brands of guitars trying to find the perfect one for me. One day I visited a local music store, which had just received a brand-new 712e 12-fret. I immediately fell in love with it and knew this was the one. Unfortunately someone purchased it before I could, so I continued waiting and doing more research. I found myself comparing every guitar I played to that Taylor and realized the 712e just could not be beat. I asked my local music store to order another one, and after a few weeks it finally came in. My wife surprised me at the store and met me there to purchase the guitar. I couldn't believe I was actually buying my dream guitar...I may have shed a tear or two... don't judge, this is a love story after all. This guitar has already inspired me to become a better player and to stretch myself to explore places that I haven't in the past. Thanks for making a guitar that is exceptional in every way.

Mark Busa

Landon Ward

High on the Neck

I had the good fortune of being mentored in 1980 and built two D28 copies. The second I sold for burrito money (ah, the follies of youth). I still own the first; it sounds great, but long story short, it has a poorly designed truss rod system and can't be adjusted properly. Over the years this has made it very difficult to play high up the neck. Enter my girlfriend (now fiancée), who bought me a 310. Right out of the case it played like it had been broken in for 20 years. Very nice craftsmanship and killer tone...I now can play up and down the neck with ease. Keep up the good work!

**Mike Vinson
Mill Valley, CA**

P.S. I love the Expression System 2!

Heart and Soul

A few weeks ago I bought a Taylor 324 from Twelve Fret in Toronto. I am 50 now and have played since I was 12. All my life I wanted to buy a good guitar but it had never happened, so I went to the store to fulfill one of my dreams. I tried many guitars manufactured by famous guitar companies. Many of them were amazing – they had a good voice and looked nice. But the moment I laid hands on your 324 and started playing I felt I had something alive in my hands, something that not only has a great voice and looks, but a heart and a soul. I fell in love instantly. You do not play on that guitar, you dream with it. There is no price tag on that. Thank you!

George

Tune-up in Texas

I just wanted to let you know how much my son and I appreciated the attention we received from [Taylor District Sales Manager] JR [Robison] at a Taylor event in Waco, Texas. I was having tuning issues with three guitars: a 914ce, 814ce, and my son's T3/B. I asked JR if he would look at them before his demonstration. He said he would be happy to and treated us like valued customers. My son's was an easy fix – he just had to stretch the strings a few times, and then he and the store repair technician put new strings on all of my guitars. While doing so he noticed a few bridge pins had worn out or dried out and were not holding the strings tight enough. I ordered new pins, and the problem was solved without having to send the guitars to California. You folks have done excellent work on my 814 in the past. I am in full-time prison ministry and play in different prisons five days a week, so they are used a lot. I just wanted to say thank you to JR and the Taylor staff.

Terry Strom

Superb From Start to Finish

I just got my 1995 510 back after more than three months of extensive repair work at your shop. I was amazed at how wonderful the guitar looks with the repaired finish and new top. It is once again the beautiful and treasured

guitar my wife bought me when we lived in Coronado more than 20 years ago. When I got it home and plugged it in, I was again amazed at the clear and vibrant sound from the newly installed ES2, and with the neck and frets all back in perfect shape it plays as wonderfully as when it was new. Please thank the repair team and supporting staff at Taylor for their attentive service and outstanding expertise. The entire evolution from start (when I showed the guitar to Taylor rep JR at a Taylor Road Show in Houston in November) to finish (when I picked it back up from Fuller's Guitar yesterday) was highly professional. It was very satisfying to know my guitar would get superb treatment!

Justin D. Cooper II

Punch and Presence

I wanted to share how impressed I am with my new 324ce SEB, which I received as a 10-year wedding anniversary gift from my wife! I have been playing [another brand of] guitar for over 10 years. It was a great guitar to start out with – very easy to play. It sounded alright to me, or so I thought, until I pulled the new 324ce SEB out of the case. Each chord had a satisfying punch and presence that I really have never experienced. Such a beautiful sound.

I cannot stop telling people about the wood – dark mahogany and Tasmanian blackwood! This is a cherished instrument of mine. I am a first-time Taylor guitar owner, and I'm very impressed with the quality of sound and workmanship. With an instrument this nice I have been inspired to begin to write songs and take guitar more seriously. Thank you for crafting such an inspiring instrument.

Jake

social circles

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ON THE COVER

18 LIVELY LIMITED EDITIONS

Our summer showcase boasts four vibrant acoustic voices: a blackheart sassafras 914ce, a rosewood/Lutz spruce Grand Concert 12-string, an ovankol/Engelmann spruce baritone Dreadnought, and a dynamic blackwood/Lutz Grand Auditorium.

**COVER PHOTO: SASSAFRAS 914CE LTD (FOREGROUND)
AND TOBACCO SUNBURST 410E BARITONE-6 LTD
(BACKGROUND)**



FEATURES

6 A GUITARIST'S GUIDE TO THE GS MINI BASS

Shawn Persinger explains why guitar players will love our compact four-string and shares some bass basics.

8 HOW TO CHANGE STRINGS ON THE GS MINI BASS

Custom strings and bridge pins require a slightly different string-changing technique. The good news: it's easier.

12 REVIEW ROUNDUP

Our new models are wowing reviewers. Plus, raves for the 12-string 562ce, 712e 12-Fret, and more.

15 SPINNING OUR WHEELS

Our new robotic buffing system adds smooth sophistication to our finish polishing capability.

22 PROFILE: SCOTT PAUL

Our new Director of Natural Resource Sustainability brings a passion for forest protection and the expertise to promote our sustainable forestry initiatives.



24 CUSTOM GUITAR GALLERY

A sampling of custom guitar details to inspire your Taylor dreams.

26 TAYLOR AT NAMM

Our expanded exhibition area was rocking with a mix of artists, dealers, media, industry friends, and of course, walls of guitars.

32 MODEL SPOTLIGHT: 214CE-FS DLX

Richly figured sapele inspired this special edition 200 Deluxe Series offering.

COLUMNS

4 KURT'S CORNER

Reconnecting with a few longtime Taylor dealers leaves a positive impression.

5 BOBSPEAK

Why Taylor's best designs are yet to come, and a word on Bob's World Forestry Tour.

33 THE CRAFT

When instrument designers innovate in response to the artistic needs of musicians, everyone benefits.

DEPARTMENTS

10 ASK BOB

Cutting guitar wood, bass bridge pins, ukuleles, and a solid-wood GS Mini.

28 SOUNDINGS

Artist love for the new bass, the American Girl GS Mini, Chris Tomlin, remembering Koaguitarman, a guitar for sustainability research, and Whalebone's instrumental folk-rock.

30 TAYLOR NOTES

Mid-year updates to the line, plus our four exclusive Road Show models.

34 SEASONAL TIPS

Guitar care for the warmer summer months.

35 TAYLORWARE

TaylorSense, new Taylor apparel, and more.



KURT'S CORNER

Lasting Impressions

During the past seven years, most of my business travels have taken me to Europe to help strengthen our sales infrastructure there. We've been building our team at our Amsterdam facility, conducting monthly meetings with our sales staff, and visiting customers throughout Europe. Over the past two years I've also traveled to many countries in Asia to visit Taylor dealers with our distributors. I plan to continue that, as our biggest growth opportunities currently are outside the U.S., where many markets are underdeveloped for us. This is a big change from our early years, which I spent driving around the U.S. with guitars in the back of my Volvo, showing them to shops and opening them as Taylor dealers.

This past April brought back a lot of memories, as I spent a week visiting U.S. dealers – something I haven't done much of in recent years. Two dealers I visited have been selling Taylor guitars since the 1980s, when Bob and I were still in our original shop in Lemon Grove: Appalachian Bluegrass Shoppe in Catonsville, Maryland, and Washington Music Center in Wheaton, Maryland. It was rewarding to visit these shops and reconnect with my friends there after so many years. I came away with a few impressions I'd like to share.

First, it's great to know people who love their work and remain dedicated

to it after spending their entire lives doing it. As I've said before, I think it's important to find a worthwhile purpose and stick with it – something you love doing, rather than just pursuing a financial reward. If you do a great job of pursuing something that's meaningful to you and are a little bit lucky along the way, you have a good chance of achieving financial success. I admire people who do this, and that includes Emory and Charlene Knode at Appalachian Bluegrass, and my friends the Levin family at Washington Music Center. They've stayed the course while navigating all the changes in the guitar market and in retail throughout their careers, and they're still there every day serving customers.

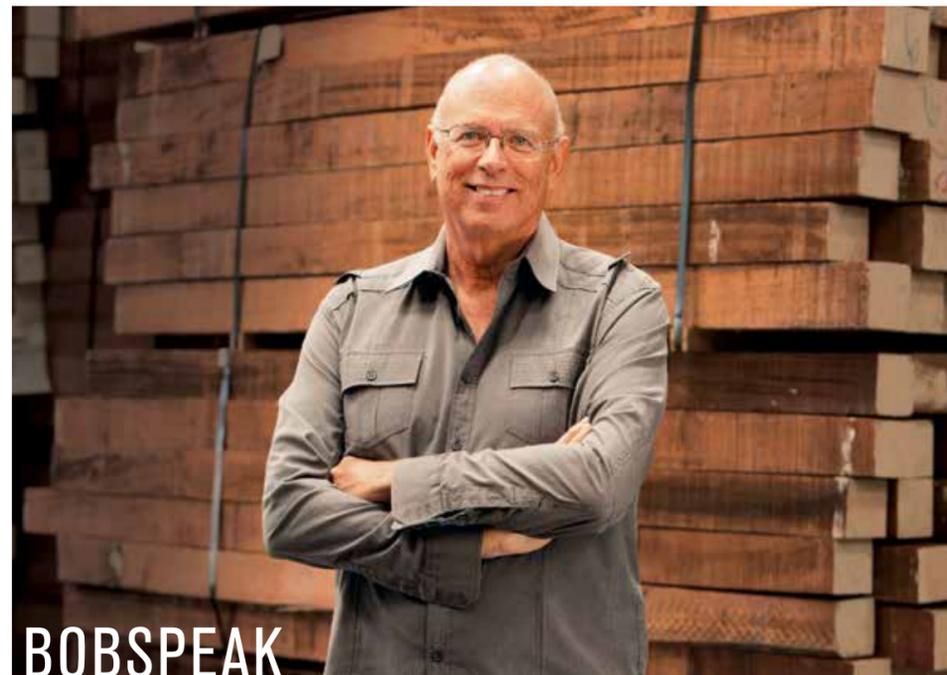
Second, it's amazing to see the results of good decisions made over the years, and how they can compound. When I was in Emory and Charlene's shop, they had posters of every ad campaign we had run since the mid-1980s, from our Lemon Grove days to Santee to the industry-changing campaigns that started in the early 1990s when we first moved to El Cajon. The brand-building we embarked on, which our advertising campaigns were a big part of, was an important element of our growth and success starting in the 1990s and carrying through to today. When we first started selling guitars to the Levins and the Knodes, we were a

struggling guitar shop with an unknown brand name. Today we're one of the top-selling guitar brands in the world. The strategic decision we made at that time to build our brand, and seeing the role it would play in paving the way for future sales growth, is something I look back on and see how things could have turned out much differently had we not made that choice.

Third, I feel fortunate to be in the musical instrument industry, as it attracts unique, creative and nice people. We meet people all the time who don't particularly enjoy their careers but chose them because they paid well. Many of these people tell us they wish they could be in the guitar business, and some of them end up doing that. They buy a guitar company, or start a guitar company. You've seen their ads or met them at a guitar show. This is not an easy business, but it can be rewarding. Of all the possible career paths I could have taken, I feel really happy I chose something music-related. I have a great partner in Bob, and we have a great team of people here at Taylor Guitars. We're prospering, we're having a lot of fun, and we have more plans for the future than we'll probably ever be able to accomplish.

– Kurt Listug, CEO

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BOBSPEAK

Growth Cycles

I feel like I've said this a thousand times, but guitar making has never been more exciting for me than it is now. I think back to so many developments. I remember the first Grand Auditorium guitars designed for our 20th anniversary in 1994. How exciting a time that was! People really loved the guitar, and it defined who Taylor Guitars became in terms of sound, style and use. Then the Baby Taylor, which was a huge success (and we sell more now than then). That guitar informed the development of the Taylor neck: how it's made, how it attaches, how it's repaired. Our whole neck development was complete by anniversary number 25 and raised the bar in terms of the playing performance.

The GS Mini is currently close to being the most popular guitar model in the world. Its development was so fun and rewarding. The T5 was born. (I know I'm going out of order here, but I don't mind.) The T5 was so revolutionary that we had to make 10,000 per year for the first two years. Now it's settled down to a manageable number and sells very well, helping people get sounds that they love. The development of our Expression System acoustic electronics was incredibly tough. It took us out of our guitar-making comfort zone, but ultimately it proved to be worth the effort, leading us to where we are today, with a fantastic self-made, integrated system. The amount we learned along the way was incredible.

There was the development of our guitar cases and so many other new ideas and models. Each development came with another fun and rewarding bit of growth.

It keeps going. Andy Powers joined us and redesigned my 800 Series. What a step that was, and he made huge improvements to it. The new 600s embraced maple as a main-line tonewood, taking stress off the demand for tropical woods and transforming the tone of maple into something worthy of functioning as your only guitar. Then Andy designed our new Academy Series guitars and the GS Mini Bass. These are both real, wonderful instruments that allow players to enjoy first-rate tone and feel without having to spend a lot of money.

All this, and yet what really excites me are the developments on our bench now. Andy is fast at work, thinking outside the box as usual. It's completely amazing, even to me, to see what is coming in terms of new guitars that will help people experience better sound and better feel. And this is only part of why I've never enjoyed what we do so much.

The other part, as you probably know, is forestry – growing trees. I'm going to talk about this for the next 20 years, so you might as well settle in for more Bob stories! At least I'm hoping for 20 years. I'm in my 60s now, but I'm trying to set up my life to continue the

forestry part into my 80s. Keep your fingers crossed!

As I write this, I'm about to embark on what I'm calling the World Forestry Tour. I've been planning this for more than a year, and departure time is now. I'm taking six colleagues literally around the world to visit some great sustainable forestry programs in places like Guatemala, Ireland, Cameroon, Vietnam, Malaysia, Fiji, Hawaii, and Washington. Our goal is to learn in order to further our own knowledge for the work we're doing. We'll be posting videos. By the time you read this the videos should be up on our website and others.

The knowledge and associations we build on this trip should help us in the future, but we're already growing guitar woods, and each year we gain momentum. Some decades from now we'll start making guitars from these woods. I wonder what exciting new models people will be enjoying by that time!

– Bob Taylor, President

Ed. Note: You can watch Bob's video reports from his World Forestry Tour on our YouTube page: [youtube.com/taylorguitars](https://www.youtube.com/taylorguitars). Once you're there, just look for the WFT Playlist. The videos include some cool drone camera footage.

2017 Taylor Factory Tours & Vacation Dates

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

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

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



Factory Closures

Monday, July 3 - Friday, July 7
(Independence Day/Company Vacation)

November 23-24
(Thanksgiving Holiday)

Monday, September 4
(Labor Day)

Monday, December 25 through Friday, January 5
(Company Vacation)

Friday, October 13
(Taylor Guitars Anniversary)

A Guitarist's Guide To The GS Mini Bass

Playing bass has never been easier — or more fun. Here's why our little bass will win you over.

By Shawn Persinger

It finally arrived! I'd been anticipating its delivery for six months (I had inside information). My expectations were high. And as soon as I plucked my first note on the GS Mini Bass, I knew it was the instrument I had been longing for — it was form-fitting, fun-loving, and finger-gratifying. In fact, it was so ideal that one of my first thoughts was, "This can't be as good as I think it is." So I tested it on Joe, my cynical bass-playing friend. Like Mikey from the old Life cereal commercials, Joe "hates everything." Lo and behold — he liked it!

"I want one," Joe declared after 30 seconds of playing. After a two-hour rehearsal, both unplugged and amplified, Joe was still in love.

Joe and I were not alone. I let every one of my students play it that first week.

"This is great!"

"It's so easy to play!"

"How did they do this?"

And more than one nonplussed "Wow."

There was no doubt: the GS Mini Bass was a hit. And I believe that once you play one, you won't need me (or anyone else) to tell you why it's great. Nevertheless, allow me to share some specifics that will encourage you to try a GS Mini Bass the next time you're at your local Taylor dealer (if they can keep it in stock). I'll also cover some bass basics because aside from finding its way into the hands of many bass players, this little bass was made for guitarists.



I have a hunch it will end up converting more guitar players to pick up a four-string than Paul McCartney!

Surprising Charms

The first thing I noticed (and could hardly believe) about the bass was how easy it is to play. The string tension, or lack thereof, on the neck is minimal, which means the strings are almost effortless to fret and bend (I learned later that one of the reasons for this is because the strings have a nylon core overwound with phosphor bronze). Additionally, since the neck's 23.5-inch scale length is extra-short for a bass, guitarists don't have to "overreach" to play notes at the lower frets like they would on a standard-scale bass.

Another characteristic I chalk up to the nylon-core strings is that an exaggerated vibrato — both traditional electric "bending" vibrato as well as a classical "horizontal" vibrato — on this bass produces a distinctly fretless sound. And if that wasn't interesting enough, the bottom two strings sound like an upright acoustic, while the top two strings sound more like an electric fretless. I was so charmed by this I immediately played Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side," which was originally performed on two different basses — one acoustic, one electric! The resemblance in tone between the different instruments was stunning.

As I mentioned earlier, these appealing qualities were so surprising for a bass — a bass that plays more like a

parlor guitar — that I could hardly believe the beauty, fullness, and depth of tone my facile playing produced. But it was all true, as some demo recordings and group jams proved. Played acoustically and amplified, the low bass tones both supported and sang. It boggles my mind to contemplate the marriage of skill, art, and technology that has brought forth such a practical and musical instrument.

Bass Guitar For Newbies

This section is for those who have rarely (or never) played a bass and perhaps are unaware that a bass is strung the same as the bottom four strings of a guitar, low to high, E A D G, an octave lower. One of the best parts about this is that any song you already play with

barre chords or power chords can be easily doubled on the bass with just one note. A prime example of this would be any song by the godfathers of punk, The Ramones (Ex. 1). This simple yet highly effective doubling approach is not limited to punk and rock — bluegrass and country also rely primarily on this concept, with the bass doubling the "boom" notes in a boom-chuck guitar strum (Ex. 2). For those of you looking for more movement in your bass playing, I suggest starting with some blues. Ironically, the relationship between the stereotypical simplistic-bass vs. complex-guitar parts found in many rock songs is reversed in blues-based material: While many a blues song can be powered on the guitar by the straightforward "blues riff" (Ex.

3, top two staves), blues basslines tend to demand more notes, movement, and fluidity (Ex. 3, bottom two staves).

Your New Favorite Jam Partner

Now that you've learned a few bass parts, it's time to put them to use. At the risk of presuming who the average *Wood&Steel* reader is, I suspect many of you 1) own more than one Taylor guitar, and 2) sometimes jam with other guitarists. If so, your jams are about to take on a whole new dimension.

An anecdote: One of my students participates in a bi-weekly jam with several other guitarists. At their last jam, after they finished playing The Beatles' "I Saw Her Standing There," he asked

the host, "Can we get your bass out and play that again? I know the bassline, and it adds a lot to the song." A bit chagrined, the host took 10 minutes getting out the bass, tuning it up, setting up the amp, dialing in the tone, and tweaking the volume to match the acoustic guitars before re-counting off the iconic "One, two, three, fa!" When they finished, no one else wanted to play the bass — a couple of them didn't even know how.

In the future, I predict the above scenario will be completely different with a GS Mini Bass on hand. Guitarists will be arguing over who gets to play bass next! Because of its sonic, low-frequency range, you can play a lot of notes on the bass without competing with the

frequency range of a bunch of guitars or the vocals. So while everyone else is strumming away, trying to distinguish their chords from those of their neighbors, or trying to hear their single-note solos against a bunch of full-volume strummers, the bass can float below it all, adding a level of depth and richness that is both musically gratifying and sonically supportive.

The Last Word

The GS Mini Bass is so much fun to play that it's hard to put down. Quite frankly, when I was first asked, "How do you like the bass?" I responded with, "I love it! It's like a toy." Now let me clarify that — I don't mean "toy" as something childish or novel, I mean it as something

Five Essential (Guitar-Friendly) Basslines

A "top basslines" list with nary a mention of James Brown, James Jamerson, Jaco, or J.S. Bach? Forgive me! Sorry, there wasn't enough room for a Top 10.

1. "I Saw Her Standing There," The Beatles (1963)

This classic, blues-based line manages to be both tuneful and rhythmically driving (notice how McCartney is keeping time as much as Ringo). But McCartney doesn't deserve all the credit, as he's admitted he "pinched" it from Chuck Berry's "I'm Talking About You" (1961): "I played exactly the same notes...therefore, I maintain that a bass riff hasn't got to be original." (Note: Though I have been unable to confirm it, it's highly likely the "I'm Talking About You" bass part was played by Willie Dixon.)

2. "Everyday People," Sly and the Family Stone (1968)

A two-minute, one-note bassline? Not exactly. It might be only one pitch — G on the lowest string, 3rd fret — but thanks to Larry Graham's unpretentious slap-bass technique (Graham claims it's the first use of slap-bass on a record, though his technique on the track is not as conspicuous as it will later become) it's never the same note twice.

3. "Get Up Stand Up," Bob Marley (1973)

The ultimate one-chord jam (C minor), this song gets its rhythmic variation from one source, Aston "Family Man" Barrett's bassline. And what a line: The chorus contains enough space that you could drive Bob Marley's Range Rover through it. And the verses distinguish themselves with triplet-phrased arpeggios. This is understated complexity at its best.

4. "Chameleon," Herbie Hancock (1973)

It's likely the ubiquity of this funk-fusion standard is due to the seeming simplicity of the bassline, but don't let it fool you — the part requires more than notes on the fretboard; players must sit back and be funky. And watch out for the tricky unison line at the end of the melody!

5. "I Wish," Stevie Wonder (1976)

How on earth does Nathan Watts manage to cram 11 of the 12 chromatic notes into this iconic bassline without ever sounding weird or dissonant? Funky, fluid and fabulous, the basic idea of this line isn't too hard to pull off, but Watts' subtlety could take a lifetime to master. And dig those "shakes" (sliding trills) he plays in the coda!

that brings joy to those who play it. I suspect "toy" is probably the last word Taylor's marketing team would use to promote such an esteemed instrument, but I think it's perfect. In fact I'm going to go "play" right now! **W&S**

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

[Guitar Care]

How to Change Strings on the GS Mini Bass

Different strings, different bridge pins, different approach

Ed. Note: Last issue we shared the story behind the innovative design of our new GS Mini Bass. This issue we wanted to explain the proper technique for changing strings. Because of the proprietary nature of the strings and bridge pins, this technique varies from the way you would typically change strings on a standard steel-string acoustic guitar. The good news is that this method is actually easier. If nothing else, you only have four strings to change instead of six!

You'll also find an easy-to-follow video demonstration of this process from Taylor Service Network Manager Rob Magargal, along with these instructions, on the Taylor website at taylorguitars.com/support

IMPORTANT: The Taylor GS Mini Bass features custom strings that were designed exclusively for the unique properties of this instrument. The strings are D'Addario GS Mini Bass Custom Light (.037-.050-.062-.090"), featuring a multifilament core wound with D'Addario's EXP-coated phosphor bronze wrap wire for long-lasting tone and projection. Because of the shorter scale length (23.5 inches) and other proprietary design features, no other strings can be used. Doing so could potentially damage the instrument. You can purchase replacement strings directly from our online TaylorWare store (visit taylorguitars.com) or through any Authorized Taylor Dealer that sells the GS Mini Bass.

Loosen and remove the old strings.

Position yourself comfortably to change the strings. A workbench is ideal; sitting on a sofa and resting the neck of the guitar on the sofa arm is another

option. Loosen each string to a point where there's a decent amount of slack. Grasp the string near the bridge and push it down into the bridge. This will release the pin and allow you to easily remove it without needing a tool (Fig. 1). Remove and discard the old strings.

Optional: Clean the fretboard.

Having the fretboard exposed gives you a great opportunity to clean your fretboard. Cover the soundhole with a towel and clean the fretboard with 0000 gauge steel wool. You can rub pretty hard without damaging the fretboard, but be careful not to let the steel wool touch the body. If the fretboard looks dry, consider treating it with fretboard conditioning oil. We suggest using our Taylor Fretboard Oil or boiled linseed oil. A small amount applied to a rag and wiped over the wood is all it takes. Once your fretboard is clean and properly conditioned, it's time to re-string.

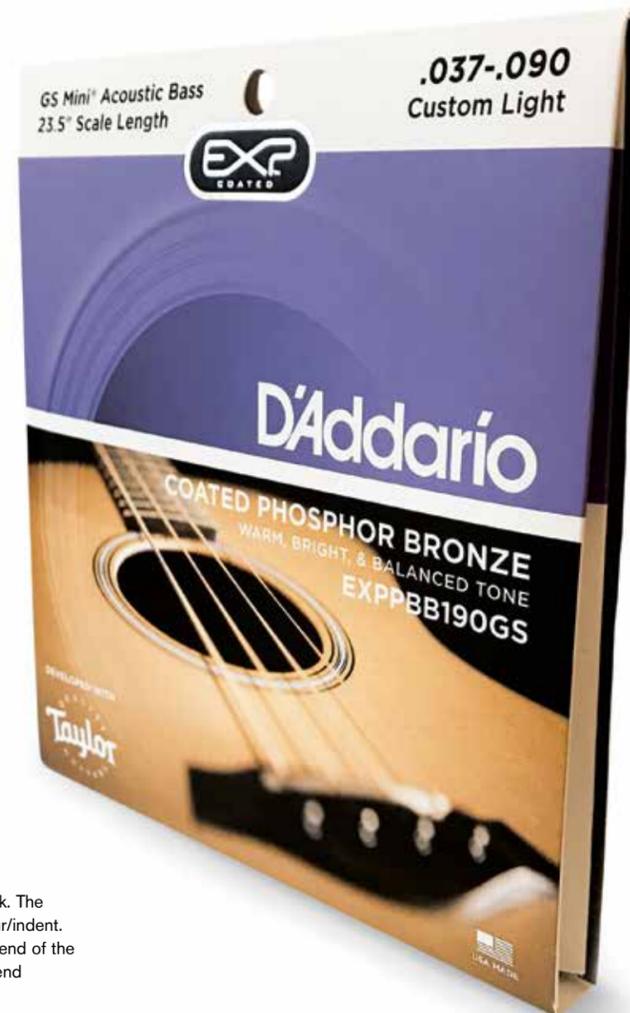
Before You Re-String:

Avoid kinking the strings in any way throughout the restringing process. Kinks can hamper the performance of the strings.

Secure the new strings in the bridge pin holes.

Insert the ball end of each string into the bridge pin hole, keeping the ball end toward the back of the bridge.

Notice the unique dual-prong bridge pin design. This will allow the ball end of the strings to be secured against the *back* side of the pin (facing the tail end of the guitar) rather than the front side facing the neck. Only one side of the pin is hollowed out below the head.



This side should face the neck. The other side has a slight contour/indent. This side should face the tail end of the guitar. This is where the ball end of the string will seat. (Fig. 2)

Set the string in the hole, insert the pin at the proper orientation (Fig. 3) so the prongs straddle the string, and then pull the string toward the neck. This bit of tension will open up the prongs and lock the string against the back of the bridge pin as you maintain some tension. The ball end will cradle into the contour/indent on the back of the pin. (Fig. 4)

Repeat this process for the other three strings.

Secure the strings to the tuner posts and tune.

Notice that the tuner posts have a slot and a hole in the center (Fig. 5). Cut the string about three inches past the tuner to give yourself enough length for about two windings around the post (Fig. 6).

Insert the string fully into the hole until it bottoms out. Bend the string over toward the inside of the headstock (Fig. 7).

Hold the string in place with your fingers while turning the tuner in a counterclockwise direction to tune it to pitch (Fig. 8). You want the windings to go downward as you tune (Fig. 9). Tune the remaining strings to pitch.

Seat the strings and retune.

IMPORTANT: Because of the custom nature of the GS Mini Bass strings – they have a soft and flexible

stranded nylon core wrapped with a proportionately heavy wrap wire – do not tug on the strings to stretch them so they settle into proper pitch. This can actually distort their profile and cause poor intonation and unusual fret noises.

Instead, you'll want to gently encourage the string to seat in three locations: at the tuner post, at the nut, and at the saddle. At the tuners, gently push the string toward the post (Fig. 10). Next, gently press each string down in front of the nut at the first fret (Fig. 11). Then gently press each string down in front of the saddle (Fig. 12) to give it a nice break over the top of the saddle. Then retune and play!



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

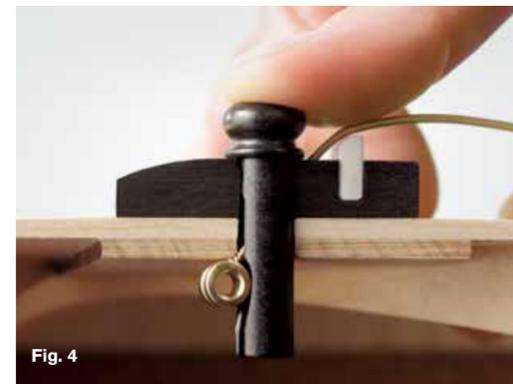


Fig. 4

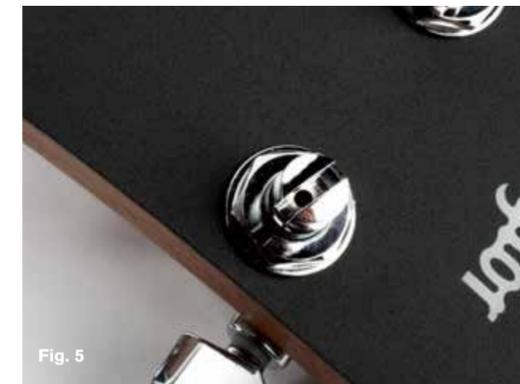


Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

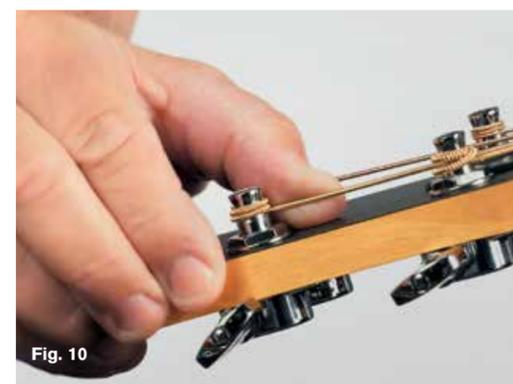


Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

Ask Bob

Cutting guitar wood, ukuleles, and a solid-wood GS Mini

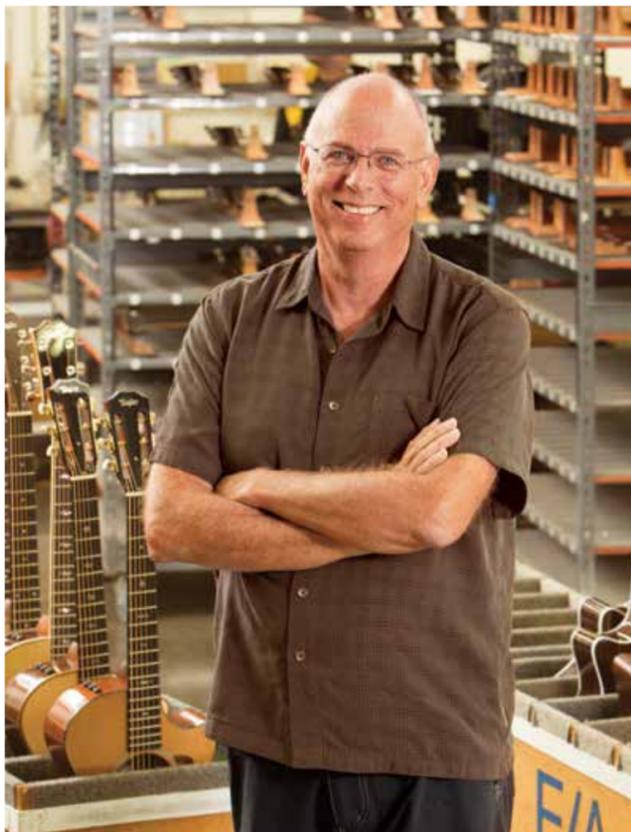
Ed. Note: In this installment, Bob invited Andy Powers to respond to a few questions about recent designs and guitar model recommendations. Andy's replies are called out accordingly. Enjoy.

I was curious about the forms in which guitar woods arrive at your factory prior to production. For example, are backs and sides received in billets, boards or already precut to width, length and thickness? Is there a particular moisture content, or will you dry further? Does Taylor staff go to the mills and actually select the logs to be used for tonewoods for future delivery?

Richard Green

Richard, the wood arrives in various forms. Imagine my first guitar. I went to the hardwood lumber store and bought a piece of rosewood, spruce and maple, then cut them into guitar pieces. When I first started Taylor, I did the same thing. Eventually I found suppliers to send me backs and sides, or fingerboard blanks, already cut to my sizes. Fast-forward to now. We have many suppliers, each of whom owns businesses around the world to supply people like Taylor. Many have grown up with us, starting as small as we did, and now are thriving. They send backs and sides that are cut into matched pairs. For necks, we buy mahogany and maple sawn at the supplier's mill into 4"x4" (100x100 mm) squares of random lengths and cut them into neck blanks at Taylor. Ebony fingerboards and bridges arrive from our very own mill in Cameroon, cut into blanks ready to dry and process. Some wood we buy as boards, but we do that as little as possible. We have one full-time wood buyer who travels to inspect wood and keep vendor relationships alive and well. No, he doesn't select every piece, because why would we have suppliers if they couldn't supply us? It's a well-developed system that's been growing for 42 years.

I read with great interest the article about your new bass guitar. The thing that caught my eye was the



bridge pin problem you ran into and how you fixed it. The slotted pins really are ingenious. I kept waiting for the part where it said you liked the new bridge pins so much you're going to put them on your other guitars as well. Needless to say, that part never came. What do you think? Is there a chance that this type of bridge pin could be used on your "regular" guitars? I, for one, would welcome the change. Not having to hold the bridge pin as I'm changing a string would be great. I play a 655ce, which, as you know, means I have to do this 12 times.

Paul G

Andy: Paul, I'm with you. Changing strings can be a pain, especially on a 12-string. This new bridge pin certainly

makes it easier. To satisfy your (and my) curiosity, yes, I've tried making some guitar-size versions of this new pin, and frankly, they work really well. That said, there are a few factors preventing us from making them today. First, these are hard to make, particularly for a guitar size. Second, if you lost one while changing strings, you couldn't simply grab any old bridge pin you have lying around to get on with the show. Finally, we'd be swimming against a century of guitar tradition, which I don't take lightly. While we're not afraid to make a change when it benefits the player, as proven with the Taylor neck or ES2 pickup system, we want to make sure we can do it well before we do. So, I'm not going to say we won't make them; I'll only say not right now.

I've emailed a couple of times about future ukulele production after seeing a high-end matching guitar/ukulele pair made from some of the most beautiful koa I've ever seen. I'm saddened that you seem to be completely dismissing ukulele production. I was hoping to acquire a ukulele with that Taylor quality. I'm only one uke player, but I'm sure there are many more who have chosen to accept what the market offers. Personally, I think you've missed an exceptional opportunity.

Audrey Parks

Audrey, thanks for the comments. We're working on a ukulele design right now. Don't think we're completely dismissing ukuleles. We don't have the resources to produce everything, so we have to choose wisely for the benefit of the most people. Also, most ukuleles that sell are selling in a price range between \$50 and \$99. Taylor can't make an instrument in that price range. So we already know that when we make a uke, it will be a low-volume seller because ours will be a better uke costing more money than most people are willing to spend. That's some background. But we have two things in our favor now to entice us to make a ukulele: one, the market has really grown, and two, we have small wood, too small for guitars. So I'm happy to say your wish will come true.

I own several guitars with solid East Indian rosewood backs and sides. None of them, however, displays the figuring and beauty of the rosewood you used on my 1976 855 12-string. Nearly all the EIR I see nowadays is rather evenly spaced and straight-grained compared to the broadly curved grain and deeply contrasting light and dark streaking on my guitar. According to a 2009 letter I received from Mike Tobin from your Customer Service staff, my 855 was one of about 36 855 models built that year. He also informed me that its serial number, 243, was approximately the 100th guitar of all 168 instruments Taylor built in 1976. I guess it's a pretty rare bird!

1) Is it likely that you personally built this guitar?

2) Because the wood is so comparatively beautiful, is there any possibility that you were using Brazilian rosewood on any 855 at the time? Duane P. Maracin Placerville, CA

Duane, good thing I can remember things of the past! Your guitar is definitely not Brazilian, it's East Indian. We were too poor to own any Brazilian at the time, even though we had a chance to buy a lot of it for \$2.00 per board foot! And yes, I built much of the guitar at that time, but not the whole thing because I've always had a team except for my first 20 or so guitars. The swirly grain you see is because of the direction the wood was cut. In those days the suppliers (see my earlier answer regarding wood supply) were not as

developed. In reality, when possible, we want the straightest pieces cut in the straightest manner. So today's rosewood is cut more correctly than our rosewood of 1976. It's an indication that the trees are large and defect-free and allow us to do that.

I own a T5 and a 214ce and am interested in buying a 12-fret 712ce. I love your guitars, but I'm not a fan of a slotted head. Can you tell me if Taylor uses only slotted heads on 12-fret steel-stringed acoustics, and if so, why?

Dan Anthony

Yes, Dan, we only use slotted heads on 12-fret guitars, except for our 552ce and 562ce, which are 12-strings. The reason is not complex; it's just aesthetics, tradition, style. Many of the reasons why a guitar is the way it is boils down to that. You might think that sounds funny coming from the guy that has broken so many traditions, but many of those are internal. So, no secret, it's largely for the look. **Andy:** Dan, there's one other subtle thing worth mentioning about a slotted head. The angle the string makes as it rides over the nut is more extreme than a standard headstock. This extra angle puts more downward pressure on the nut, which makes the strings feel a little more crisp and snappy for open position chords. A guitar with a 12-fret neck positions the bridge at a more flexible part of the guitar's body, making the strings feel a little looser when you hit them. The snappy fretting handfeel balances the slinky strumming handfeel, making a great-sounding (and great-looking) guitar. On a 12-string, I just want those to play as easily as possible – that's a lot of strings to push down.

Ed. Note: Dan, we do offer the option of ordering a 12-fret 712ce with a standard headstock through our Custom program.

I've been an owner of Taylor guitars for years. I currently have a custom 616ce and a mahogany GS Mini. I find myself only picking up the GS Mini and feel bad about neglecting my 616ce. I was thinking that if I could get down to only one guitar, what would I want? This brings me to my question: Are you looking at making an upgraded GS Mini, maybe one with solid back/sides made in El Cajon? If so, I would definitely buy one.

Cynthia Clark Chapel Hill, NC

Cynthia, I'd love to sell you one! Alas, each time we think about it, the next stop for the upgraded GS Mini made in El Cajon would be a \$2,000 guitar, and we don't think we would find a lot of players like you who would part with those dollars for what most people don't feel is their main guitar. At least not just yet. The GS Mini was designed for high performance and an easy build so that both the player and the factory can enjoy the success of that guitar. It really is a wonderful guitar, and like you, some people love it as their main guitar. One of the other things that makes so many people love it is that it's not too expensive or precious. There's something about a guitar that really works and is so affordable, useable, and if need be, replaceable. So, we'll continue to think about it. It's good to hear your vote!

I am the proud owner of a Taylor 818e, which I absolutely love. To my ears, Taylor guitars have always been a bit light in the bass department, but this guitar is nearly perfect for me. I fell in love with it from the first strum. I've owned it for a few years now, and it's a keeper. I'm now at a stage where I'm looking to add a 12-string to my "stable," but I'm not sure whether to just get a 150e to mess about with or save a bit extra and invest in "something better" like a 552ce. Although I'm not wealthy, I don't mind paying a bit more for a quality instrument. Both guitars sound good from what I hear via YouTube, so I'm finding it difficult to know what to do. Any advice will be very gratefully received. Also, with my old 12-string I was advised to always tune down a whole step. Is this necessary nowadays with the advances in guitar building, or is it possible to tune and play your guitars in concert pitch?

Marcus Hunt

Marcus, I can save you time. Get the 552ce (cedar-top) or 562ce (all-mahogany). The 562ce has won several awards for best new guitar this past year. It's really something. And, yes, better guitars are better, so if you're of a mind to go that route and can save the money, that's the right choice. Next answer: Lowering tension on 12-strings ended with the first Taylor 855 back in 1975. We've never made a 12-string that had to be tuned down in order to be playable or to save the guitar from damage. Tune it up to pitch if you like. One side note: Some players think a 12-string sounds better tuned lower, so some Taylor owners do that. They feel that a 12-string guitar is a different instrument altogether, and that it's not

right to play it at the same pitch as a 6-string. You can make that decision for yourself, but your Taylors can all be played at concert pitch.

I've been looking at a custom order and have read all I can on tonewoods. What are your thoughts on a maple body with a cedar top? I play softly, quietly, and for my own pleasure. I lean toward playing the blues and a little jazz, mostly fingerstyle, with a little picking, not much strumming, and from everything I have read, I think this would be a good match for me. I am specifically thinking 612c (I'm still unsure as to a 12-fret or 14). I am hard of hearing, and I like the bright sound of maple. My first Taylor was a 1995 612c, but I gave it to my friend when I switched to playing bass in 1996. I really love that guitar. I have played many maple/cedar classical guitars and like the tone and response, and a few mahogany/cedar guitars, which I really like, but they're not bright enough for my taste. My real concern is this combination on a small body. Since I like a bright sound I was leaning towards the 14-fret. Any thoughts? Will cedar work with the new bracing on the 600s?

Wes

Andy: Wes, with our Custom program, you've come to the right place. While it isn't a typical combination, cedar can sound quite good over a maple body, particularly on a smaller one. That will respond well to a light touch, but would certainly be darker and warmer sounding than the 612c you used to play. To give yourself a shimmering and brilliant response, I'd combine Lutz spruce with the small maple body, built with our Performance bracing. This combination would give you a strong response with fingerstyle playing and the vibrant trebles you enjoyed with the 612c. A 12-fret body will tend to emphasize the lower midrange punch. Since you're a fingerstyle player with jazzy inclinations, I'd steer you toward the 14-fret neck. You'll appreciate the extra fingerboard range and crystalline detail of each note.

I've been wondering if Taylor makes a guitar that's comparable to the deep resonating quality of the Gibson J-200 acoustic. I love the fat mids and lows the J-200 generates, and having played a few Taylors myself, I would be inclined to think that your company has engineered something of the same quality. Have

you? If so, I would buy one in a heartbeat!

Tom Malcolm Altadena, CA

Andy: Tom, for years we've made jumbo guitars based on the classic Gibson and Guild jumbo guitar shapes. A few years ago, we designed a new type of large-body guitar we call the Grand Orchestra that we felt would serve a wide variety of players. It's similar in size to the jumbo, but was designed to accommodate a broader

range of playing styles. We're making it using several different tonewoods for different tonal flavors, but the maple and spruce 618 model is one of my favorites. This would be the closest comparison to a traditional maple/spruce jumbo guitar, and give you the big low and midrange power you're looking for. While we continue to build a legacy jumbo through our Custom program for players who crave an extra curvaceous figure, I recommend you try strumming a 618. I think you'll dig it.



I've read that the top wood on an acoustic guitar is responsible for 99 percent of the guitar's tone. This can't be true, correct? What percentage of the guitar's tone do you attribute to each section of the guitar?

Mark Piccione

Mark, I don't think I'm smart enough to answer that question. It all contributes. The top does not hold responsibility for 99 percent, but it does play the primary role. If I made a guitar from steel, except for the top, I don't expect to have a guitar that's 99 percent as good as any other good guitar. It all adds up, but I can't say precisely how, nor is it important to me. Which of your five senses is most important? If you think of it that way, you can understand that you really don't want to lose any of the portions of a guitar that contribute.

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.

[Guitar Reviews]

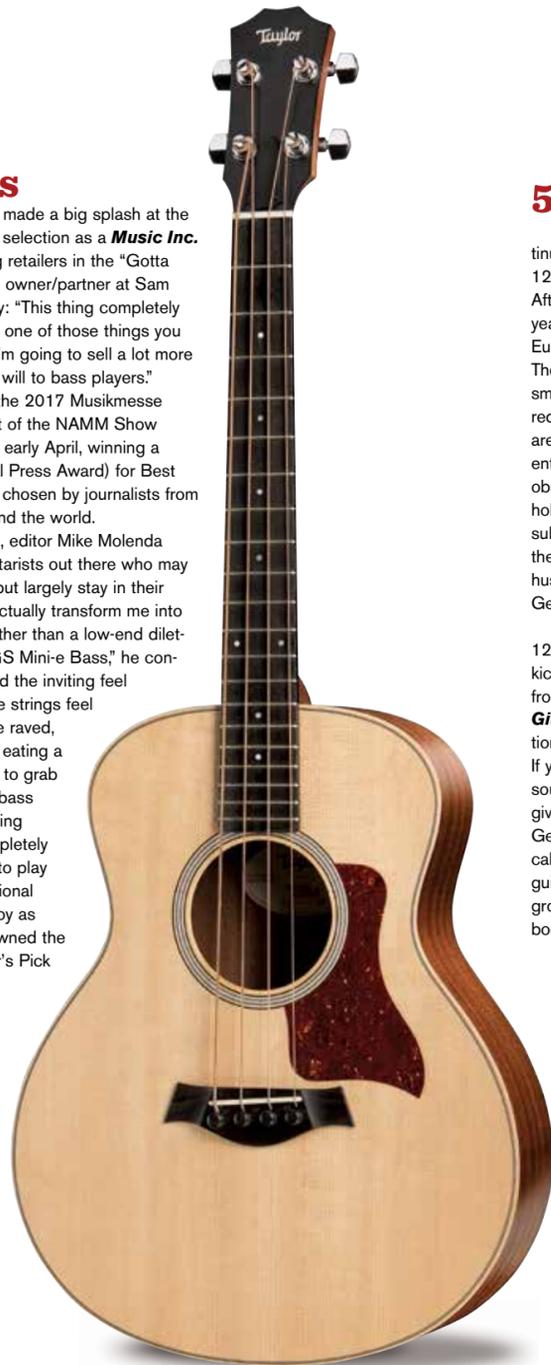
Here's what guitar reviewers are saying about Taylor's latest designs

GS Mini Bass

Our compact acoustic bass made a big splash at the Winter NAMM Show, earning a selection as a *Music Inc.* "Best in Show" nominee among retailers in the "Gotta Stock It" category. Sammy Ash, owner/partner at Sam Ash Music Corp. had this to say: "This thing completely blew away my expectations. It's one of those things you truly don't get until you play it. I'm going to sell a lot more of these to guitar players than I will to bass players."

The bass also fared well at the 2017 Musikmesse gathering – Europe's equivalent of the NAMM Show – held in Frankfurt, Germany, in early April, winning a MIPA (Musikmesse International Press Award) for Best Acoustic Bass. The awards are chosen by journalists from over 100 trade magazines around the world.

At *Guitar Player* magazine, editor Mike Molenda gave voice to the legions of guitarists out there who may dabble a bit with electric bass but largely stay in their guitar lane. "If anything would actually transform me into a serious wannabe bassist – rather than a low-end dilettante – it would be the Taylor GS Mini-e Bass," he confesses. Molenda especially loved the inviting feel of condensed scale length. "The strings feel slinky, sexy, cozy, and sweet," he raved, comparing the satisfaction with eating a favorite dessert. "I'd never think to grab a parlor-sized acoustic/electric bass for tracking song ideas or jamming with friends, but the Mini-e completely changed my mind...it's so easy to play that even beginners and 'occasional bassists' will be beaming with joy as they lay down grooves." He crowned the bass with the magazine's Editor's Pick Award.



562ce

Our compact Grand Concert 12-fret/12-string continues to captivate players and critics who normally find 12-strings too bulky or demanding to play comfortably. After earning glowing reviews in U.S. magazines last year (*Premier Guitar* called it a "studio superhero"), European magazines have joined the chorus of raves. The editorial team from *Guitarist UK* was immediately smitten by its accessibility: "Its action is low with a reduced string tension that makes fretting a joy – gone are the days when playing a 12-string meant disorientation for both left and right hands," the magazine observed. The review also praised the guitar's ability to hold its tuning, along with its "considerable pluck and subtlety" when amplified through the ES2 electronics. In the end the review team found it to be full of "sonorous, husky, lap-friendly fun" and issued the guitar their Gear of the Year Award.

"Who thought it possible to give the 12-string topic such an interesting kick forward!" raved Andreas Schulz from the German magazine *Akustik Gitarre*. "The detail in its definition is rare for this type of guitar... If you've always liked the 12-string sound but found it hard to play one, give this guitar a serious try." Another German magazine, *Guitar Dreams*, called it a "small miracle." "Playing this guitar is addictive.... To get such a grown-up sound from such a small body is a magical piece of art."



814ce DLX

It only took a few plucked notes for *Acoustic Guitar's* Adam Perlmutter to discover the sonic delights of our 814ce DLX in his review for the magazine's May edition. "When I pick a few bass notes...first with my thumb and then a plectrum, I'm struck by its richness and depth of sound," he says. He also liked the way the guitar responded to a range of playing approaches, from gentle picking to a more aggressive attack. "I'm impressed by the guitar's evenness and clarity in all registers, as well as its warm, natural reverb. It's immediately obvious that Taylor – which for decades has been raising the bar on the modern steel-string guitar – has taken its flagship model to the next level."

After detailing the luxurious feel and styling of high-performance features like the radius armrest and Gotoh 510 tuners, Perlmutter's test-drive turned into a joy ride as he delved deeper into the guitar's musical range.

"Due to the guitar's lushness and clarity, I find myself playing arrangements of tunes by the great jazz pianist Bill Evans, packed as they are with cluster-voiced chords," he writes. "The guitar really shines in this setting – it feels like a lap piano."

Perlmutter felt the guitar's greatest strength was its versatility. "The guitar is a superb choice for rhythmic accompaniment," he says. "Chords of all qualities, open and fretted, have excellent note separation and a satisfying low end with just the right amount of presence for playing in a jam or with a singer."

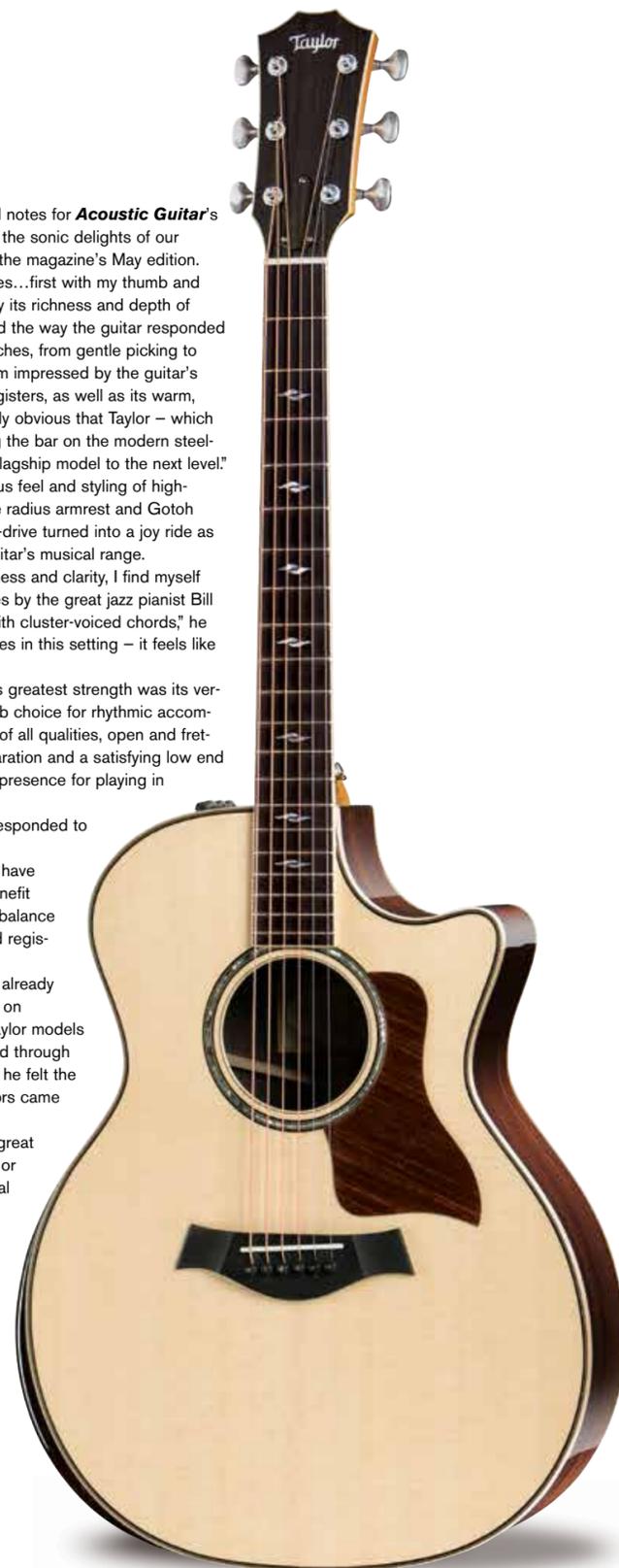
He also liked the way it responded to single-note work.

"Bluegrass and jazz lines have sharp definition and really benefit from the instrument's terrific balance between different strings and registers."

Our ES2 electronics had already made a favorable impression on Perlmutter based on other Taylor models he played. In this case, played through a Fender Acoustasonic amp, he felt the guitar's natural acoustic flavors came through.

"The ES2 would make a great tool for recording, too, alone or in conjunction with an external microphone."

His verdict: "If you're a modern steel-string guitarist in search of the ultimate all-in-one instrument, Taylor's 814ce DLX is well worth an audition."



Academy Series

Like the GS Mini Bass, our Academy Series fared well at the Frankfurt Musikmesse, earning a MIPA in the Best Acoustic Guitar category. The series also made the cover of the April issue of the German magazine *Gitarre & Bass*. In his review, editor-in-chief Dieter Roesberg had this to say: "No guitar builder for a long



time has been so mercilessly consistent in designing a guitar series that is, all the way through, so focused on good sound and playability, leaving out all the superfluous, and yet still creates such a stunning instrument. Hats off!"

Guitar Player's Jimmie Leslie reviewed the Dreadnought 10e and Grand Concert 12e for the magazine's May issue. He started with the 10e and said the comfort level appealed to him immediately. "I'm a little dude, so a typical dreadnought can feel as bulky to me as to a student, but the 10e was a fine fit," he noted. Not surprisingly, he found the 12e more conducive to fingerstyle playing. Plugged in through a Rivera Sedona Lite amp, he liked the simplicity of the ES-B pickup's controls and the amplified response: "I found the tones that burst forth from these guitars didn't

need much sculpting anyway."

Leslie also commended the spirit of the design: to invite a new generation to experience the pleasures of making music.

"Kudos to Taylor for focusing on the future," he writes. "We need more new players, and we need them to keep with it. I'd recommend a 10e or 12e to anyone looking to make the challenging path of becoming a guitar player a little less arduous.... Where were these guitars when I was fighting action five feet off the neck on my first acoustic!"

Premier Guitar gear editor Charles Saufley also came away impressed with the 10e. "This is a thoughtfully built, fine-playing flattop that consistently delivers sonic surprises and consistently feels more expensive than it is," he writes. He appreciated the minimalist design as a function of making a quality guitar more accessible, and also noted the uniquely compelling traits that would appeal to seasoned players.

"The somewhat unconventional small-scale dreadnought body shape and short 24 7/8" scale lends the guitar an interesting – and surprisingly complex – tone profile," he says. "Individual notes from the first through fourth strings genuinely sparkle with pleasing overtones that color arpeggios and extended chords and add extra resonance, atmosphere and harmonic content to octaves in open tunings. The same qualities (and the guitar's excellent set-up and intonation) make capo-up voicings sound fantastic too, and it's easy to imagine the 10e performing spectacularly in overdub situations where you want to add dimension with a second acoustic voice."

Saufley also dug the dynamic response. "A softer fingerstyle approach – which was really my favorite way to use the 10e – summoned a lot of bass presence from the shadows and added an almost mahogany-like mellowness to the midrange. On the flip side, [a] strong attack with a heavy flatpick coaxes a cool, punching-outside-its-weight-class sassiness that's perfect for bluegrass runs and country blues figures. The 10e also responds well to aggressive flatpick strumming, 'distorting' in a pleasing way that reveals surprising headroom and harmonic detail."

For *Guitar World's* May edition, Chris Gill test-drove both the 10e and 12e, and beyond loving the playing comfort, discovered pleasant sonic distinctions with each. "The 10e delivers classic dreadnought tone with a powerful, assertive voice that is surprising considering its shorter scale length and that the guitar was strung with light-gauge strings," he says. "The bass isn't quite as boomy or big, but many players will consider this a bonus as the midrange is also slightly more prominent and sweeter – perfect for rock rhythm playing on stage without needing a bass cut filter." Of the 12e he says: "This is a real honey for fingerstyle players with rich midrange, surprisingly voluptuous treble, and disciplined bass, but it's also a great rhythm guitar for solo singer-guitarists."

[Guitar Reviews] continued

712e 12-Fret

Phil Feser at *Vintage Guitar* (May 2017) was impressed by our rosewood/Lutz spruce 12-fret's sonic horsepower: "The tone is huge for a small-body guitar – a clear and punchy bottom end; an articulate and lush midrange; and a silky smooth high end. With the bridge shifted deeper in the lower bout, the 712e has added depth and bass response and a bit more projection without sacrificing any fingerstyle-friendly midrange. The harder you dig in, the more the guitar responds, never seeming to get washed out or compressed."

Adam Perlmutter from *Acoustic Guitar* loved the blend of old school aesthetic charm and modern playability. "Speedy runs that are difficult to pull off on other steel-strings are made possible on the 712e," he shares. "It's almost too easy to play." In terms of tone, like others he was impressed by its performance versatility, picking up on the natural warmth and power, along with its "brilliant and balanced" voice, and calling it "just as good for strumming as it is for fingerpicking." He also thought the guitar's "clear and uncluttered sound" would blend well with other instruments or sit nicely in a mix. On the website the review also featured a companion video demo from AG's Pete Madsen.

The guitar scored a Platinum Award from *Guitar World* magazine, as Chris Gill lauded our modern updates to the 12-fret guitar design concept, which make it a more dynamic musical tool.

"Whereas many vintage 12-fret acoustics have relatively light construction that requires the use of light-gauge strings and a somewhat restrained and delicate touch, the 712e 12-Fret feels solid and robust," he says. "When you play it gently it still sounds sweet, with vividly complex midrange harmonic overtones, yet as you dig in the sound becomes bigger, bolder and impressively louder." The review included a video demo from Paul Riario on the magazine's website.

In his video and written review for *Peghead Nation* (pegheadnation.com), Teja Gerken was especially eager to explore the guitar's musical personality, as he has owned a Taylor 712c since 1994. Between the 12-fret design, shorter 24-7/8-inch scale length, Lutz spruce top, and other evolved features, Gerken felt the 12-fret asserted an identity all its own. He noted its player-friendly design.

"With its 12-fret neck and short scale, the 712e 12-Fret is about as easy to play as a steel-string guitar could be," he says. "Anyone who has struggled with playability issues should check out one of Taylor's 12-fret grand concerts: the sheer ease of fretting could be revelatory. The 712e 12-Fret had a big dynamic range that allowed it to develop rich tone when played softly or with some force, and it had a high degree of sonic complexity."

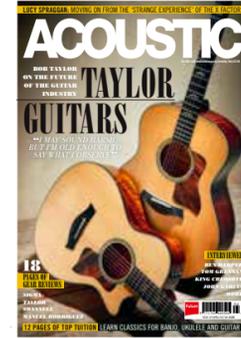
The video demo features Gerken playing a fingerstyle piece, while, in another segment, colleague Scott Nygaard flatpicks the guitar. For amplified performance, Gerken liked the transparency of the pickup: "We ran the guitar's Expression System 2 electronics through a Fishman Loudbox Mini amp and, as we've experienced with other Taylors using this system, the guitar sounded essentially like its acoustic self, but louder."



612ce 12-Fret / 618e

Nick Robbins from the UK's *Acoustic* magazine took a two-pronged approach to exploring our maple/torrefied spruce 600 Series for the publication's April 2017 issue, playing and comparing our smallest and largest body styles. He began with the 612ce 12-Fret and found it "an unbelievably comfortable guitar to play."

"It just fits into your body and the fretting hand feels remarkably relaxed thanks to that slightly shorter scale," he writes. Echoing a common theme among players who play our 12-fret guitars for the first time, he was pleasantly surprised by the tonal output. "Staying up in first position provides a surprisingly loud and complex tone. The projection from this little guitar is quite staggering." He recognized some of maple's sonic brightness, but was pleasantly surprised by the low-end presence, which he felt was "smooth and even across the strings." While he felt the guitar lived and breathed for fingerstyle applications, he was impressed with its response to strumming and flatpicking as well. "It's the sort of instrument that makes you want to run through your entire repertoire just to hear how each song sounds in this particular configuration." He also liked the "more open" tone of the torrefied top. "It's the sound of a well-used and well-loved guitar."



Switching to the 618e, Robbins enjoyed its "huge" dynamic range. "Thrash around with a plectrum and you'll get ear-splitting volume that'll fill the largest rooms, but there's still a place for fingerstyle playing on this model too," he says. The powerful low end also lent itself to some down-tuned excursions in D A D G A D. He even enlisted a colleague for a jam session to hear both guitars together. "The two guitars are ideal companions and voiced perfectly for a dual performance," he writes. "The deeper, slightly more booming tone of the 618e complemented the smaller, more direct sound of the 612ce 12-Fret perfectly." In the end he concluded that these were "stunning" guitars with a "laudable ecological footprint," and that our revoicing efforts have lifted the 600 Series "into a far more versatile and musically fertile ground."

410ce-R

Acoustic Guitar's Pete Madsen took our rosewood/spruce 410ce-R for a spin (March 2017 edition). Immediately he picked up on our efforts to honor the virtues of a traditional shape and tonewood pairing while also appealing to the needs and desires of contemporary players.

"Strummers and bluegrass players will appreciate this dreadnought-sized guitar, but I find the 410ce-R to be a wonderful fingerpicker as well," he says. "The not-so-boomy bass gives excellent definition to alternating and monotonic bass lines. I love the depth of sound when I played slide in open-E tuning (E B E G# B E), especially when I barred the strings with my slide, then slowly opened up the bass strings with alternate bass playing. For fingerpickers who have been playing small-bodied guitars in order to get a more defined sound, but who miss the dynamic range of a bigger guitar, this could be an attractive option."

He also liked the sleek feel of the neck.

"The neck's slim profile makes it easy to navigate from the nut to the 19th fret.... If you like to play fast runs up and down the neck, you'll enjoy picking your way through the 410ce-R."

Madsen especially liked how the ES2 electronics preserve the guitar's high-end sparkle and other acoustic flavors.

"The three sensors mounted behind the saddle capture one of the most accurate representations of the natural acoustic sounds I've heard in an electrified acoustic instrument," he writes. "All the elements of the character of the wood are present in the electrified format. The bass sounds brassy and rich, and the trebles sparkle without becoming harsh or 'quacky,' as is the case with many piezo pickups."

In the end, he says, the guitar delivers on all playing levels.

"Whether you're a professional gigging musician or a hobbyist," he concludes, "the 410ce-R is an instrument you'll be proud to bring to the next gig, jam, or stay-at-home practice session."

[Innovation]



smooth operator

Our new robotic buffing system makes it easier to put a pristine sheen on guitars

By Jim Kirlin

If you've toured our El Cajon factory at some point over the last 16 years, chances are you've seen Buffy in action. She's a legend. Fellow employees marvel at her tireless work ethic as she methodically polishes one guitar body after another into a rich glossy sheen.

Alas, after a productive career that has brought her magic touch to a few hundred thousand guitars, Buffy is retiring. She'll always be our shining star.

Buffy, of course, is our finish-buffing robot (actually there are two), and the central component of an integrated system we debuted back in 2001 with two goals in mind: to bring greater consistency to our buffing process, and to relieve our craftspeople of the physical demands of doing the work entirely by hand.

The reason for Buffy's "retirement" is that we've upgraded to a new system, featuring a pair of new buffing robots, new buffing wheels, and other new hardware and software components. Between the evolution of robotic technology, our ongoing push to refine our processes, and the mileage on our existing buffing robots, the time was right for an overhaul. After an extended period of development to update the robotic programs and fine-tune the integration of the new components, we began the installation of the new system during our annual factory shutdown at the end of 2016, and it was up and running in time for our return in January.

continued next page

Leading the project was our in-house robotics engineer, Tyler Robertson, who handled all the programming. You might remember Tyler from our recent story on the robotic pickup assembly system we currently use for our Expression System 2, which sports cutting-edge machine vision technology ("Vision Quest," Fall 2016). At the time Tyler hinted at some of the improved features of the new buffing system, which he was working on: greater automation with the help of radio frequency identification (RFID) labels located inside each guitar body; the addition of another buffing wheel to the process; and more responsive wheel motion technology.

Since Tyler hadn't worked on the process end of buffing in our Finish department, he worked closely with our established experts: former department manager Chris Carter (who now manages our Repair department) and current manager Hector Hernandez, with additional input from buffing veterans Sammy Michel and Jeremiah Kahler.

Hand-Buffering Is Hard Work

Let's rewind for a moment to better appreciate the benefits of using of robots for buffing. Buffing a guitar body entirely by hand, as we did for years, is one of the most physically demanding aspects of making guitars. A guitar body happens to be a really hard object to buff, with its complex geometry and curves, and the mix of consistent pressure and fluid movement required to achieve an even luster.

"It was backbreaking work," says Chris Carter, a 22-year veteran who recalls the days when working in the

Finish department meant doing it all – paste-filling bodies, a couple cycles of hand-spraying finish followed by sanding, and then buffing for 20-30 minutes. Then came the moment of truth: presenting the body to then-department manager Steve Baldwin for final inspection.

"Steve would *always* find a mistake," Chris says. "Which meant more buffing."

As Chris recalls, some bodies were especially difficult to buff.

"Back then there were more Jumbo bodies with Florentine cutaways – or maybe I was just the one who got stuck buffing them," he laughs. "They were big bodies with a tight waist and that sharp cutaway. Those were *work*."

Along Came Buffy

For our first foray into robotic buffing, Steve Baldwin (who has since retired), had to learn the programming language that would orchestrate the movements of a 6-axis robotic arm as it picked up a guitar using a vacuum-controlled gripper and then manipulated its curves against the spinning buffing wheels within a robotic finishing cell. With the help of an outside robotic integration company, Pinnacle Technologies, Baldwin and our finish team refined the sequence into an impressive display of industrial choreography.

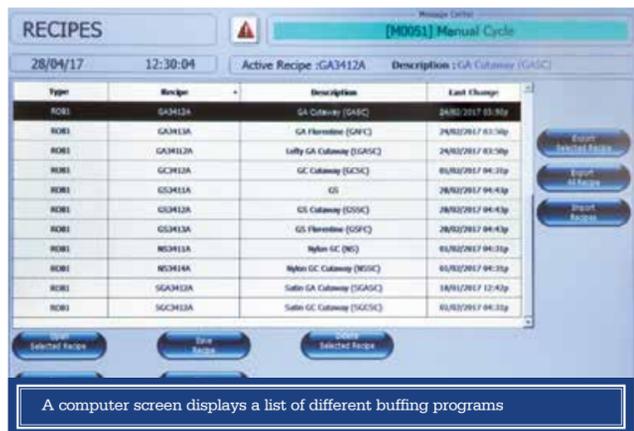
A buffing wheel holds stitched layers of polishing cloth (about 16-ply on average). Our original robotic system used two wheels, each made with a differently textured cotton fabric, which allowed the buffing to progress from a coarser buff (to remove scratches) to a fluffier buff to bring out the shine. Each

wheel is mounted to a motor-powered track that enables it to slide forward and backward to regulate the buffing pressure against the robot-held guitar. Behind the wheel, another motor-driven applicator holds a block of dry buffing compound (essentially a solid mixture of wax and fine-grit sand) and auto-applies the material to the wheel periodically to facilitate the polishing process. The robot manipulates the guitar based on the specific buffing program for a given shape. During the buffing cycle, the robot even sets the guitar down on a dedicated stand and then picks it up from the opposite side, enabling it to polish the entire surface area of the body.

Our first-generation buffing cell operated on roughly a 15-minute cycle, and initially completed about 80 percent of the buffing work. The last phase of manual buffing would give the body a final shine and a fluff to clean off any residual buffing compound. This last step also enabled our craftspeople to inspect the work for quality and consistency, and attend to any trouble spots if necessary.

Beyond the goals of greater consistency and physical stress relief for employees, Taylor VP of Manufacturing Chris Wellons notes that our investment in a robotic system also enabled us to efficiently ramp up production to meet the growing demand for our guitars.

"No employees have ever lost a job due to a robot," he adds. "We always had a plan in place to repurpose those employees who had been hand-buffing into other operations within the Finish department or elsewhere in production."



A computer screen displays a list of different buffing programs

Buffy 2.0

One morning in late March I meet up with Tyler in the buffing room, where he's fine-tuning a few process details, to learn more about the new system's improved capabilities.

"We didn't want the replacement system to be too crazy different," he says over the muted drone of spinning buffing wheels. "The impetus was really that the other machines were getting older."

Out in front of one of the new buffing cells, Tyler points out some of the new components and the way they improve this next-generation polishing capability.

New Wheels

The new system incorporates a third buffing wheel, which allows the buffing sequence to be better calibrated from a slightly coarser buffing fabric to a

fluffier one. Technically the order of the progression is the cut wheel, then the color wheel, and then the fluff wheel (see sidebar).

"The material is different on each," Tyler says. "It's Canton flannel, then domet flannel, and then muslin cotton. We were able to make the second wheel a bit more aggressive and the third wheel quite a bit less aggressive."

The choice of material, and even the sewing of the fabric, he says, makes a big difference.

"We switched to a different type of fluff wheel – it keeps it together more, it makes it a bit stiffer," he explains. "That means you can push harder on it!"

By the end of the cycle, he says, the quality of the luster is higher than in the previous system.

"If all we did was just add that extra wheel, it would make a big difference," he says.

Another minor recalibration was to shift to a narrower wheel for the first phase of buffing.

"It allows the wheel to fit better in tight areas like the waist or cutaway," he says. "This helps minimize the occurrence of dull spots."

More Responsive Robots

One of the keys to a good buff is the ability to regulate the pressure on the guitar as the wheel and robot interact. Our new ABB robots do a better job of calculating the pressure and responding to maintain a consistent amount. The pressure is calculated with the help of a laser sensor and can compensate for wheel wear, as Tyler explains.

"It measures the diameter of the wheel and how much fabric has worn down," he says. "These new ones are

more accurate. They display the pressure based on the motor current for the wheel, which lets me fine-tune areas based on these numbers. So as the robot pushes the guitar into that wheel, the current goes up on the motor, and if the current goes up based on the settings on the controller, it'll back off until the current goes down. On the older robots you'd see the wheel move in and out while it was trying to get that pressure. These newer robots are more responsive – the wheel stays contacted."

RFID Automation

Tyler says his original concept for the new buffing cell included a vision system – similar to what he had worked on for the robotic pickup assembly unit – featuring a camera that could read the guitar shape and automatically call

up the correct buffing program. But the many different color and binding options we offer, and the possibility of buffing compound getting on the camera lens, presented potential complications for visual recognition. Instead, he decided to use a scanning system that could read each guitar's specifications from the RFID label inside it, and then auto-select the program. Without the RFID interface, the program has to be manually selected with a controller. That's why until recently, guitars were often buffed in batches of the same body shape for efficiency – so the programs didn't have to be changed manually for each guitar. Each buffing cell features two pallet drawers, each of which can hold two guitar bodies, so up to four guitars can be loaded into the buffing queue.

Better Programming Capability

Tyler says the transition to the new system also gave him an opportunity to change the formatting of the programs to make the programming process smoother and more efficient.

"For example, it means that I can simply mirror an existing program to buff left-handed guitars instead of having to make new programs," he says. The software interface for the programs is also easier for employees to use if they're selecting a program.

Added Safety Features

The new buffing cells incorporate new safety features, such as light curtains.

"If someone tries to put their hand in the loading area while the robot is



Sammy applies a finishing touch to the buffing process

trying to pick something up, it'll stop," Tyler says. "Also, the buffing wheels can't run if the doors to the buffing cell are open. I like that a lot, especially because these wheels are lower to the ground, which would make it more dangerous if someone tripped."

More Robot Time = Less Stress on People

While the addition of the third buffing wheel adds time to the robotic buffing cycle (from about 15 to 17 minutes), the process brings the bodies closer to completion than the previous system. As a result, the final phase of hand buffing is easier on our craftspeople and takes less time, so the net result is actually a better buff in slightly less time.

The buffing process is also made easier by the sophistication of the finish application process that precedes it. This includes both the electrostatic/

robotic finish spraying system we use – which coats the surfaces of the body with a consistently even finish thickness – and the hand-sanding that follows.

"The sanding is a really important thing when it comes to the buffing," Tyler says. The more consistent everything is, the better things turn out. Everything gets waterfallled through production."

As for the original Buffy? She's moving to Mexico. Our 200 Series guitars, which have gloss-finish tops, and our 200 Deluxe models, which feature full-gloss bodies, are both produced at our Tecate facility. After some maintenance and other performance upgrades, Buffy will relocate and join our Finish team there. No doubt she'll receive a warm welcome. **W&S**



L-R: Chris Carter, Hector Hernandez, Tyler Robertson, and Sammy Michel in the buffing room

The Art of Three-Wheeling

Tyler explains the differences in material composition between each buffing wheel used in our robotic system.

Cut Wheel

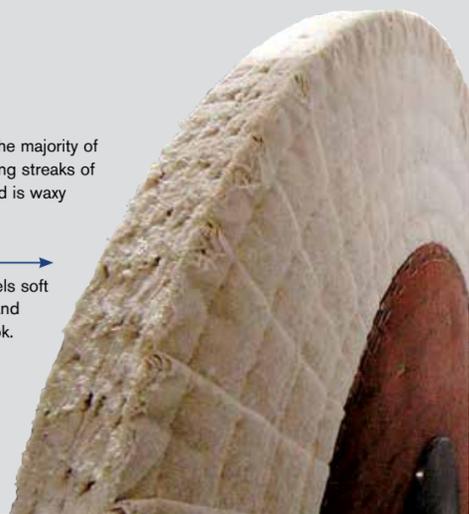
"This is an aggressive fabric that feels rough to the touch, does the majority of the scratch removal, yet still leaves the guitar looking dull, with long streaks of scratch from the aggressive fabric and compound. The compound is waxy with a heavier grit of abrasive."

Color Wheel

"This fabric still has some density but is much less abrasive; it feels soft to the touch. This helps blend the scratches from the cut wheel and gives the guitar what you would describe as a shiny or glossy look. The compound on this wheel is very dry, and the abrasive is fine."

Fluff Wheel

"This is very soft fabric that has little to no compound applied to it. This wheel removes final dullness and cleans up any leftover compound from the previous wheels."



Polish Points

More About the Buffing Process

- A special rake with carbide teeth is used to clean buffing compound buildup from the fabric of the buffing wheels. The wheels are raked anywhere from one to four times a day to optimize their performance.
- About 16 pounds of buffing compound are used each day.
- The buffing wheels are replaced on average every three months.
- Currently we have a total of 45 different buffing programs.
- We have separate buffing programs specifically for our 500 Series guitars because the faux tortoise shell binding material is more susceptible to the heat generated by the buffing wheels.
- Our satin finish isn't buffed. We use UV-flat. Gloss-finish bodies receive an additional top coat of polyester that is cured in a UV oven.
- A gloss-finish neck or peghead veneer is hand-buffed. If a guitar has satin-finish back and sides and a gloss top, the top will be buffed with the robot.
- The robotic buffing cycles for the gloss-finish T5 and T5z are slightly shorter than for our acoustic guitars – about 10 minutes.
- On a gloss-finish body with an armrest, the armrest area is buffed manually.



Pallet drawers where bodies are loaded for buffing. The round casing holds an RFID scanner

FANTASTIC FOR FUR

A DYNAMIC LINEUP ENLIVENS OUR NEW LIMITED EDITION COLLECTION

By Jim Kirlin

YOU'VE PROBABLY HAD THIS EXPERIENCE:

you meet someone at a party, instantly hit it off, and before you know it you've been talking for an hour. That's how you'll feel after picking up any one of our charismatic new limited edition guitars. You can thank our resident design maestro, Andy Powers, who selected some choice ingredients from our tonewood pantry, worked his signature acoustic alchemy, and emerged from our design studio with four uniquely compelling voices that promise to whet your musical appetite.

Flamboyant blackheart sassafras makes a return appearance and this time enjoys our lavish 900 Series treatment, featuring a full complement of premium features, including an ebony armrest. Our acclaimed small-body 12-string/12-fret design platform is flavored with the rich tonewood pairing of Indian rosewood and Lutz spruce, and the result is pure acoustic magic. Our first-ever spruce-top Dreadnought baritone marries ovangkol with Engelmann spruce and debuts a gorgeous vintage-look tobacco color treatment. And two of Andy's favorite tonewoods, Tasmanian blackwood and Lutz spruce, pair up on a Grand Auditorium that feels remarkably alive in all the right ways.

All four models come equipped with our Expression System® 2 acoustic electronics and ship in a Taylor deluxe hardshell case. Read on for more details. Better yet, visit your local Taylor dealer and make some new musical friends. Just remember, you might be there a while.

continued



Front: 12-string 752ce LTD; Back (L-R): 314ce LTD, 410e Baritone-6 LTD, 914ce LTD

914ce LTD

Body: Cutaway Grand Auditorium
Back/Sides: Blackheart Sassafras
Top: Sitka Spruce
Bracing: Advanced Performance with Protein Glue & Side Braces
Armrest/Binding: West African Ebony
Fretboard/Peghead Inlay: Pink Abalone/Pearl "Ascension"
Finish: Gloss Body (3.5 Mil), Satin Neck
Rosette: Single-Ring Paua Edged with Koa/Ebony (Bound Soundhole)
Additional Details: Koa/Paua Edge Trim (Top, Fretboard Extension), Koa Purfling (Fretboard, Peghead), Gotoh Gold Tuners, Bone Nut/Micarta Saddle

We've had a thing for blackheart sassafras ever since we sourced some wild-looking sets a few years back from a Tasmanian timber supplier who specializes in removing overmature trees from family farms. Each set of bookmatched blackheart tells a unique story, displaying an exotic tableau of variegated blond, hazel, pink and other subtle hues. Dark lines that run through the heartwood (hence the "blackheart" name) come from fungi that form in the tree after branches break off during storms, allowing water to drip down through the tree while it grows.

Sonically, the slow-growing hardwood's tone profile is pleasantly intriguing: it blends the woody midrange warmth of mahogany, the focus of maple, and a chimy, breathy top-end clarity and sparkle reminiscent of rosewood. This mix of tonal flavors translates into a player-reflective musical personality.

"It goes where a player pushes it," Andy said back in the fall of 2014 when we released a batch of sassafras limiteds. "Depending on the player, a person might bring out more of a mahogany sound, or rosewood, maple, walnut or even something else."

For this release we've chosen to feature our versatile Grand Auditorium shape, we've paired it with Sitka spruce, and dressed it in our 900 Series finest. That means tone-enhancing touches like Advanced Performance bracing, the use of protein glue, side braces, optimized wood thicknesses



Front of the 914ce LTD; Back of the 752ce LTD

752ce LTD

Body: Cutaway Grand Concert
Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Lutz Spruce
Bracing: Performance with Protein Glue
Binding: Koa (with Matching Backstrip)
Fretboard Inlay: Green Abalone "Reflections"
Finish: Gloss Body, Satin Neck
Rosette: 3-Ring Herringbone-Style with Douglas Fir/Maple/Black
Tuners: Taylor Nickel
Additional Details: Weathered Brown Pickguard, Douglas Fir/Maple/Black Top Trim

By now you've surely heard that our 12-string Grand Concert is something special. Thanks to Andy's deft acoustic artistry, the combined platform of a 12-fret/12-string design with a small body has delivered an incredibly accessible 12-string playing experience. So it's no wonder that our all-mahogany 12-string 562ce has been hailed as a game-changer among dealers, reviewers and players alike. (If you need a reminder of the guitar's appeal, see the recent review highlights for our 562ce on page 12.)

This delectable variation, the 752ce LTD, pairs Indian rosewood with Lutz spruce and churns out a mini-symphony of sound in a remarkably easy-to-play package.

"This basic design gives the player a lot of headroom and dynamic range," Andy says. "When you incorporate rosewood with a spruce top you get

even more high-fidelity shimmer. Each note, or octave note, has a luxurious kind of response. With that overtone series emphasized, the sound is thick and broad. As a whole, you end up with this surprisingly dynamic presence from a small instrument!"

The compact Grand Concert body helps contain the richness of the woods and the 12-string voicing. The result is an expressive tonal character that emphasizes the chimy octave courses while still preserving the sonic balance and intimacy. One chord will seduce you.

The guitar sports an array of our wood-rich 700 Series appointments, including koa binding, a herringbone-style rosette with Douglas fir and maple, and our weathered brown pickguard, which lend warmth to the guitar's appearance.



L-R: Twisted Ovals fretboard inlay on the 314ce LTD; Ovangkol back on the 410e Baritone-6 LTD, featuring a Tobacco finish

410e Baritone-6 LTD

Body: Dreadnought
Back/Sides: Ovangkol
Top: Engelman Spruce
Bracing: Baritone
Binding: White
Fretboard Inlay: Italian Acrylic Dots
Finish: Gloss Body with Tobacco Sunburst Top, Tobacco Back/Sides; Satin Tobacco Neck
Rosette: 3-Ring White
Tuners: Taylor Nickel
Additional Details: Faux Tortoise Shell Pickguard

We've been crafting baritone guitars for about eight years now, almost exclusively featuring a Grand Symphony body. The only baritone Dreadnought we've made (outside our Custom program) was a limited run in the spring of 2014, featuring sapele back and sides and a mahogany top. It was loaded with husky-voiced baritone character, and the natural compression of the hardwood mahogany top helped spread the sonic warmth and woodiness evenly across the tonal spectrum.

But we've never made a spruce-top baritone Dread – until now. This 400 Series edition pairs African ovangkol with Engelman spruce. Andy enjoyed working with the woods and the Dreadnought form to forge a baritone with no shortage of personality, as he explains.

"Ovangkol is similar to rosewood in its tonal characteristics, with a little

more control and midrange balance, which fits the baritone's personality," he says. "Paired with a spruce top, the guitar has a powerful attack and a complex voicing. Formed as a Dreadnought body, which tends to emphasize a strong lower midrange presence, this recipe serves up one of the most powerful baritone guitars that we've made. It's got a lot of gusto."

To match the guitar's deeper, rumbling sonic register (it's tuned B to B), Andy chose a dusky, neo-vintage aesthetic treatment featuring a tobacco sunburst top with color-matched tobacco shading on the ovangkol back and sides. A gloss finish heightens the rich appearance of the deep brown color, reflecting subtle hints of ovangkol's variegation to add visual depth. The mahogany neck also received the tobacco color treatment to match the back, with a satin finish for a smooth

handfeel. White binding accents the Dreadnought's contours and adds a crisp counterpoint against the tobacco shading.

"The overall look really suits the sound of this guitar," Andy says. "And it sounds really good. I was playing it and found myself thinking, why haven't we done this before?"

Featured appointments include faux tortoise shell for the binding, rosette and pickguard, the return of our "Twisted Ovals" fretboard inlay scheme (used on the 600 Series for several years prior to 2015), and vibrant abalone bridge pin dots that add a pop of color against the ebony bridge.

314ce LTD

Body: Grand Auditorium
Back/Sides: Tasmanian Blackwood
Top: Lutz Spruce
Bracing: Performance
Binding: Faux Tortoise Shell
Fretboard Inlay: Italian Acrylic "Twisted Ovals"
Finish: Satin Back/Sides, Gloss Top, Satin Neck
Rosette: 3-Ring Faux Tortoise Shell
Tuners: Taylor Gold
Additional Details: Faux Tortoise Shell Pickguard, Green Abalone Bridge Pin Dots

"I love blackwood," Andy declares as he reflects on this guitar. "Right now I think it's my favorite back and side wood for a flattop."

More and more players who've discovered our blackwood 300 Series guitars also love what they hear, thanks to the wood's strong projection, warm and focused midrange, and top-end sparkle.

"It's got enough of mahogany's dryness and warmth, but with splash of shimmer and overtone color giving it a special something extra," Andy says.

For this limited edition Grand Auditorium, Andy swapped the mahogany top we normally pair with blackwood for Lutz spruce, whose properties lend a dynamic boost to the overall acoustic output.

"Lutz is another wood that's become one of my favorites, he says. "The quality of the material we're using, the way it's cut – it's a spectacular top wood. It has all the qualities I've loved about old Adirondack spruce without being too stiff or dense."

Pairing the two woods on this guitar, he says, translates into a tone profile that sits in a musical sweet spot.

"Both of these woods live in the middle of the tonal spectrum, which gives a guitar made from them a really engaging personality," he says. "You put those ingredients together and they sound super appealing to almost every type of playing style."

Featured appointments include faux tortoise shell for the binding, rosette and pickguard, the return of our "Twisted Ovals" fretboard inlay scheme (used on the 600 Series for several years prior to 2015), and vibrant abalone bridge pin dots that add a pop of color against the ebony bridge.

For complete specifications on all models and more information on availability, visit taylorguitars.com.

[Sustainability]



ProFile: Scott Paul

Taylor's new Director of Natural Resource Sustainability wants to help turn Taylor's vision of sustainable forestry into a scalable model for the future

By Jim Kirlin

It's a full house in the training room on our El Cajon campus, and Scott Paul, Taylor's recently hired Director of Natural Resource Sustainability, is laying some knowledge on several dozen of us from the sales, marketing, and customer service teams. Scott knows how to rock a PowerPoint presentation, and at the moment he's "wonking out," in his words, on the global impact of deforestation, showing time-lapse photos that vividly illustrate his point.

"The last few decades have seen such unprecedented escalation of forest loss that governments are now reacting to it in a serious way, and we need to be intimately aware of all of this," he says. He cites data from a landmark report by The Climate and Land Use Alliance, a collaborative initiative that supports land use policies and practices that mitigate climate change,

benefit people, and protect the environment. "What it says is that 71 percent of all tropical forest loss that's happening on the planet is due to large-scale agricultural conversion."

It's been driven, he explains, by market demand and the accelerated growth in large-scale production of palm oil, soybeans, and beef.

"This is a relatively new thing that's only been happening in the last 10 or 15 years," he explains. "If you want to play ball on a global scale and supply the big box stores, or the Chinese or Indian markets, you need a farm the size of Rhode Island. Obviously, Rhode Island is already taken, so the Tropics are great because it's flat, there are no rocks, there's a lot of sun, and far too often there's little law enforcement — if you could just get rid of the people and the trees, you could have a massive farm."

Scott runs through more slides showing examples of illegal logging and the rapid increase in deforestation: palm oil plantations in Indonesia and the Congo; soy in Brazil, and others. He cites another alarming statistic from the United Nations: Each year deforestation, mostly driven by the expansion of commercial agriculture, adds an amount of carbon pollution to the atmosphere that's equivalent to all the world's cars, trucks, ships, trains and airplanes combined.

The point of all this isn't to fill the room with doom and gloom. It's to deepen our awareness of the environmental stakes, underscore the importance of engaging in sustainable forest management initiatives, and validate the pioneering work that Taylor as a company has been pursuing.

"When Taylor Guitars started, no one even knew what sustainable devel-

opment was," he reminds us. "That term wasn't even coined until 1987. But the world is changing rapidly, and we as a company are in an incredibly unique position to do something impactful."

A Passion for Forest Protection

Scott comes to Taylor as an environmental heavy-hitter with diversified credentials. He's held senior positions at the world's largest environmental organizations, including 14 years at Greenpeace, where he served as their Director of Forest Campaigns. During his tenure, he led an international campaign that documented illegalities in the Brazilian mahogany trade, which eventually resulted in the listing of big-leaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). This in turn helped set the stage for the U.S. Congress to amend the Lacey Act, expanding its protection of wildlife to include prohibiting the importation of forest products sourced illegally in other countries. Scott has served on the board of directors for the Forest Stewardship Council (a global forest certification system). He worked at the White House Office for Environmental Policy. In the private sector, he oversaw business development at an alternative fiber start-up company. He also participated in the United Nations environmental policy dialogue.

What has largely guided his career trajectory, he says, is a passion for forest protection and lessening the effects of climate change. He traces it back to his experiences after graduating from college in Massachusetts in the late 1980s. He'd taken a semester off before graduating to travel through Europe, which meant his friends graduated a semester ahead of him. Unsure of his own post-college path, he knew he didn't want to go the traditional corporate route many of his friends were taking.

"They went into Boston and got a cubicle in a sea of cubicles," he says. "It sounded horrible to me. So I decided to run away to Central America for a year just to have a life adventure."

He worked at an orphanage in Guatemala and for the Costa Rican National Park Service. While working in Costa Rica at Poás Volcano National Park he had an epiphany.

"My job was to stand on top of the volcano at the lookout station and tell people not to crawl over the fence into the mouth of the volcano," he recalls. "It wasn't hard. Back then people mainly came to the park Thursday through Saturday, so Monday through Wednesday I usually just sat there. I

remember one day looking across the expanse and thinking I was incredibly happy with where I was, and that I'm supposed to protect places like this."

Scott spent more time backpacking through Central America, fell in love with other parts of Latin America along the way, and not wanting his adventure to end, enrolled in graduate school to pursue Latin American Studies.

"I did my master's thesis on the history of conservation in Central America, really Costa Rica," he says. "And then I ended up back in Central America."

When he finally ran out of money, he moved to Washington, D.C.

"I kind of stumbled into an internship at the White House in the Environmental Policy Office," he says. "That's when things really got into the track I'm in now."

Meeting Bob

Scott first met Bob Taylor in 2007, while working for Greenpeace on the Musicwood campaign. Some of you might recall our coverage of the Musicwood initiative, a coalition that brought Taylor, Martin, Fender and Gibson together in an effort to safeguard the long-term sustainability of Sitka spruce. If you ever saw the documentary about the campaign, *Musicwood*, Scott was a central figure in the story, which chronicled the struggle to preserve the future of old-growth Sitka spruce trees in Southeast Alaska's Tongass National Forest. The mission of the coalition was to persuade the Sealaska Corporation, the largest non-federal landholder in Southeast Alaska, to rethink their logging practices and adopt a more responsible forestry management plan before the supply of available musical-instrument-quality spruce disappears, along with habitat and species.

Bob and Scott became better acquainted during that project, and went on to cultivate a friendship based on mutual respect for each other's work. Beyond sharing a concern for the future health of the world's forests, one particular area of common ground was the belief that innovative business practices are a vital component of sustainable development.

In Scott's case, his cross-sectional experience working with a wide array of stakeholders — landowners, manufacturers, government policy makers, scientists, NGOs and local communities, among others — has given him a unique understanding of the complex relationship between economic, social and environmental interests. As a result, his expertise has enabled him to forge a common understanding of environmental issues and encourage engagement from diverse groups of stakeholders. With

the relationships he's built, it also means that policy officials in Washington, D.C., or Geneva, or in other important environmental arenas, are inclined to heed his calls.

After Scott's PowerPoint presentation at Taylor, Bob Taylor shared more on his relationship with Scott over the past decade and why Scott is an asset to Taylor.

"He's a real greenie, but he also understands what business is all about," Bob says. "Scott's going to help us get the word out on the projects we're involved with — Crelicam and ebony in Cameroon, which is an important thing, and the work we're doing with koa in Hawaii, and the work that Steve

"I've worked for some of the biggest environmental organizations and honestly believe I can do as much good at Taylor moving the sustainability needle."

McMinn's team [from tonewood supplier Pacific Rim Tonewoods] is doing with maple. With Scott's help, I think we have the potential to change the trajectory of how our forestry is done."

Bob explains why this type of work is helping to establish proof of concept for new paradigms of sustainability.

"When we do something like the Crelicam project or Paniolo in Hawaii or Steve and his maple, there's an economic driver to each one of those things, and this is often the piece that's missing in environmental work, because commonly it's done through NGOs with foundation funds, or other time-based programs, and then when the funding ends, the program is over," he says. "You put trees in the ground, you go help some people in a village, the money dries up, the foundation or the World Bank decides to put money someplace else, and that just goes away. But what we're really trying to do is build something where there's an ongoing economic driver. That's what makes it sustainable. I believe that we can change the way the world thinks about people coming in to do similar things. Scott will run a campaign advancing and promoting what we do, and that will include NGOs and governments and other relevant interested parties. We need to bring people together who work on the issues. We need to get on the same page."

Scott shares with the group why working at Taylor presents a unique opportunity for him at this point in his career.

"I've worked for some of the biggest environmental organizations on Earth, and I've been in the captain's seat for some really big campaigns," he says. "And I honestly believe I can do as much good at Taylor moving the sustainability needle as I was able to do at any other organization I've worked for."

In a follow-up conversation a few weeks later, Scott elaborates on working with Taylor, and why the timing seems opportune.

"When it comes to sustainability, there are three components: there's forest protection, there's sustainable management, which means using it but not depleting it, and the third one

is restoration," he explains. "They all should overlap, of course. After starting my career in Washington, for years I tried to get a job doing restoration, but there were very, very few jobs, so I got into forest politics and conservation and sustainable management issues," he says. "But in the last maybe five years the world has really started taking on the restoration agenda in a serious way, driven in part by the politics of climate change and the fact that when you grow trees they sequester carbon. So for the first time ever there's a mature conversation and debate taking place at the governmental level concerning the restoration agenda. And frankly, Taylor Guitars may be doing some of the more interesting and even provocative restoration stuff that I've seen. It's small-scale right now, but very cool stuff."

"There's a concept within the wonky world that I come from called PPP — public-private partnerships," he continues. "Over the last several years, governments have been footing much of the bill for the big efforts on forest protection and climate change, but they are increasingly asking the private sector to get in the game. And in order to stimulate that, they are all about PPP. It basically means governments are looking to the private sector to partner with, to step up and help pay for or lead some of the programs needed for greater sustainability; it can't just be the government and a couple of NGOs. The private sector has to do its part, to take on more responsibility. It turns

out that Bob's emerging dream and initiatives are perfect for what I believe these PPPs are looking for."

Scott understands that everything is a work-in-progress, but in talking with Bob in recent years, he has witnessed Bob's sustainability vision evolving in real time the more he learns.

"I keep saying to Bob, where do you want to be in 20 years?" he shares. "If your wildest dream comes true and Crelicam succeeds and Paniolo succeeds, what does that look like? In Cameroon we're putting trees in the ground; we're putting people to work; we're using less and making more. We want to leave more than we take. We need to prove concept. If we succeed, then maybe we get to grow the concept; not for the good of Taylor Guitars but for the planet. Sorry, I can't help myself. I'm a true believer."

Bob elaborates on his long-term forestry outlook and what he hopes to accomplish.

"When I look ahead 20 years, or better yet, 100 years, I envision people playing guitar still, and Taylor Guitars making those guitars," Bob says. "This will sound bold, but Facebook or Apple may not be around, but I think that guitars and Taylor will be. Therefore, I see our forestry work being able to survive because we'll be there to help it along. With Scott's help, I believe we can make better decisions and involve others in a way that I can't do on my own. We'll do something small, which we think is both an example and also scalable. I think Scott can find those people, groups or countries that might want to emulate what we're doing, either on their own or in cooperation with us."

Other Projects

One of Scott's current projects at Taylor involves working to create greater clarification in regulatory circles regarding the recent reclassification of *Dalbergia* rosewood on CITES Appendix II. Scott, Bob and Luisa Fiona Willsher from our Spanish tonewood supply partner Madinter Trade (also our ownership partner with Crelicam) traveled to Washington, D.C. in early April for several meetings. The goal moving forward, he says, is to find ways to maintain the intent and integrity of what CITES is trying to accomplish with *Dalbergia* while also clarifying the regulations so the good operators aren't being hurt along with the bad operators, and so that the regulations don't create unnecessary complications.

During his presentation at Taylor, Scott talked about the recent change in rosewood's CITES status, and compared it with mahogany, which is also listed on Appendix II. (Appendix II lists



Scott (second from left), Bob Taylor (second from right), and others in front of a Sitka spruce tree in Alaska during the Musicwood campaign

species that, according CITES, "are not necessarily now threatened with extinction but that may become so unless trade is closely controlled.")

"I'm actually the guy who played a big role putting mahogany in Appendix II," he says. "When I worked at Greenpeace our team documented illegalities and issues in the Brazilian mahogany trade, a campaign that directly resulted in the eventual uplisting of the species to Appendix II. But in the end, CITES is all about the Annotation, the instructions that dictate how it will be implemented. Sorry, this is wonky, but with mahogany's Appendix II, all the Annotation says is that you need CITES paperwork for logs, sawn wood, veneer sheets and plywood. It's not perfect and it's complicated, but the point is that a finished guitar no longer needs CITES paperwork."

The new Annotation that governs rosewood, by contrast, requires CITES paperwork for the life of the instrument if sold across international borders.

"So, currently, if a guitar has rosewood on it, in 200 years, when my great-great-granddaughter sells it from the U.S. to someone in Canada, she'll have

to prove it to be pre-Convention or post-Convention, and have the paperwork. I don't see how this protects forests."

The hope is that an appropriate annotation can be developed in the future to preserve the CITES convention's intent without penalizing responsible business.

As of this writing Scott was preparing to leave on a four-week world trip with Bob Taylor, Steve McMinn from Pacific Rim Tonewoods, Vidal de Teresa from Madinter, and couple of others involved in our sustainability work. The plan was to meet with people in other regions who are engaged in innovative forest restoration and cultivation initiatives, such as plantation-grown mahogany in Fiji, or North American spruce stands in Ireland. Beyond Fiji and Ireland, the group will travel to Guatemala, Spain, Cameroon (involving Crelicam and ebony reforestation), Vietnam, Malaysia, Hawaii (where Paniolo is cultivating koa), and the state of Washington.

Look for updates on the trip and these projects in future issues. **W&S**

SOMETHING SPECIAL

A CUSTOM TAYLOR
IS YOUR UNIQUE
PERSONAL STATEMENT.
HERE ARE A FEW OF
OUR LATEST OFFERINGS.



1



2



3



4



5



6

Our Custom program traces back to Bob Taylor's first guitars. From those grassroots beginnings, our custom capability, like our entire guitar-making operation, has steadily evolved to offer Taylor devotees a rich palette of tonal and aesthetic options. These days, between our extensive menu of choices and efficient turnaround time, the Taylor of your dreams is more accessible than ever.

Our dealers also get in on the design fun as well, often specifying out custom orders with their Taylor sales rep to create unique inventory for their store. We do our part, too. For our annual custom guitar sales event held the day before the Winter NAMM Show earlier this year, we designed and showcased an array of beautiful custom models. In about four hours, more than 100 orders had been placed.

Here you'll find a sampling of some of our recent custom models. Whether you're a seasoned player looking for a Taylor with optimized performance features to suit your playing preferences (neck width, scale length, neck profile, etc.) or a diehard Taylor lover looking to commission the creation of your ultimate guitar, we're at your service.

If you need more inspiration, peruse our custom guitar gallery at taylorguitars.com, and if you have any questions, talk to your preferred Taylor dealer or give us a call.

1 Cutaway Grand Auditorium featuring black limba back/sides (paired with a top of European spruce), bloodwood binding, and a light shaded edgeburst

2 All-walnut 12-fret Grand Concert with bloodwood binding and armrest, single-ring bloodwood rosette, and smoky ebony bridge

3 Cutaway 12-fret Grand Concert with cocobolo back/sides (paired with a European spruce top featuring Adirondack spruce bracing), cocobolo binding with white/red purfling, and two-piece cocobolo backstrip against contrasting sapwood

4 Florentine cutaway on an all-koa Grand Auditorium with paua abalone/pearl Island Vine fretboard inlay, paua top edge trim, 3-ring rosewood rosette, and rosewood pickguard

5 Figured koa peghead overlay with paua/pearl Island Vine and paua Taylor logo inlays, Indian rosewood truss rod cover, and chrome Gotoh 510 tuners

6 Tree fretboard inlay featuring koa (trunk) with paua/black oyster

Notes From NAMM

It was an action-packed Winter NAMM Show for Taylor in Anaheim, California, earlier this year. Our new Academy Series, GS Mini Bass and 800 Deluxe Series enjoyed an exuberant response from dealers and other guests who had an opportunity to play them. Our footprint at the show was bigger than ever, featuring an expanded dealer/meeting room that was constantly bustling. Our sales team had more space and more guitars on hand to show dealers, while our video lounge provided a dedicated space for Andy Powers, Bob Taylor, product specialist Marc Seal and others to conduct on-camera interviews to talk about our new gear. We also shot a lot of artist interviews, including a steady stream of Facebook Live videos that kept our social media community engaged throughout the show.

Over in our main exhibition room, the 2017 line was well represented. Our guests love that our room is a place where they feel welcome to hang out and play guitars, and to interact with Taylor staff. On two mornings we hosted an information session with our dealers to update them on the new CITES regulations regarding *dalbergia* rosewood.

Guitar Awards

Two Taylor models earned industry accolades during the show. The GS Mini Bass earned a "NAMM Best in Show" nod in the "Gotta Stock It" category, while our 12-string Grand Concert 562ce 12-Fret won a Music & Sound Award as the "Best Acoustic Guitar of 2016." These awards are both significant as they are voted on by all retailers, not just Taylor dealers.

Artist Performances

Once again we showcased a dynamic lineup of Taylor artist performers in our main exhibition room over the course of three days. On Thursday San Diego's own **Tolan Shaw** (sunburst **814ce**) led the way with a groove-rich solo set made even groovier with a looping station that he used to add layers of sound and percussion to his songs. Shaw, who would go on to win a 2017 San Diego Music Award for Best Singer/Songwriter in March, has been posting a series of "Taylor Tuesday" videos in which he shares a new looping progression on one of his Taylor guitars. Next up was Texas-bred, Nashville-based country-pop duo **SmithField** (Trey Smith and Jennifer Fiedler). Their polished vocal harmonies filled the room, blending original material – including their hit "Hey Whiskey" – with several covers, including the Civil Wars' emotionally charged "Barton Hollow."

On Friday, Tokyo solo fingerstylist **Shuji Fukunari** wowed the crowd with an envelope-pushing set. His altered-tuning instrumentals – played on a **714ce**, **614ce** and **814ce** – blended melodic sophistication with percussive tapping, slapping, and harmonics. He even treated the crowd to an inventive reworking of Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song." Nashville father-son duo **Tim and Myles Thompson** kept the musical bar high with a crowd-pleasing set of their own. Tim, an international fingerstyle champion, locked in with Myles, a virtuoso in his own right, who switched between mandolin and fiddle. The interplay shifted fluidly from the acoustic Celtic rocker "Take Me Down" to a hot take on Weather Report's

"Birdland," to a stunning classical-meets-bluegrass rendition of Mozart's "Turkish March." Between songs Tim shared his appreciation for the playing comfort of his **812ce 12-Fret**. Closing out the day was **Korbee**, led by the charismatic duo Tom and Jenn Korbee, whose pulsing blend of electro-pop and acoustic rhythms charged the room with an uplifting, anthemic musical vibe. Tom Korbee switched between keyboards, a **K24ce** and an **all-koa GS Mini**, which he likes to play on tour because its compact size allows him to jump around on stage while performing.

Saturday's lineup brought Southern rocker **Brian Collins** and members of his band, who worked through several tracks from his *Healing Highway* record, with help along the way from harmonica legend **Lee Oskar**. Collins is a big fan of his shorter-scale custom Dreadnought **710e**. "The short scale really adds that something extra to an already full-bodied tone," he shared. Capping things off was Santa Monica street busker turned pop star **Andy Grammer**, who delighted the crowd with an energetic set interspersed with the origin stories behind his hit songs. Grammer comically recalled the shaky start to his formal artist relationship with Taylor, confessing that after his first loaner guitar was stolen we kindly sent him another...which was also stolen. Grammer, whose go-to guitar is his **514ce**, played a new **814ce DLX** during his set, enlisting the crowd to lend vocal support on well-known tunes including "Keep Your Head Up," "The Pocket," "Honey I'm Good," "Back Home," "Fresh Eyes," and "Good To Be Alive (Hallelujah)."



SmithField



Tim & Myles Thompson



Andy Grammer



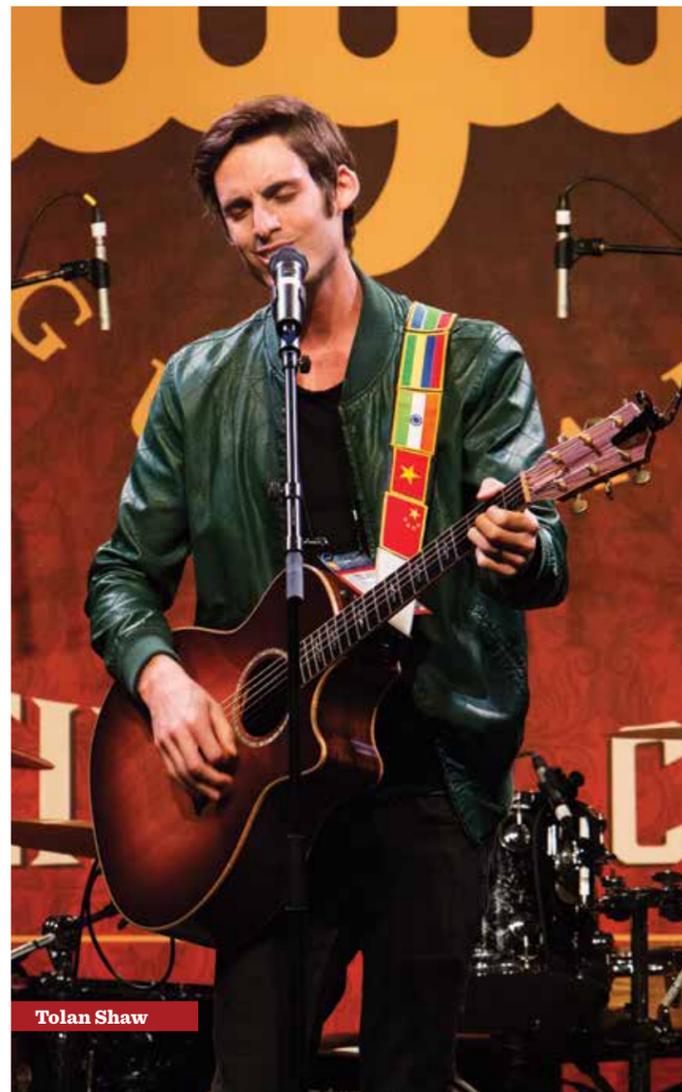
Shuji Fukunari



Korbee



Brian Collins



Tolan Shaw

Soundings

Embracing the Bass

Our **GS Mini Bass** is making its way into the hands of discerning pro musicians across different musical genres, with great reactions so far. Among them



Brian Allen

is longtime first-call Nashville session bassist **Michael Rhodes**, who's been out on tour with blues great Joe Bonamassa. "I love it," he shared with our head of Artist Relations, Tim Godwin, adding that it's been perfect for playing in his hotel room while on tour. Another new fan is **Brian Allen**, a prolific session and stage bassist who currently plays in acclaimed guitarist Robben Ford's band and in the session rhythm section for Grammy-winning producer Dave Cobb (Chris Stapleton, Jason Isbell, Sturgill Simpson). "This bass is perfect for working out parts in the studio, practicing or playing gigs," he shared. "Acoustic or plugged in, it's been turning heads and perking up ears everywhere." **Jed Elliott** from the popular English rockers The Struts checked in with us in early May from Los Angeles before a string of tour dates, with some writing and recording sessions planned after that. "The bass is fantastic," he said via email. "It's the perfect companion on the road. I can run all over the neck with it when it comes to writing on the go, it sounds fantastic for acoustic jams, and it's perfect for live radio sessions."

Songwriter, composer, producer, musical director and arranger **Fred Mollin** also dropped us a line to rave about the bass after getting a chance to record with it.

"The studio sessions were a great 'audition' for it," Mollin shared via email. "Getting the tone was effortless, going direct to the console and preamp. My longtime session ace bass player, **Larry Paxton**, put it through its paces and was absolutely gobsmacked."

Mollin, a longtime Taylor player, also brought the bass to Nashville's Tin Pan South Songwriters Festival, held March 28 through April 1, and sat in with a few artists during several of the acoustic songwriter-in-the-round events.

"I used it on a few songs where it created better opportunities than another guitar, and it was simply perfect," he said. "After the shows all I did was answer questions about the beast. As the world capital for acoustic songwriter performances, Nashville may be ground zero for this instrument."

Mollin felt that as a musical tool, the bass was groundbreaking in its feel and sound. "It stands tall in a tiny body," he added.



Jed Elliott

American Girl GS Mini

If you've been raising a young daughter or know others in that boat, chances are you're hip to the popular American Girl® brand of dolls and accessories. The company's creative team recently consulted with the folks at Nashville's famed **Bluebird Café** music venue on the development of a new doll character: Tenney Grant, a young, aspiring singer-songwriter who pursues her musical dreams in Nashville. In addition to the doll, the Tenney collection of accessories includes several music-inspired products, including a miniature version of an authentic Taylor GS Mini guitar that features custom artwork and can play three songs.

Taylor was invited to collaborate on the guitar design project with American Girl through our friends at the Bluebird. In addition to the doll-sized guitar, Taylor designed a life-size, special edition **American Girl GS Mini** to inspire young girls to explore their own musical aspirations. After American Girl developed the custom artwork for the doll-sized soundboard, we scaled up the graphic treatment to create a matching top for the Taylor-produced guitar. The vibrant teal top sports a



white floral screen print, white faux pearl pickguard, and white/black soundhole rosette to match Tenney's GS Mini.

"Music is powerful, especially in the lives and development of young boys and girls," says Taylor Vice President of Marketing Tim O'Brien, "so we were excited by the opportunity to partner with American Girl to encourage young girls to pick up a guitar."

We're currently selling the standard-size American Girl GS Mini exclusively via TaylorWare on the Taylor website. Offering the model directly to customers has enabled us to support

our non-profit charity partner Notes for Notes®, a national organization that builds, equips and staffs after-school recording studios that are free for youth inside Boys & Girls Clubs and after-school centers across the county. For every American Girl GS Mini guitar sold, Taylor will donate \$100 to Notes for Notes.

To promote the launch of the Tenney collection, American Girl filmed an episode of their YouTube series *AG Life* at our Nashville showroom with Taylor artist and Radio Disney Country Correspondent **Savannah Keyes**.

Giving Spirit

Popular contemporary Christian singer-songwriter and worship leader **Chris Tomlin** visited the Taylor factory with members of his band in early May. Tomlin was in town to play a show in San Diego on the latest leg of his "Worship Night in America" tour, a 24-date run across the western half of the U.S. through mid-May. The Texas-bred Grammy winner (and multiple GMA Dove Award winner) has been playing a **522e 12-Fret** on stage during his large-scale worship music events, with bandmate **Daniel Carson** on a sunburst-top **712e**

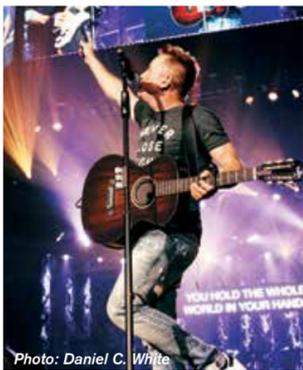


Photo: Daniel C. White

12-Fret. Thanks to Tomlin's generosity, one lucky fan at each show has gone home with a new Taylor. Tomlin's camp recently arranged to purchase 24 sunburst-top **210e-SB DLX** models from us for the tour. Toward the end of each night's performance, as Tomlin is joined on stage by the other supporting acts on the bill – Big Daddy Weave, Phil Wickham, Zach Williams & The Reformation, Mosaic MSC, and Jason Barton – Tomlin surveys the crowd to find young worship musicians in attendance and invites one to join him on stage to play guitar with the band on a song. After handing his guest his 210e-SB DLX for the performance, Tomlin surprises the young player by giving him or her the guitar to take home and play with their worship group at their church. "You are the future," is the message he's been sharing with his young fans.

Tomlin has been headlining his "Worship Night" music events over the last two years, including sold-out shows at Madison Square Garden, Red Rocks and other iconic venues.



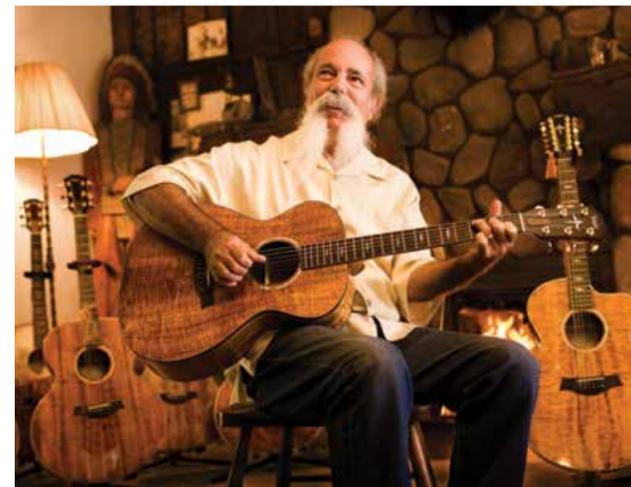
Photo: Corey Bost

Remembering Koaguitarman

In late February we learned of the passing of **Russ Lewark**, a longtime member of the extended Taylor community. Russ was a major fan of our guitars, and of Hawaiian koa. Several years back he told us his first koa love was a Taylor Dreadnought **K20**, and that an all-koa guitar's acoustic properties were the ideal tone for the fingerstyle ragtime, jug band, and folk-rock he enjoyed playing. But he also liked how koa held up to flatpicking, including some bluegrass-style runs. His koa Taylor collection grew to an impressive 14 guitars at one point, including several artist signature models we produced together with **Richie Sambora** and **Kenny Loggins**, along with our commemorative **John Denver** model, which was released in 2003.

We had the pleasure of featuring Russ in our winter 2009 guitar guide issue of *Wood&Steel*. He and his wife Twyla welcomed us into their home, where we photographed him, fittingly, for our Koa Series. He's shown playing one of our latest models surrounded by many of the beautiful guitars that made up his own personal koa series.

Russ was also an active member of an online acoustic guitar forum in the early 2000s, known by many as "Koaguitarman." Taylor's trade show coordinator, David Kaye, remembers getting to know him via the forum.



"When I started at Taylor 14 years ago, one of my first goals was to devour every bit of history about the company I could find," Kaye recalls. "Guitar forums had started popping up on the Internet, so naturally I began to frequent them to glean as much information as I could. That's where I first 'met' Russ. Forums, true to their nature, seem to take off on wild (and often false) tangents regarding all the guitar brands. When it came to Taylor conversation, if someone posted erroneous information regarding our guitars, often it was Russ who would

post a reply. He always responded with a calm demeanor, politely providing accurate information and sharing his love of koa and Taylors. I finally properly met Russ a few years later when he was visiting the factory, as he often did. We stayed in touch via emails and phone calls, and he would always drop by the Taylor room at NAMM. He was very humble and nice man. He will be missed by everyone at Taylor."

Our condolences go out to his wife, Twyla, and their three daughters, Amber, Ashley and Lalena.

Guitar for a Good Cause

Bob Taylor donated a custom Taylor guitar as an auction item for the **UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability's** 2017 IoES Gala, held at a private residence on March 13 in Beverly Hills. The annual event honors environmental game changers and raises money for the institute's solution-driven environmental research programs. This year's theme, "Innovators for a Healthy Planet," reflected this year's honorees, Toyota and **Paul Allen**, cofounder of Microsoft.



The event attracts an array of Hollywood celebrities who share a passion for promoting innovative environmental causes. This year's attendees included host committee members **Courteney Cox**, **Christina Hendricks**, **Freida Pinto**, and **Moby**. Musician **Robbie Robertson** was also on hand, as was **Jackson Browne**, who played a set. Our Director of Natural Resource Sustainability, Scott Paul, and Director of Supply Chain, Charlie Redden, both attended the event on Taylor's behalf.

During the auction portion of the event, Browne played Bob's donated guitar, a gorgeous 12-fret Grand Concert whose tonewood ingredients Bob had personally specified to serve as an embodiment of Taylor's long-term commitment to

sustainable sourcing and reforestation. The body features back and sides of bookmatched AA-grade flamed maple responsibly sourced by our maple and spruce supplier Pacific Rim Tonewoods, paired with a figured maple slothead neck. The premium-grade Sitka spruce top was also sourced by PRT. The fretboard, bridge and peghead overlay were made with Cameroonian ebony from our mill in Africa. The fretboard was specially selected for its exotic "marble cake" variegation.

The guitar's decorative binding, backstrip and soundhole rosette incorporate figured Hawaiian koa sourced by Paniolo Tonewoods, the company formed by Taylor and Pacific Rim Tonewoods to cultivate koa forests in Hawaii. The guitar sold for \$8,000.

Last year Bob donated money to fund an ebony research project with the Congo Basin Institute, a forest research center based in Cameroon that was formed in partnership with UCLA's IoES. The project, which is focused on studying the sustainable cultivation of ebony, is currently underway.

Acoustic Scenery

One listen to *Mirabilia*, the latest release from acoustic instrumental folk-rock trio **Whalebone**, will instantly transport you to the bucolic English countryside and evoke vistas of forgotten pastoral worlds. Picking up where the trio's previous album, *As Turn the Seasons*, left off, this sixth recording continues to explore and build upon the traditional sounds of ethnic-flavored music while maintaining a decidedly British sensibility.

As on the prior release, multi-instrumentalist **Steve Downs** (**314ce**, **GS Mini Mahogany**) draws from the rich sonic palette of his Taylor **Baritone 8-String** to great effect, especially together with the trio's

musical sensibility also informs a further reach: idyllic scenes of Eastern Europe with arpeggiated bouzouki playing on "Hiraeth"; Andalusia in southern Spain, conjured with the help of syncopated handclaps and Phrygian inflections on "Mouse 16"; and long-gone, pre-industrial, rural America on "Lost Borders," articulated with somber violin melodies accented by bluesy yet graceful bent-note guitar solos.

The interplay of Steve Downs' and Charlotte Watson's steel- and nylon-string guitars (along with mandolin, bass and more) with Sarah Ibberson's fiddle balances traditional folk "accompaniment and lead" roles with complex ensemble interactions more akin to the texture and arrangements



expanded instrumentation, featuring 5-string fiddle, bouzouki, classical guitar, electric guitar, slide mandolin, percussion and more. The result is a collection of instrumental music that resonates in a richly allegorical way. On tracks like "Floodplains" and "Thynge," the trio naturally tonepaints their hometown of Shropshire, England – and the British Isles in general – with modally infused, folk-like themes (*Mirabilia* was recorded at their Shropshire studio, which overlooks the Severn River, and more than one song reflects the flowing, transformative nature of the water). But their expansive

of a classical trio. They also find room for all the instruments' voices to be highlighted as soloists but analogous to lead vocalists rather than self-indulgent displays (though on "Holding Aces," an acoustic wah-wah solo stands out in high relief). From song to song, the trio's thoughtful musical equilibrium makes *Mirabilia* an album that goes beyond merely drawing and holding your attention; it invites you to daydream about the music and imagine the settings suggested by its various ethnic influences within. Whalebone-music.com

– Shawn Persinger

Taylor Notes

Mid-year Updates to the Taylor Line

As much as we love unveiling the latest configuration of the Taylor guitar line to kick off each calendar year, our lineup also lives and breathes as the year rolls on. We might change a specification or add a new model to an existing series. With new designs like our Academy and 800 Deluxe Series, we might chart a model rollout schedule that gives us the flexibility to make adjustments in production based on demand.

Other refinements happen behind the scenes, as we introduce a new process that elevates the quality of our craftsmanship. (See the story on our new robotic buffing system on page 15). Then there are the seasonal limited editions that ride alongside our standard line, which we weave into our production build slots. (See page 18 for our latest batch of those, or the opposite page for the models we created exclusively for our current Road Show tour).

The good news for you is that there's always something fresh cooking at the Taylor factory. Ahead you'll find several mid-year updates to the Taylor line, along with an idea of when you might find them in stores.

The Academy Series

What's New: Grand Concerts are coming

Details: The rollout began with the Dreadnought 10 and 10e. In May, the steel-string Grand Concert Academy 12 and 12e began arriving in stores, with the nylon-string 12-N and 12e-N scheduled to start shipping toward the end of the year. As a series, the guitars have already racked up rave reviews and awards among guitar reviewers (for a sample, see page 13), and we're excited to get the smaller-body Grand Concert models into people's hands. If you know someone who's looking for a compact, easy-playing and affordable Taylor option, these guitars fit the bill.

The 800 Deluxe Series

What's New: All body styles are available

Details: Introducing our ultra-premium 800 Deluxe Series earlier this year was no small feat, especially considering the additional craftsmanship required to incorporate our new radius armrest on each model. That's why the initial release was limited to three models: the 810e DLX, 812ce 12-Fret DLX, and 814ce DLX. Now we're ready to expand the series to include every model we make within our standard 800 Series. That includes a 14-fret Grand Concert (812ce DLX), a 6- and 12-string Grand Symphony (816ce DLX and 856ce DLX), and a 6- and 12-string Grand Orchestra (818e DLX and 858e DLX). Beyond the armrest, the other deluxe features include Adirondack spruce bracing and Gotoh 510 tuners.

200 Deluxe Series

What's New: The figured maple 214ce-FM DLX model joins the series

Details: Our 200 Deluxe collection continues to expand its model options. After introducing a pair of all-koa models with shaded edgeburst tops earlier this year (the Dreadnought 220ce-K DLX and 224ce-K DLX), we're planning to add the layered maple/Sitka spruce 214ce-FM DLX to the family. The maple's attractive flamed figure features a natural gloss finish (and gloss top) and is paired with a satin-finish Hard Rock maple neck. Appointments include white binding, black purfling, Italian acrylic small diamond fretboard inlays, a single-ring faux pearl rosette, and chrome tuners. The guitar comes with Expression System® 2 electronics and ships in a Taylor deluxe hardshell case. We've only shipped about 75 models so far, but we expect to ship more in the third quarter of this year.

Sunburst Top 800/900 Series

What's New: A tobacco sunburst top is now a standard option for any 800 or 900 Series model

Details: Last fall we offered limited-release Grand Auditorium 814ce-SB and 914ce-SB models featuring a tobacco sunburst top. What made these unique was a breakthrough color application process that enabled us to spray the sunburst without adding material thickness to the ultra-thin 3.5-mil gloss finish. The vintage-look guitars were a hit, so we've opened it up as a standard option for any model offered within the 800 and 900 Series. Alas, it isn't yet available for 800 Deluxe models due to the nature of the radius armrest, but it's probably just a matter of time.

Cutaway Grand Symphony Models

What's New:

A Florentine-style cutaway will be the standard for steel-string cutaway models in the 500 Series and up

Details: A couple of factors played into moving from a Venetian to a Florentine cutaway on our GS models. We introduced the Florentine as the standard cutaway for the Grand Orchestra when we began making cutaway versions of the body style last fall because, as Andy Powers explained, he felt the larger radius curves blended aesthetically with more voluptuous body lines. Similarly, the scoop of the Florentine nicely complements the Grand Symphony's full-bodied form. It also adds a dramatic flair to the bold-voiced body. Due to limitations on how many Florentine cutaways our production team can execute per day, the plan is to gradually work the new cutaway models into production. That's also why we're only doing it on the 500 Series and up. They should start rolling out gradually later this summer. If you're a fan of GS models but prefer a Venetian cutaway, don't worry, you can still order it as a standard model option.



Four on Tour: Exclusive Road Show Guitars

By the time you read this, we'll be into the final month of a new season of Taylor Road Shows, which run through the end of June. This year our design team hatched a special run of four exclusive Road Show models we think players will love. Every store that hosts a Road Show will have at least three of these models on hand for their event. They'll be part of their Taylor inventory, so if they don't sell the night of the show, they'll remain at the store. Be sure to check our Road Listings on the Taylor website (taylorguitars.com/events) to see if we'll be heading your way. If you won't be able to get to an event but want to get your hands on one of these guitars, give us a call and we'll do our best to track one down for you.

Koa/Torrefied Spruce 714ce LTD

Until now, torrefied spruce tops have been reserved for our maple 600 Series, so this koa/torrefied Sitka beauty serves up a unique treat in look and sound. The cutaway Grand Auditorium sports a back and sides of fetching Hawaiian koa normally reserved for our Koa Series. The torrefied spruce lends a played-in quality to the guitar's overall voice, enriching koa's midrange presence and top-end brightness with extra warmth and responsiveness. A shaded edgeburst wraps the body in refined neo-vintage charm (and complements the darker color of the torrefied top), while a variegated West African ebony fretboard from our ebony mill in Cameroon gives each guitar a one-of-a-kind appearance. Pearl Century fretboard inlays, a colorful paua rosette, and abalone-dotted ebony bridge pins supply sparkling accents, while our ES2 electronics invite you to plug in. There's a lot to love about this guitar.

GS Mini-e AA Koa LTD

If you like the look of our standard GS Mini Koa, feast your eyes on this upgraded edition, featuring AA-grade flamed koa all-around, on both the solid top and the layered back and sides. The Mini has quickly become one of the most popular models in Taylor history by giving players a comfortably scaled-down guitar option without skimping on sound. The 23.5-inch scale length makes the fretboard easy to navigate, and the streamlined size makes the Mini an easy travel companion. This premium edition also features our ES2 pickup, so you've got a stage-worthy guitar option whose looks, sound and feel will be the envy of everyone.

T5z Custom LTD with Sassafras or Cocobolo

If you haven't experienced our T5z demo at a Road Show, you're missing out. For this exclusive T5z offering, you have a choice between two bold and exotic hardwood-top options: lava-hued Mexican cocobolo or beautifully bookmatched blonde sassafras. The compact hollowbody electric features our proprietary electric and acoustic pickups, five-way switching for a range-roving array of tones, dual compatibility with electric and acoustic amps (or a PA), and a 12-inch fretboard radius and jumbo frets for expressive string bends. Finishing details include white binding, an all-gloss body, and gold tuners. We've had one of these two models on hand at each Road Show.

[Model Spotlight]

Special Edition 214ce-FS DLX

Our 200 Deluxe Series hosts a rich mix of premium aesthetic looks, from tonewoods to color finishes. So when one of our wood suppliers recently showed us some richly figured sapele veneer, we knew just what to do. The back and sides of this special edition cutaway Grand Auditorium are dense with delicate, curly figure that gives the amber-hued sapele a luxurious chatoyance (to use one of Andy Powers' favorite words). Cream binding and a rich gloss finish supply tasteful finishing details.

For anyone who's inspired by exotic-looking woods and craving something special from Taylor at an attractive price point, this guitar is sure to make an alluring muse. Each guitar comes with our ES2 acoustic electronics and ships in a Taylor deluxe hardshell case. Quantities are limited. Contact your dealer about availability or give us a call and we'll help locate one near you.

Body: Grand Auditorium
Back/Sides: Layered Figured Sapele
Top: Solid Sitka Spruce
Binding: Cream
Fretboard Inlay: Italian Acrylic Small Diamonds
Finish: All-Gloss Body, Satin Neck
Rosette: Italian Acrylic
Tuners: Chrome



THE CRAFT

Tools for Musical Growth

When breakthroughs in instrument design harmonize with the creative longings of musicians, good things happen

There are two phrases that have special meaning to me: "what if" and "why not." Wow! What powerful statements these are, masquerading as questions. They tell me something good is about to happen. Their power lies in the idea that something is about to change. A convention will be challenged. A "no" might be on the verge of turning into a "yes."

These phrases serve me well as an instrument maker. My call is to create tools that enable musicians to embrace, make and share their creative gifts. My ultimate desire is to make the music-playing experience, sensed through sight, touch, and hearing, as enrapturing as it can be, regardless of the experience level of the musician. And to make anything better requires making

a change, however big or small. This simple fact is easy to overlook.

I've learned that improvements typically happen through a two-way interaction between musicians and instrument makers. Musicians go to builders, imploring them to expound on an instrument by expanding its range, volume or some other characteristic to further enable their musical creativity. Builders

emerge from their workshops with music-making tools that sound or feel better. Their changes offer new ways to draw musicians further into fresh and unexplored places.

Over time I've come to believe that making changes with the musician's desires in mind can be recognized as a hallmark of a great builder. A quick survey of music history's admired builders – Stradivari, Guarneri, Cristofori, Orville Gibson, Lloyd Loar, C.F. Martin, Torres, Hauser, Fender, D'Aquisto and others – suggests this one act was their common denominator: they changed the form of their instrument as it had been known in a way that musicians enjoyed. While those changes addressed varying characteristics of different instruments, whether ergonomic, sonic or visual, the end results were an instrument musicians liked to play. Sure, many wonderful makers slowly and diligently refine their craft, without making sweeping, paradigm-shifting alterations. But even there, a slow evolution with the musician's benefit in mind is the result of many small changes in material, workmanship and design.

believe their creativity is good not only for themselves, but for those around them. Music is a stunningly beautiful expression of our creativity. And while it's easy to point to the enduring works of music's great composers and performers as wonderful, I don't think this creative goodness is confined to the musicians that history has deemed noteworthy. I believe it lives within everyone who dives into musical waters. That said, the recipe for creative expression requires two essential ingredients: imagination and ability. In other words, our creativity is limited only by our ability to craft what we imagine. I've found that this holds true in both music making and instrument building. After all, if we can't give form to our ideas, they won't exist outside of our own thoughts. Ability alone without imagination, however, gives us nothing but the routine, mundane repetition of what we've already seen.

This is why I think people of all abilities should be playing and enjoying music at whatever level they are able to, and letting their enjoyment pull them along the path of experience. The depth

Our creativity is limited only by our ability to craft what we imagine.

The changes are also closely aligned with the tastes, settings, and desires of musicians living within a particular place and time in history. For example, the piano developed as musicians wanted more dynamic range and power during the classic and romantic era of music's lineage. The solidbody electric guitar was developed to satisfy musicians' desire for more dynamic range and power in the electric, futuristic post-war era. While the exact form of those changes varied due to the cultural context, the musical desire behind them was the same. And once those traits are captured in the form of a great instrument, players tend to favor those instruments as long as they live.

This two-way street – musicians seeking to expand their comfort and range of expression; makers responding and encouraging musicians to further their art – brings us to the intersection of imagination and ability. Those two beloved questions, the "what if" and "why not," are where the dreams of music makers bump into the abilities of instrument makers, hopefully with innovation, growth and beauty as the results.

A Recipe for Creative Growth

At a core level, I believe people are inherently creative. Moreover, I

and quantity of a person's creativity will grow as their ability and knowledge expand.

My experience as an instrument maker is parallel to this creative progression. The thrill of my earliest attempts at taking a saw and chisel to wood was infectious and drew me in over and over. With practice, I learned to direct these tools where I wanted them to go so I could give form to the instruments I imagined as a player.

Here within the workshop, I find myself and all of us at Taylor Guitars embracing the privilege of offering our best to match your musical imagination. We strive to make instruments that feel, sound and look better than ever, and span a full range of musical needs – to encourage the musical curiosity of a first-time player, the honed skill of a seasoned veteran, or the guitar player craving a new direction. And we get to do this in a way that leaves our forests in better condition than the way we found them. This work is challenging, thrilling and rewarding. We get to make instruments that support creative musical expression, and I believe this musical creativity is a benefit to us all.

– Andy Powers
Master Guitar Designer

[Seasonal **Tips**]

Summer Guitar Care

Whether your summer plans include a vacation or staycation, the warmer weather can impact the condition of your guitar. Here's how to keep your guitar healthy wherever you both end up.

Monitor those humidity levels.

Depending on where you live, the summer heat may include higher humidity. For a guitar, 40-60 percent relative humidity (RH) is a good target zone (45-55 is ideal). Depending on the humidity levels outside, the use of indoor air conditioning can lower the humidity. Either way, be sure to use a digital hygrometer, which is more accurate than the needle variety. It can be kept in the room where you store your guitars, or, better yet, in a central location inside the guitar case, preferably Velcro'd to the outside of the accessories compartment (facing the heel of the guitar).

Humidify or dehumidify accordingly.

One of the humidification products we recommend is D'Addario's Two-Way Humidification System because the moisture-filled packets are formulated to either release or absorb moisture to maintain a predetermined RH level of 45-50 percent. In areas with extreme or year-round high humidity (routinely registering over 60 percent), you might need to use a dehumidifying product such as bamboo charcoal, a natural product that has been used as a dehumidifier in Asia for more than five centuries. It has a negative ionic charge that attracts excess moisture and odors from the surrounding atmosphere. We carry bamboo charcoal dehu-

midifier pouches from Ever Bamboo in TaylorWare.

Wipe it down after playing.

Warm weather means more perspiration on your guitar as you play. As you wipe down the body and strings, keep an eye out for the buildup of grime on the fretboard. This can be transferred to the underside of your strings and compromise their tone or ability to stay in tune. Consequently, in the summer months you might want to change your strings more frequently and if necessary, de-grime the fretboard.

Periodically clean and condition your fretboard.

After removing the strings, cover the soundhole with a towel and clean the fretboard with 0000 gauge steel wool. You can rub pretty hard without damaging the fretboard, but be careful not to let it touch the body. If the fretboard looks dry, consider adding a little fretboard conditioning oil. We suggest using our Taylor Fretboard Oil or boiled linseed oil. A small amount applied to a rag and wiped over the wood should do the trick.

If traveling by car with your guitar, treat it like a pet.

If it's too hot to leave your dog in the car, don't leave your guitar there either. On a hot summer day, exposure to extreme heat inside a car can cause a guitar's wood glues to soften and the bridge to come loose under the pull of the string tension. In extreme cases, other guitar components can even begin to separate. If you must keep

your guitar in the car on a hot day, try to find a shady parking spot or use windshield shades and crack the windows.

Fly smart.

Planning to fly with your guitar? According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), small musical instruments can be transported as your one carry-on baggage item if there is room in the overhead compartment when you board and the instrument can be stowed safely. Keep in mind that this policy applies only to U.S.-based airlines. Be sure to check with your airline carrier on specifics and limitations of these rules, and give yourself extra time at the airport.

As a service to instrument owners, the DOT has put together an online information guide for flying with a guitar. You'll also find links to advice from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) on carrying guitars through screening checkpoints, a central overview of the individual policies of most U.S. airlines, and Frequently Asked Questions. To access that information, visit dot.gov and enter "traveling with a musical instrument" in the search field.

Consider installing TaylorSense.

By now you've probably heard about our new smart battery box and mobile app. Think of it as a health monitor or fitness tracker for your guitar. During the summer months, it makes a great tool for tracking your guitar's humidity and temperature, along with physical impact and the preamp's battery life. For more product details, see our TaylorSense sidebar.

Or add TaylorSense installation to a Taylor service package.

If you plan to send your guitar in for a service package at the Taylor factory, you can also upgrade your ES-equipped guitar to include the TaylorSense battery box. Regularly \$79.99 through TaylorWare, it can be

added to any service package for just \$50. You must have a Taylor guitar with a 9v-powered ES1, ES2, ES-T or ES-N pickup, a WiFi or cellular-connected iPhone 5 or later, or iPod 6th Generation or later, running iOS 8 or later, and the free Taylor Guitars iOS app

Protect Your Taylor with the TaylorSense Smart Battery Box and Mobile App

Our breakthrough health monitoring system puts the vital signs of your guitar into the palm of your hand

We love helping customers maintain their guitars, so we're excited to introduce a new guitar care tool called TaylorSense, which makes it easier than ever to track the condition of a Taylor guitar. TaylorSense features an easy-to-install smart battery box that replaces the battery box on Taylor guitars equipped with a pickup powered by a 9V battery. The smart battery box houses sensors that monitor your guitar's:

- Humidity
- Battery Life
- Temperature
- Physical Impact



Your guitar's health data is pushed from the TaylorSense battery box to our free Taylor Guitars iOS App via low-energy Bluetooth anytime you're within range. Shaped by our extensive service expertise, TaylorSense is also calibrated to send you timely alerts when your guitar needs care, along with simple "how-to-fix" videos from our service team. The free Taylor Guitars App also includes a mobile suite of useful tools including FourTrack, a multitrack recorder, a guitar tuner, and more.

TaylorSense is currently sold through our online TaylorWare store. To learn more, visit www.taylorsense.com

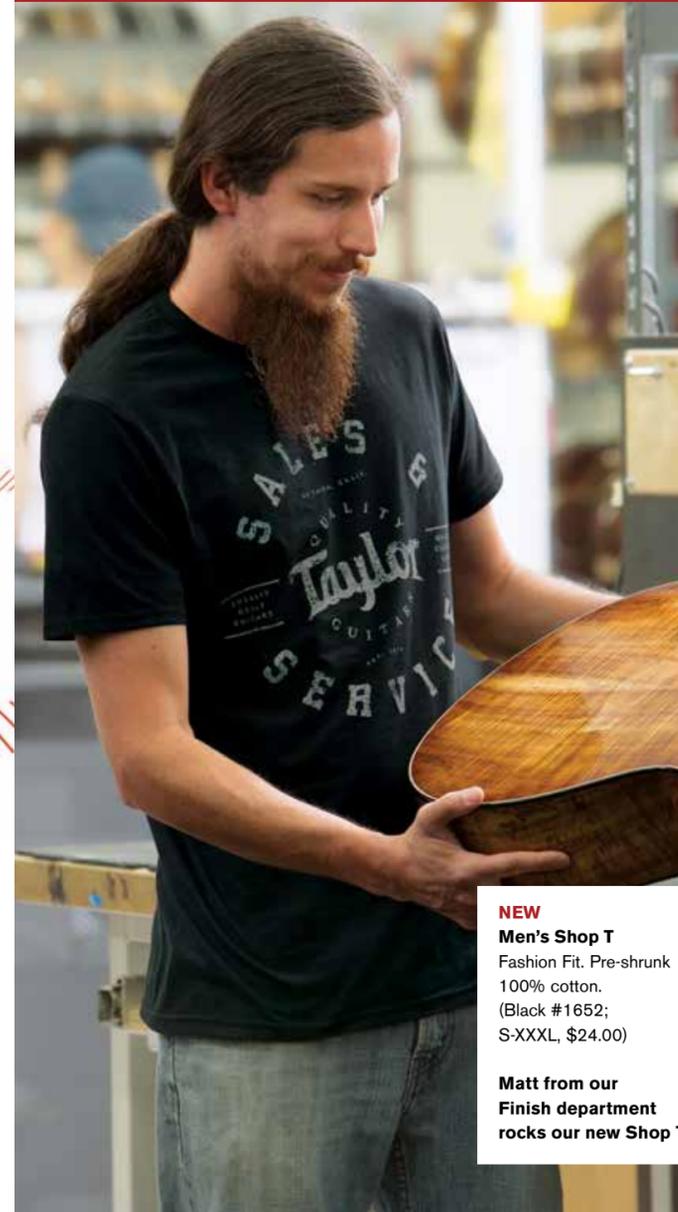
taylorsense

SMART BATTERY BOX + MOBILE APP



TaylorWare

CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS



NEW
Men's Shop T
Fashion Fit. Pre-shrunk 100% cotton. (Black #1652; S-XXXL, \$24.00)

Matt from our Finish department rocks our new Shop T.

Visit taylorguitars.com/taylorware to browse our complete line of Taylor apparel, guitar care products, parts and accessories, gift cards, and more.

1-800-494-9600



NEW
Men's Classic T
Fashion Fit. Pre-shrunk 100% cotton. (Red #1653; S-XXXL, \$24.00)



Roadie T
Fashion fit. 60/40 cotton/poly. Ultra-soft, worn-in feel. (Charcoal #1445; S-XXL, \$25.00)



Two-Color Logo T
Standard fit. Heavyweight preshrunk 100% cotton. (Sand #1651; S-XXXL, \$22.00)



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



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

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

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

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



Taylor Bar Stool
30" high. (Black #70200, \$99.00)
24" high. (Brown #70202, \$99.00)

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





Wood&Steel

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The paper we used is certified to Forest Stewardship Council® standards. The FSC® is a non-profit organization that supports environmentally friendly, socially responsible and economically viable management of the world's forests.

Warm Aloha

As one of four models designed exclusively for our latest Road Show season, this Hawaiian koa Grand Auditorium 714ce LTD marks our first use of torrefied spruce tops outside our maple 600 Series. In this case the torrefied top will help conjure the sound of a played-in koa guitar, complementing koa's midrange focus and top-end brightness with a splash of extra warmth reminiscent of a cedar top, with all the clarity and sonic headroom that makes spruce a dynamic soundboard choice. Variegated West African ebony fretboards from our mill in Cameroon infuse each edition we make with unique character, while a shaded edgeburst casts a warm vintage glow. Learn more about our exclusive Road Show models inside.

