

Wood & Steel

A close-up photograph of a Taylor guitar bridge and strings. The bridge is dark wood with six black saddles. The strings are a mix of natural and synthetic materials, some appearing as thin lines and others as thicker, more textured strands. The background is a warm, brownish-orange color with a subtle circular pattern.

V-Class
12
String
Grand
Concerts

Ringin' truer than ever



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magic

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A Grand Replacement

In 1966 I was living in my dorm room on campus. My roommate had a cheap Silvertone sunburst guitar. There was a revolution going on in folk music, and there were songs I wanted to sing and play, so I would order sheet music with guitar chords through the local music store and learn individual songs on that old Silvertone with high action and questionable intonation up the neck.

In 1976 I was at a conference in Philadelphia and walked into Sam Goody Music on the way to the train station. They had an amazing selection of guitars, including a Martin D-35 12-string, still in its packaging in the basement. I played it down there among all the guitar boxes and loved its deep bass and bell-tone highs. I bought it on the spot.

By 1996, the structure of that guitar wouldn't hold the 12-string tension, the top was lifting, tuning and intonation were difficult, and a luthier recommended that I sell it as there was nothing that could be done to rebuild the structure to restore it. Whether that was true or not, I did as he suggested.

I've been trying to find a guitar to replace that one in the ensuing 22 years.

Yesterday I opened the case of the Grand Pacific 717 I had pre-ordered through Chicago Music Exchange. This is probably the one. It's not the same as the Martin, as no two guitars are the same, but it's very, very good, and better in many ways. As I hammered out some of the first songs I learned, its volume overwhelmed the room, and I could picture it by a council fire hold-

ing its own with the voices of a crowd singing to the night sky. With the Wild Honey Burst, it looks like something from years ago – as old as my father, but fresh and simple and new.

As Andy Powers has said, it has a sound that I remember, and for me, a power that I remember. Thanks to all who had any part in making this happen.

Mike Mann

Rings True

With your V-Class bracing being such a topic of discussion in the last couple of issues of *Wood&Steel*, I was torn between the desire to test-drive one of the new models and the need to stay a safe distance away – fearing that if what was being said was true, it would render my other guitars obsolete.

I recently put my hands on a V-braced 914ce while at a music store in Lake Worth, Florida. I found it to be an extraordinary guitar (pretty much what I expected). I ran it through my paces and fiddled with some alternate tunings to see where the bottom was. I was impressed by the increased harmonic points along the neck, the ease of grabbing and holding pitch with the tuners (not to mention the workmanship and the drop-dead beauty of the instrument in general), but I left the store sensing that I was still missing something.

During that same stay in Lake Worth, I frequented a casual event called "Pickers in the Round" at Rudy's Pub. This is an acoustic event on week-end afternoons that features an open cast of players and instruments (at one point I counted 12 acoustic guitars going in the circle of players). As one might expect, at such a point, the sound can get rather confused. So, in walks a player with what turned out to be an identical match to the 914ce that I had played a few days earlier.

Now, the owner of the guitar was an accomplished player (as you would expect from someone packing that kind of heat). What surprised me, though, was the way the voice of the guitar sliced through the wall of sound it joined. It wasn't so much a volume thing as it was a matter of clarity or focus – like the instrument was running

on a frequency of its own. When he leaned into it, the guitar stood clearly alone and articulate in the mix, when he eased off, it assumed its place back in the pack (remember, no electronics engaged and 12 guitars running). The dynamic range of that instrument, in as tough a situation as one would likely ever encounter, was just remarkable.

I left Rudy's that night a believer that everything the Taylor folks had been saying about the new bracing system rang true – and then some.

**Clark Robins
Richmond, VA**

Found His Fit

I just purchased a mahogany/blackwood V-Class 324ce and want to thank you folks for making such a beautiful and playable instrument! As I grew up with guitars in my family, I fell in love with the sound and simple beauty of the acoustic instrument. I got Jimmy Page fever back in 1969, so I bought an ES-335, and of course, a Strat along the way. But I've always appreciated the acoustic. I owned a nice one until my son adopted it several years back. I got along with electric equipment for years, but there was always something missing. It was that natural sound of wood and steel, without electricity. I have grown to appreciate and not deviate from a clean sound, to a fault! I've always expected the highest quality in an instrument, hence my choosing Taylor. I am not a professional musician, just a workaday guy who loves to play. I've worked with my hands for most of 68 years – saw-mill work, tree trimming, commercial fishing, construction, etc. Even though my hands are beat up, they still work pretty well.

This 324ce stands way out! Its rich blend of sound, looks and workmanship, at an affordable price, fits my niche. I can't put it down. I'm staying up until the wee hours playing quietly. The bottom line: I love this guitar. I figure my son will adopt this one, too, some day.

J Maze

Retirement Treat

I've been playing guitar a long time – even longer than you, Bob! I was in at the start of the Salvation Army in the UK using guitars and pop-style music for worship and evangelism back in the 1960s. It was so long ago that the lovely Tom Jennings, then owner of Vox, supplied our first amps and PA – along with the Beatles, of course. Since then I've been privileged to use lots of instruments by good makers including Gretsch, Rickenbacker, Gibson, Fender –

and some not so good, too. The only guitar I've owned long-term has been a Yamaha FG180, which I bought new in 1969 and now have up for sale on Reverb.

Now at my age and in retirement, I decided to treat myself. So I did a lot of research, and then visited my local store, GAK in Brighton, where I spent an educational afternoon. I tried out a number of acoustics from truly reputable manufacturers including some with solid bodies as well as tops, not thinking I could afford a Taylor. However, I thought while I was there I'd give one a go. It was a 214ce-K DLX.

Immediately as I set my fingers on the strings and the fretboard I could tell this was a different world. The price label showed a bit more than I thought I could afford, but the quality was unmistakable. An indication of how good it sounded is the fact that both my wife and daughter agreed that despite the price this was the one I should buy, and urged me on!

Thank you, Bob, and Andy Powers and your team at Taylor Guitars, for making this oldie happy and for enhancing our worship at the Salvation Army in Worthing, Sussex, which is the only place I play these days. My beautiful koa-bodied Taylor rings out loud and clear in praise, and looks like a million dollars, too.

Bruce Tulloch

The Real Deal

We've all become accustomed to hearing the hype of a new product, only to be disappointed when asking it to "walk the talk" or reading the fine print. "It does 0 to 60 in 3.2 seconds!" – only to find out that's with race gas, a tail wind, at sea level, and with a skinny-as-heck driver!

Not so with the new Builder's Edition K14ce. After spending months reading every piece of info I could find to substantiate that Andy has truly found a revolutionary design change, every word encouraged me to buy one...and it's true.

This guitar makes a chord-hacker like me sound so much better! Although my hands are a bit unruly, my ear for tone is spot on. What has kept me from exploring the entire fretboard has been eliminated with the new V-Class bracing. The ease of play and exceptional tonal quality are only surpassed by the Taylor reputation. Every store sang the same tune...Taylor is on to something!

Thank you, Bob and Andy, for your bold moves. Your Builder's Edition K14 truly is all that and a bag of chips!

**Donnie Beson
Woodland Park, CO**

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Contents

WOOD&STEEL | VOLUME 94 | SUMMER 2019



On the Cover

18

V-Class 12-String Guitars

Resident design guru Andy Powers has adapted his V-Class bracing pattern for our 12-string Grand Concerts. Together with a new string anchoring system, the 12-string sound has never been more pitch-friendly.

Features

- 6 From Songwriting to Production**
In part two of our series on the craft and commerce of songwriting, we explore how song ideas take form in the production process.
- 8 Pick Power**
The oft-overlooked guitar pick flavors your acoustic tone more than you think. With our versatile new line of picks, we've brought a whole new world of feel and sound to your fingertips.



- 14 The Wood&Steel Interview: Mimi Fox**
The renowned jazz guitarist talks about returning to her acoustic roots on her new album, *This Bird Still Flies*, and sheds light on her expansive approach to composing and improvising.
- 22 New V-Class Grand Concerts**
Following its debut in select series to start the year, our V-Class bracing now powers all of our U.S.-made Grand Concert guitars. Here are a few of our favorites.
- 23 New Model Spotlight: Builder's Edition K24ce**
As if the beauty of an all-koa guitar wasn't already inspiring enough, sleek ergonomic contouring elevates this Builder's Edition offering to sublime heights.
- 24 A Grand Reception**
Our new Grand Pacific has made a great impression on guitar reviewers around the world. Here's a roundup of reactions so far.

Columns

- 4 Kurt's Corner**
Kurt shares Taylor's plans for continued growth.
- 5 BobSpeak**
Bob explains why the skill set of Andy Powers makes him ideally suited to drive Taylor's design innovation for years to come.
- 31 The Craft**
Andy explores the ways in which a guitar maker's design approach is informed by the surrounding environment.

Departments

- 12 Ask Bob**
Fretboard oiling tips, how soundhole size affects tone, high-humidity guitar care, Adirondack spruce trees and more.
- 26 Sustainability**
Scott Paul traces the technological progress that has enabled the status of wood species to be assessed more accurately and reveals why that's good news for ebony. Plus, our ebony planting initiative in Cameroon reaches a new milestone.
- 29 Soundings**
Grand Pacific artist reactions from Winter NAMM, plus Linda Perry, Ben Harper and Alex Cuba.
- 34 TaylorWare**
Our new line of Taylor guitar accessories includes tuner upgrade options, premium guitar straps, an innovative capo, and guitar care products.



A Plan For Continual Growth

Occasionally I am asked by people working at Taylor Guitars or others outside the company if Bob and I want the company to continue growing. Yes, we do, and I'd like to share the reasons why.

The first and foremost reason is because our ambition has always been to grow the company. When we were very small, this was simply to make a living, and we needed to get big enough and profitable enough to do that. Beyond that level, further growth has provided the resources that enable us

wasn't great. There was a lot of room for improvement, both in the quality of the guitars themselves and how we made them. Since the beginning, Bob has had a vision for how the guitar could be made more playable and more serviceable, while better utilizing natural resources and producing better quality. This has taken a huge continued investment of financial resources. Our growth has provided that.

In the early days, we made guitars in a tiny shop where we struggled to

cial management of our resources. But where do we go from here?

We have further ambitions and goals we want to accomplish. We want to make and supply more high-quality musical instruments to the world and eventually broaden our product line into other types of fretted instruments. We want to create more good jobs and provide meaningful work to people. We want to grow our distribution in more areas of the world, to provide more musicians with great instruments. We've made a positive impact on the amount of music being created in the world, and this is a good thing. The world needs it.

We also need to keep growing because the world keeps changing, usually imperceptibly on a daily basis, but more noticeably on a year-to-year basis. We need to remain constantly alert to these changes to ensure that we have the resources to respond and adapt. Resources can refer to many different facets of our operation: financial, human, technical, natural (a sustainable wood supply), the ability to manufacture, etc. The company has to remain prosperous to keep reinvesting in and improving these resources.

We're excited about the future. We're excited to continue developing and bringing new instruments to the market, and inspiring more people to make music. Here's wishing you a musical summer!

– Kurt Listug, CEO

We want to eventually broaden our product line into other types of fretted instruments.

to do the work we've wanted to pursue, and to achieve our purposes with the company. We're an independently-owned company, and it's been important for us to remain so, without the need of outside investors.

Bob has been on a quest since the earliest days to design a better guitar, and to reengineer how guitars are made. Our first guitars were pretty crude. They were difficult to make, and the quality

survive. Today, we operate out of two state-of-the-art guitar factories. For many years, we had no money and could barely afford to buy materials. Many decades later, we co-own an ebony mill in Africa.

So, we've arrived at a good spot. We make a good living, as do our 1,100 employees. The company has great benefits and provides a great working environment. This came about through profitability, growth and prudent finan-

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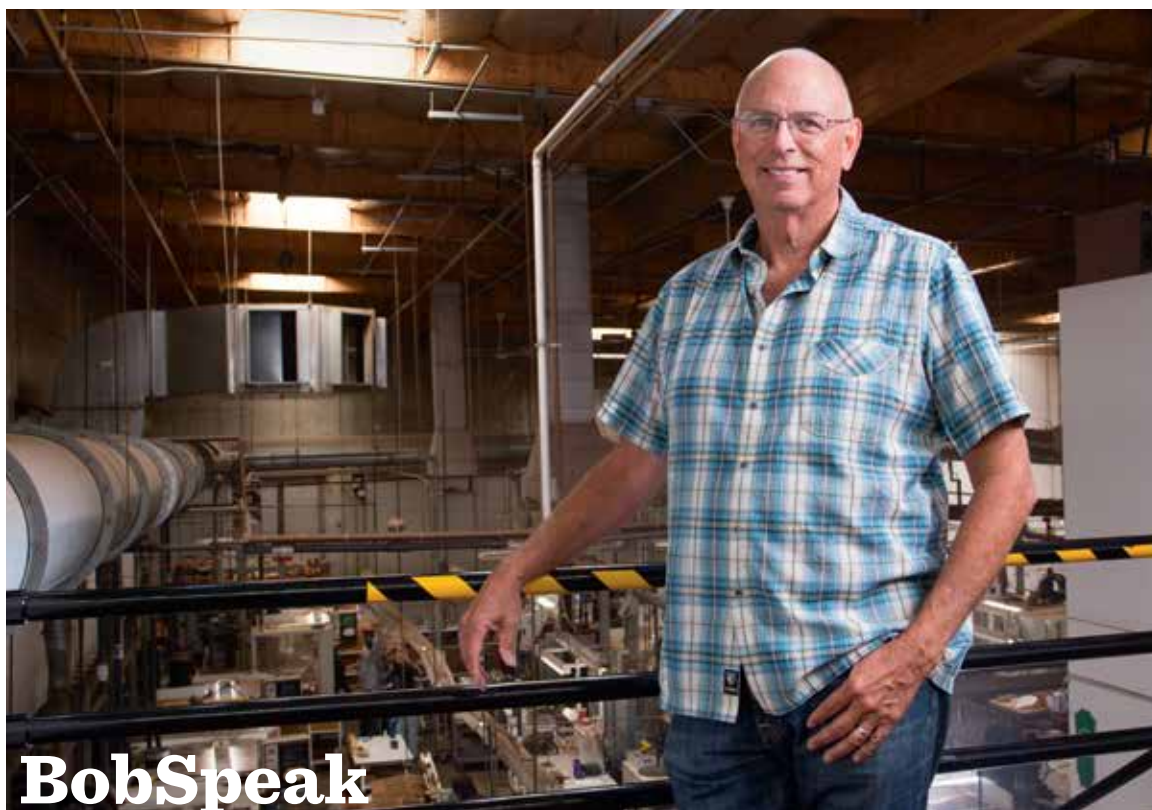
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BobSpeak

The Art of Removing Mistakes

Some of you might remember a little demonstration we shared in our story on the Grand Pacific last issue, which we've also been doing at some of our in-store events: Put your hand directly in front of your mouth, say "pa-pa-pa," and feel the puff of air against your hand. Now say "ma-ma-ma" and feel that there's no puff of air. Now say "ba-ba-ba" and feel a very mild puff of air.

Why are we doing this? Because this puff-of-air effect is one of the things that Andy designed out of the new Grand Pacific guitar. When we listen to the warm bass, the power, the glory of the dreadnoughts we're used to hearing, we're hearing the puff of air. But it actually gets in the way of good sound. It poses problems.

Now go to YouTube on your phone and search for the Beach Boys song "Barbara Ann." It starts with "Ba-ba-ba ba-Barbara Ann" — we all know it. And then all the other voices and notes come in with that vocal bass line continuing underneath. Now imagine them singing instead, "Pa-pa-pa pa-Parpara Ann." Same note, but with huge puffs of air. Imagine recording that. The engineers would be doing all kinds of things to screen that out.

Unlike me, Andy is not only a great builder, he's also a fantastic player and musician. He plays many instruments and has played with the best musicians you can imagine. He's an accomplished jazz player, having been taught and mentored by an older group of jazz guys who

saw his potential when he was young and brought him under their wing. When he was a teenager, his dad drove him to Los Angeles to take lessons from guitarist John Jorgenson at John's behest after meeting Andy. I met Andy at the NAMM Show when he showed up playing guitar for Jason Mraz. Andy has a home movie of his tenth birthday party, and there's not one other kid there. There were a bunch of old dudes who played guitar professionally. That's who he wanted to come.

What Andy is inspired to do is make guitars that work better for playing, recording and performing music. He's about the music even more than the guitar. He has played and repaired examples of all the vintage guitars that everyone loves, and he loves them too, but he also knows that while they please the ear with that first strum, they present problems in use. He wants to improve the performance of guitars because he thinks they need it. Andy once told me that the acoustic guitar is the weakest instrument in the orchestra, that a bad piano is a better musical instrument than most good guitars. By the way, he has studied in detail how Steinway designs pianos, how the instrument works, and that knowledge has helped him understand guitars. He wants things to be better. He wants better musical sound.

He says he wanted to design the Grand Pacific to sound like the recorded sound of those guitars back in the day, but he knows that engineers worked

hard to get that sound, even back then. So why not take out some of the problems? I have a friend, Jens Kruger, my favorite banjo player in the world, and known for playing Deering banjos. He's helped their designs. He says if you start with a good instrument and then remove the mistakes, you get a great instrument. Andy is constantly working to remove the mistakes from the guitar.

At Taylor we've always designed guitars very purposefully. Yes, sometimes we are guided by inspiration from killer wood, or a special thing here and there that pleases the eye, or our love of craftsmanship, but the bones of each guitar are purposeful. I was pretty good at that, and I think over the years I did a good job solving certain tonal issues and, above all, playability issues. But Andy is better than me especially when it comes to sound. And he's so practiced that he can literally build one prototype to arrive at the sound he wants, which amazes me. He knows how it will sound and what to do to create that sound. In addition, he has spent his life playing guitar in the best and worst situations, and has thoughtfully considered what a good guitar should be. I'm really proud of him for this level of innovation he brings to the state of guitars.

Andy has Taylor Guitars at his disposal to make these designs of his. Our team is willing to go down long and difficult roads to develop methods and skills to make Andy's designs. Andy doesn't have to compromise the design

2019 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 or email us: privatetours@taylorguitars.com.

While not physically demanding, the tour does include a fair amount of walking. Due to its technical nature, the tour may not be suitable for small children. The tour lasts approximately one hour and 15 minutes and departs from the Visitor Center 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 1 - Friday, July 5 (Independence Day/Company Vacation)

Monday, September 2 (Labor Day)

Monday, October 14 (Taylor Guitars Anniversary)

November 28-29 (Thanksgiving Holiday)

Monday, December 23 - Friday, January 3 (Company Vacation)

in order for us to make it. We rise to the task with gusto each day because we have a great team with lots of practice and skill. They're accustomed to having their skills stretched from working with me, but Andy brings that to a new level, which they're ready for. It's quite a thing for me to behold.

When experienced players play the Grand Pacific, they offer up comments that sound like they've already talked to Andy. I've heard things like: "Hey, the bass is there, and so controlled; there's

no boom that gets in the way"; and "Listen to the intonation! It sounds like the same guitar all the way up the neck!" So, I think that Andy has the mind and ears of a player, and the hand skills of a builder. He keeps validating that what I thought of him when we started working together was correct.

Except it's better, better than I ever dreamed.

— Bob Taylor, President

From Songwriting to Production



How are song ideas transformed into recordings? These days, the songwriting and production processes are more integrated, and offer more creative possibilities, than ever.

By Josquin Des Pres and Michael Natter

In the first installment of our three-part series, “Anatomy of a Song” (Fall 2018 / Vol. 92), we delved into the nuts and bolts of songwriting, exploring the parts, the people and the process. We talked about the conversation that leads to concepts and in turn to lyrics, and on and on.

In this second installment, we examine the different ways production connects with the art of songwriting and beyond. We start our exploration with the various methods of production, from organic to electronic.

Before we begin discussing in-studio production, let’s take a look at a couple of our personal songwriting experiences.

Michael Natter:

In 2011, Jason Mraz was writing songs for his next album, *Love Is a Four Letter Word*. He and I jammed, we laughed, and we shared ideas for possible concepts. One jam in particular went on for two months without any concept or lyrics. Then one day, sitting beneath a blazing summer San Diego sun, I said to Jason, “You know that the sun is a fearsome, fiery furnace that is 93 million miles away, and it would completely incinerate anything that came too close, but by the time the light gets to us, it’s just perfect!”

Then, to show off my 8th grade science retention I added, “And the moon is only 240,000 miles away.”

That night, Jason took that lyrical inspiration and put it together with two months’ worth of jamming and wrote one of his and my favorite songs, “93 Million Miles,” with the moon reference turned into the second verse. Organic songwriting indeed!

Beginning a song with a guitar jam, a vocal and a lyric idea, and then bringing it to full production, is one way to produce a song, but it is not the only way. There are a variety of ways that production can become an integral part of songwriting. Production is not exclusively the “next phase” of the songwriting process anymore.

Josquin Des Pres and Michael Natter:

Let’s look at another songwriting approach: writing to pre-existing tracks or beats, also known as toplining. In this case, a beat, groove and chord progression are provided. The production is pretty much finished by the time we add melody and lyrics. This example happened when, along with Nancy Natter, we wrote with Laura Marano, a well-known actress from the popular Disney kids’ series *Austin &*

Ally. However, we were in San Diego, and Laura was in Los Angeles. We sent Laura several pre-produced tracks ahead of time, prepared by one of our co-writers/programmers, Fabien Renoult. To make it easier on our busy schedules, considering the driving and other expenses that would be required to meet in person, we chose to do a Skype writing session. Laura chose one of the tracks, and we tossed around some possible concepts. One of those concepts was how ubiquitous the cell phone has become and how it has, in many cases, replaced face-to-face interaction. We laughed about how the concept was on full display as we were using the exact technology we were writing about! Laura listened to the tracks and found a melodic approach and lyrical phrases to kick off the session. We talked, sang, listened, ate and wrote with the help of electronic wizardry for about three hours. Voila! Verses, chorus and a bridge emerged. Michael re-wrote the first verse at home and sent it off to Laura for a first-draft rough demo. Although our personal preference is an in-person session, this way is quick, convenient and easier to schedule.

Production Approaches

Josquin Des Pres:

In the context of this article we won't cover the "mega-producers" of the past 40 years, who are also composers, songwriters, conductors, arrangers, orchestrators and multi-instrumentalists (i.e. Quincy Jones, David Foster, Phil Ramone, Mutt Lange, etc.). Instead, let's focus on the indie, boutique and home studio types, who are nonetheless equally relevant and successful.

Having been an independent producer for decades, I've enjoyed the opportunity to work in a wide variety of styles, using various production methods on numerous recording platforms and Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs). Nowadays, a song can be developed from an organic coffeehouse style into pop, R&B, hip-hop, country, EDM, reggaeton, etc. It all depends on what market you are aiming for. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear the same song produced in two different styles and charting in two different markets at the same time. Alternatively, a song that was originally produced specifically for one market might cross over into another market (e.g., country with snap tracks and a hint of hip-hop to

appeal to the pop market). I know some readers may be put off by this, but in the end, music distributors and record labels aim to cast a wide net that will obtain maximum sales. The same song being produced to sell in two different markets is a trend that started appearing in the 1990s. I recall an example of the hit song "I Swear" that was on the country charts performed by John Michael Montgomery and at the same time on the pop charts performed by the boy band All-4-One.

It would take several pages to cover the multitude of production methods, so let's break it down to three principal ones using common DAWs.

1. Singer-Songwriter-Driven Projects Suggested platform: Pro Tools or Digital Performer

This type of session would kick off once the song is already written and sounds great in its acoustic form. Basically, think guitar or piano and vocals recorded by the singer-songwriter, often using the ever-present mobile phone voice memo. There are two approaches to this: The first would be to track everyone playing together to a click track, then putting markers that define the various sections (intro, verse, chorus, etc.), and then overdubbing the additional needed parts.

The second approach is my favorite because it gives me much more control over the recording and sound quality of each instrument. This time, start with having the singer-songwriter lay down their acoustic version of the song to a click track. This is now a scratch instrument and vocal. Once again place your markers such as intro, verse, chorus, etc. Then start building the production beginning with the foundation instruments. My process is drums first, then bass, guitars, keyboards, etc., one instrument at a time. Personally, I like to run a hybrid system with analog tube mic pre-amps on the front end, and then enter the digital domain. In both cases, the use of a click track is paramount if you plan to cut and paste sections so there are no timing discrepancies from beginning to end.

2. Singer-Songwriter/ Producer-Driven Projects Suggested platform: Pro Tools or Logic with Kontakt

This type of session would also begin once a song has music and lyrics and already sounds great in its acoustic form. Logic with Kontakt is a good combination for this sort of work because each comes with a wealth of

onboard loops and instrument plug-ins. In this case, the artist would team up with a producer who is a skilled musician, sometimes a multi-instrumentalist, or at the very least a keyboard player with advanced arrangement abilities. Together the artist and producer will develop the final arrangement and production.

3. Singer-Songwriter/ DJ-Driven Projects Suggested platform: Ableton

In the "old days," only the melody and lyrics defined who the songwriters were, and the backing track was considered "the arrangement." Nowadays, a beatmaker/DJ can also be technically credited as a songwriter. They come up with the music tracks and chord progressions that will inspire a melody and lyrics. A good beat can set the tone and the mood for the entire vibe and subject of a song. Then the artist or co-writers will add their melody or rap to the created track.

Vocal Production

This is the most important part of this entire series. The vocal performance is everything! Without an incredible vocal performance, you have no song. This is where the artist is going to make the melody and lyrics shine. To be clear, "an incredible performance" doesn't mean that one has to belt out loud notes and hold them for a long time. A great performance is about conveying emotion, based on understanding and delivering the message contained in the lyrics. It's about getting in character and telling the story.

Before you book a vocal session, make sure the vocalist has the lyrics memorized. There's nothing less exciting than a singer reading while recording a vocal track. Most of the time we can tell if a singer is reading, even with our eyes closed. Just like an actor memorizes his lines in order to deliver a great performance, a vocalist has to memorize the lyrics. Yes, they can use a lyric "cheat sheet," but only for reference, not for reading word-for-word.

In the studio, choosing the best microphone for the voice you're going to record is of the utmost importance. Refrain from applying equalizers on vocals. Choosing the right microphone will minimize the need for EQ. Stay very conservative with the use of compression when recording. It's better to preserve the original timbre and character

of the voice and then modify it later. A good idea is to have the vocalist sing a full pass of the song on each mic and then make your choice.

As the producer, we suggest that the vocalist be told to "sing like this is a known hit you've been singing for the past 10 years and perform it like you're in front of ten thousand people." This mindset will uplift their performance. Also, when the song is "telling a story," help the vocalist understand how to let it "simmer" in the verses and pre-choruses, setting up the "event." An "event" is a culminating section in a song that could be either the chorus or most often the end of the bridge leading to the outro of the song.

There are many technical methods of tracking vocals. The most common is to record three to four takes from start to finish and then comp them together. Another method is recording takes one section at a time. Loop the recorded sections until there is a satisfactory take and then move to the next section.

The Dos and Don'ts Of Song Production

Regardless of production styles, never forget: It's all about the song and only about the song. The only things the listener will remember are lyrics and melody. As a producer, it's easy to get caught up in your own sounds, your own riffs, your own solos and orchestrations, etc. It's easy to put your music ahead of what really matters: the words, the melody, and most of all, the artist. Good production is about serving and elevating the song, therefore creating the best representation of the song and the artist. Favor the melody and lyrics over superfluous arrangements that only your peers will appreciate. Too often we hear production attempts where the track is "bigger than the artist" or filled with so many "bells and whistles" that the main focus, the song, is diluted.

Always, ask yourself, "Does the addition of this sound, or this production technique, enhance the song or artist performance, or does it bury the message?" Whether you are the producer of an artist or your own artist/producer, it will best serve everyone to be the producer of a great song with enhanced lyrics and a great vocal performance, rather than being the producer of a song that is full of spectacular sounds. **W&S**



Josquin Des Pres



Michael &
Nancy Natter
Photo:
Talitha Noel

Josquin Des Pres is a musician, songwriter, and music entrepreneur whose credits include co-writing numerous songs with Bernie Taupin (Elton John) and with songwriters Winston Sela, Michael Natter and several American Idol finalists. Des Pres has also composed songs and themes for over 40 television shows, produced more than 60 CDs for major and independent record labels, and written several books about the music industry.

Michael Natter is best known for his collaboration with Grammy-winning singer-songwriter (and Taylor artist) Jason Mraz. Their hit single, "I Won't Give Up," is one of four co-writes from Mraz's platinum-selling Love is a Four Letter Word album. Michael's wife, Nancy, joined Michael to co-write the title tracks on the debut albums for X Factor winners Alex & Sierra (It's About Us) and American Idol winner Nick Fradiani (Hurricane). The Natters teamed up again with Mraz on two cuts from his Yes! album.

PICK POW



ER

**A closer look at the
tone-shaping attributes
of guitar picks, including
our new collection
of exclusive
designs**

By Colin Griffith

When you consider everything Taylor has built since we opened up shop four and a half decades ago, one core belief that has steadily guided our pursuits is that playing a guitar should be an inspiring, expressive act. We've always sought to craft instruments that make music more accessible, whether that means optimizing the playing experience with easy-playing necks, appealing combinations of body shapes and tonewoods, or nuanced bracing designs that voice our guitars with pleasing musicality. So it won't surprise you to learn that we've turned our attention to another important, yet often overlooked, ingredient of acoustic tone: the guitar pick.

Despite being one of the most fundamental tools in a guitarist's arsenal (or perhaps *because* of this), the choice of pick is often an afterthought among recreational players. Many are content to simply grab a colorful pack of mediums off the rack at the local store and be done. But the truth is that a pick's influence over the tone of an acoustic guitar is more significant than many players realize.

Most pro players know this. When you talk to session guitarists, touring musicians, and recording engineers, you quickly discover that many have strong preferences about a pick's size, shape, material and thickness, each of which contributes to the overall tone. In reality, trying a new guitar pick is one of the easiest and cheapest ways to bring subtle new flavors to your tone.

With that idea in mind, Taylor's Chief Business Development Officer, Keith Brawley, set out on an R&D path with one of our pick supply partners to develop a fresh portfolio of Taylor pick options.

The Celluloid Standard

Picks made of celluloid (the first synthetic plastic material) were originally conceived as an alternative to tortoise shell many decades ago. The medium celluloid pick in particular has dominated the guitar pick market since before most of today's guitar players even held the instrument.

"When my friends and I first started playing, we used Fender medium celluloid picks," Brawley recalls. "They were the easiest picks to find, and they were inexpensive, so they became ubiquitous; it was just what you thought of when you thought of a guitar pick. After all, celluloid picks have been around for a hundred years! But decades of development in new materials and manufacturing techniques have taught us that there are many ways to coax more tone out of your guitar with a pick. They really matter if you want to shape your sound. And I felt we could offer new tone-enhancing options."

Celluloid will always have merits as a pick material. Its bright, fast, articulate response makes it a great option for lead players; the enhanced treble range is ideal for soloing or strumming at the front of a mix, and the audible click or scratch to the string adds definition, similar to the effect drummers sometimes seek by taping credit cards to their bass drum heads. But for those preferring a softer sound, celluloid can sound tinny, even abrasive.

Because helping players fine-tune their sound has always been a hallmark of the Taylor philosophy, our guitar experts have been demonstrating how different pick designs can influence tone at our recent in-store product showcase events. It's proving to be a revelation among many recreational players. Taylor District Sales Manager

and seasoned guitarist Rich Casciato has enjoyed seeing the light-bulb moments among listeners during his pick demonstrations.

"It's a matter of choosing the right tool for the job," Casciato says. "I tell people to think of the pick as a hammer and the string as a nail. A small hammer won't drive a big industrial nail. The top of an acoustic guitar wants to be *driven*. On an electric guitar, you only have to activate the pickups. On an acoustic guitar you have to get the bridge to transfer the string energy to the top. A thicker pick helps you do that."

One of Brawley's goals in developing Taylor's line of picks was to provide options that "warm up" the sound of a guitar, producing the low-end presence that so many acoustic players treasure. That required a deep understanding of how different picks contribute to different guitar tones.

The Basics of String Damping

Like every other part of the guitar, the way the pick impacts tone is all about physics. Shape, size and material all influence the way a pick interacts with the string, along with the position of the picking hand on the string relative to the saddle. These factors all contribute to damping – the degree to which the pick actually mutes certain frequencies. To help us understand how damping works, specifically in relation to guitar picks and tone, we turned to Andy Powers, master guitar designer at Taylor. He explains that the phenomenon comes from the string's natural harmonics, which most players recognize primarily at the 12th, 7th and 5th frets.

"Each harmonic within the string has a physical vibrating length, which

becomes progressively shorter at higher frequencies,” he says. “When you use a pick to articulate the string, you are choosing a cutoff point for that harmonic series. How much pick surface actually touches the string, and where it touches the string, will selectively dampen those harmonic overtones. This determines the cutoff frequency at the top end, and results in the perceived brightness of tone.”

In other words, when you use a pick, the area of the string that comes into contact with the pick is actually muted, which effectively filters out that particular frequency from the sound the guitar then produces. In practice, then, different picks of different sizes and shapes will contact a different length of the string.

“If you use a pick with a wide, broad surface, you’re covering a proportionally large section of string, which will mute the harmonics starting from a correspondingly lower pitch,” Andy says. “That’s why pick shapes that are round tend to sound darker and warmer than picks that are pointed.”

The same is true at the other end of the pick spectrum. A sharper pick (or most celluloid options) will dampen a much smaller portion of the string, removing fewer of those trebly overtones from the overall sound. The result is greater definition with more top-end brightness.

Rigidity

Andy also points out the importance of rigidity in how a pick produces tone. A thinner pick, or one made from a softer material, will flex when the player articulates the string. That little bend has a considerable impact on the dynamic range of the guitar – the flex-

ibility of the pick itself creates a light, airy tone when played gently, but once you dig in and the pick begins to bend, you hit a volume ceiling.

“You’ll hear and feel the pick flex before the string releases,” Andy elaborates. “It has a natural compression effect – the pick absorbs some of the player’s hand motion.”

Like an actual signal compressor or limiter, a soft, flexible pick trims down the highest volume peaks, leading to a more uniform, dynamic response. But if what you really need is power or a wide volume range, Andy says, a thicker, more rigid pick will do the job.

Edge Contouring

In addition to flexibility, the shape of a pick’s edge can noticeably change the guitar’s output. Most common guitar picks have a flat edge, perhaps with a subtle rounding to keep the pick from catching on the string windings. But different edge shapes produce different tones. Some picks, especially thicker, heavier ones, also have a tapered or beveled edge. This creates a dramatically different feel and sound for the player.

“The edge is beveled to further widen the area that touches the string,” Andy says. “It feels smooth – it glides right off the string because you’ve distributed the friction over a larger area. It’ll have a quick-feeling response as a result.” This pairs nicely with the increased warmth a beveled pick elicits.

Your Turn to Pick

Different musical situations often call for particular acoustic guitar flavors or textures, and having an array of picks at your disposal can help you diversify your musical palette without spending

a lot of money. Choose a thin, soft pick and enjoy the natural compression effect and smooth, uniform, dynamic response. For strummers, that’s a tempting option. A thicker pick, particularly one with a rounded or beveled edge, provides a warmer sound with greater volume variation – but perhaps without that defining “click” that can give an acoustic guitar its twang.

With our new line of Taylor picks, we aim to provide a range of tonal options, covering all parts of the musical spectrum. It’s another way we’re striving to help players achieve greater control over their sound, and to make the guitar-playing experience as individual and unique as each person who picks up a guitar. (For more on this idea, see our tips on playing with a pick.)

As for how players should choose their guitar pick, Andy insists that like most decisions in music, this one is almost entirely subjective.

“The right pick is so unique to what a person is playing with a particular guitar,” he says. “That’s the real story – that there is no ideal.”

Taylor guitar picks are currently available at authorized Taylor dealers and from our online TaylorWare store at taylorguitars.com. You can hear a demonstration of how different picks contribute to acoustic tone at our in-store New Model Showcase events through August, and our Taylor Road Show events in the fall.

Key Pick Characteristics

Thickness

How much a pick flexes when you pluck a string is a major factor in the tone it delivers. A thinner pick will absorb more energy from your hand, which diminishes the volume output of the string. Thicker picks that don’t flex much will produce more power and warmth. Likewise, a thinner pick interacts with the string differently, especially on the wound strings – if the pick is thinner than the spaces between the windings, Andy Powers says, you’ll hear a scratchier sound as the pick catches the metal of the string. This translates into a brighter sound with a stronger initial attack.

Material

As with tonewoods, the material that goes into a pick influences the sound it produces. Celluloid lies at the trebly end of the tonal spectrum, while ivoroid, though compositionally very similar to celluloid, tends to produce greater midrange presence. Picks made with blended materials like our new Taylex™ formula will deliver more low-end response. Generally speaking, materials of different densities will offer varying tones, with denser picks usually producing warmer tone.

Shape

Pick shapes typically fall somewhere along a spectrum between pointed and rounded. Sharp-pointed picks tend to produce a brighter sound because they dampen a smaller frequency range on the string, while a wide, rounded edge will mute some of those treble tones out of the guitar’s sound. Pointed picks feel different, too – they tend to feel stiffer, requiring greater control on the part of the player, and depending on the pick shape, may slide off the string faster than a round pick. For reference, pick shapes are usually denoted with numbers – the 351 being the most familiar, compared to the wider 346 or the small, sharply pointed 651.



3 Tone-Shaping Picking Tips

1 Try a thicker pick, but work on using the lightest grip you can.

This gives you greater control over the guitar’s dynamic range. Andy Powers explains: “Often, experienced players gravitate toward a thicker, firmer pick because they’ll learn how to hold it with enough touch sensitivity that they can make the output nice and uniform.” With a tight grip, you’ll get more power and volume; loosen up, and you’ll find an airy strumming tone that works great for cowboy chords or soft accompaniment.

2 Vary the position of your pick hand.

Picking the string closer to the bridge will result in a brighter, more defined note, perfect for arpeggios or lead lines that you want front-and-center in your mix if you’re playing with other instruments. Move toward the neck and you’ll hear a stronger bass response from your picking.

3 Test out different grips on the pick,

holding it so that less of the pick is exposed in your hand. Holding the pick close to its point allows you greater control over the pick, and makes it easier to articulate the strings with your fingers. This way, you can mute strings easily, or even try adding pinch harmonics to your playing for a new sonic tool.



New Taylor Guitar Picks

From bright and defined to warm and blended, our range of guitar picks offers players flexibility in both tone and feel.

Below we present our latest collection of picks based on material composition. We've arranged each pick series along a tonal spectrum from relative brightness (Celluloid) to darkness (Premium Darktone® Thermex® Pro). Remember that thickness is another major contributing factor to your tone – a heavier-gauge (thicker) pick transfers more energy to the string. We recommend experimenting with different pick materials, thicknesses and shapes. It's a fun (and affordable) way to introduce subtle new sonic flavors to your sound.

To learn more about our new picks, check out our *Taylor Guitars: From the Factory* podcast (accessible via most podcast platforms), episode 22, in which Keith Brawley talks about the pick development process and product specialist Marc Seal demonstrates the nuanced tonal distinctions of each pick material.



Celluloid

- Pick Shape:**
351
- Colors:**
Abalone, White Pearl, Tortoise
- Thicknesses:**
.46 mm (Light), .71 mm (Medium)
.96 mm (Heavy), 1.21 mm (X-Heavy)



Our new celluloid picks deliver a modern sound characterized by clarity and top-end articulation. Thinner celluloid picks produce an even brighter tone and make an excellent choice for players seeking uniformity in volume or an airy strumming tone – popular with recording musicians laying down acoustic backing tracks. Taylor celluloid picks are featured in a variety of colors that complement the inlay and trim designs of select Taylor series. For instance, a white pearl color matches up well with guitars from the 300 Series, while a faux tortoise shell color relates to the 500 Series.

Taylex®

- Pick Shape:**
351, 346, 651
- Color:**
Smoke Grey
- Thicknesses:**
1.00 mm, 1.25 mm



Featuring a material produced with Taylor's input, Taylex picks offer a tonally richer and more versatile response than celluloid, adding a touch of warmth and body while maintaining top-end sparkle for definition and clarity.

Ivoroid

- Pick Shape:**
351, 346, 651
- Thickness:**
1.21 mm



Produced with high-quality Italian celluloid, our new ivoroid picks feature a dense formulation with attractive wavy grain and a softer feel, yielding a warm, midrange-emphasized response reminiscent of mahogany. The smooth material eliminates much of the scratching sound that occurs when a pick rubs across the string windings. This is an excellent option for virtually any player.

Premium Darktone® Thermex® Ultra

- Pick Shape:**
351
- Colors:**
Abalone, Blue Swirl, Black Onyx, Ruby Swirl (later in 2019)
- Thicknesses:**
1.0 mm, 1.25 mm, 1.5 mm



A truly unique design, our Thermex Ultra picks offer a blended tone with increased bass presence thanks to a tapered edge that glides smoothly off the string. The layered composition of these picks also provides a splash of treble, creating a response similar to a rosewood guitar. The Blue and Red Swirl varieties are composed of celluloid layered with acrylic, while the Abalone and Black Onyx versions are made from a specially designed thermoplastic. Another plus: When Thermex warms in your hand, it provides a better grip.

Premium Darktone® Thermex® Pro

- Pick Shape:**
351, 346, 651
- Color:**
Tortoise Shell
- Thickness:**
1.5 mm



A single layer of this specialized material creates an alluring, dark tone, falling at the baritone-esque end of the pick tonal spectrum. If you want a darker sound than this pick provides, you'll need to play with your fingers.

Ask Bob

Fretboard oiling tips, how soundhole size affects tone, and high-humidity guitar care

Bob, you've got me confused. In the last edition of *Wood&Steel* [Winter 2019], you responded to one question saying that you should never use linseed oil on the fretboard. I have two Taylors that I love, an Academy 12e and a 412ce, and both included a sheet on replacing your strings that said to wipe down the fretboard with boiled linseed oil when you remove the old strings after rubbing the neck with very fine steel wool. Am I misreading something?

Greg Penk
Leonardtown, MD

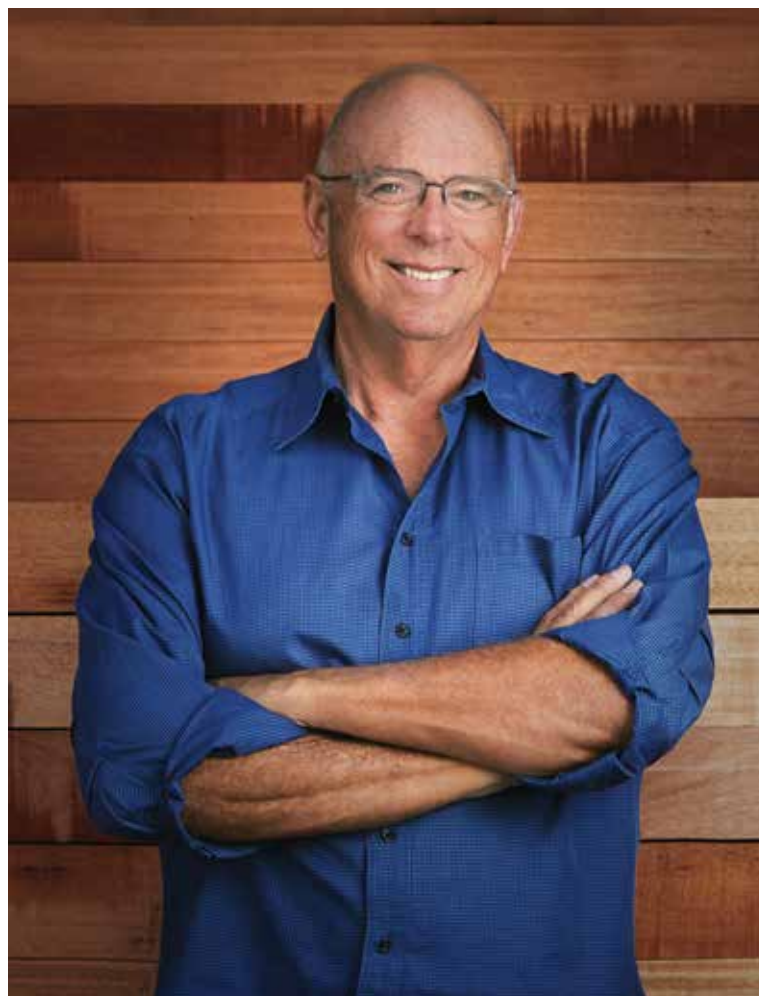
Ed. Note: Taylor Customer Service manager Glen Wolff responded to Greg via email, and Bob concurs with Glen's reply below.

That confused a few people, Greg, but I can clarify. One good initial soaking of boiled linseed oil is all the fretboard needs, and we do this in the factory. When the fretboard starts looking dirty or dry we recommend using 0000 steel wool to clean it and following up with a light coat of oil. Boiled linseed oil can be used again, but since it actually dries into something hard it will build up if used too often, so just a little bit on a rag wiped over the frets is all it will need. A thinner oil, like the new Taylor Fretboard Conditioner we sell, is easier to use and does a really good job. It's also sold in a smaller two-ounce bottle. Any excess of either oil should be wiped clean immediately. I hope this clears things up!

My wife and I recently took the factory tour. I asked [the guide] if you use a Plek machine on your guitars before sending them out. At first he didn't know what Plek was, and then I described it to him as sort of an MRI for guitars. He said he thinks that you do have some sort of machine that does the necks. Do you have a Plek machine?

Ernie Maczo

Ernie, your guide might not have immediately known what a Plek machine is because we don't use them in the



factory. We do have one in our repair department for older necks under certain conditions. We don't benefit from Plek in the factory because the sophisticated production process for our patented Taylor Neck yields a straight neck that nearly always won't be improved enough by a Plek. For readers who don't know, Plek is a machine that you put a guitar in, tuned to pitch, and from there it scans the shape of the fretboard, including flaws, and then has the ability to correct those flaws. It's quite clever and effective. But so are technicians, and our build process doesn't leave flaws. But the Plek can help our repair technicians accomplish more work when a guitar fretboard is worn or troublesome.

Bob, this is for either you or Andy: How much thought and experimentation has gone into determining the optimal size of the soundhole for tone, and how might the variation impact the voice of the guitar? Is there a certain trade-off between volume and projection? Maybe your response will answer my next question, but why doesn't the soundhole size vary for any of Taylor's full-size bodies?

Tony Sanchez

Andy's response: Tony, in simple terms, the soundhole size does play a role in the voice of the guitar. It's one of the variables in what's called the Helmholtz resonance (named after

I have worked as a tool and die maker and tooling manager for the last 49 years. I have learned how critical tooling is to any manufacturing process. The quality of the tooling determines the quality of final product. I was glad to hear you mention tooling in the last issue of *Wood&Steel*. Do you make your own special cutters or can you use carbide inserts?

Leo Watts
Aiken, SC

Yes, Leo, we make our own tools. We have a large tooling shop, with engineers, designers, machinists, fabricators and repairmen. We sort of do it all. We don't make our own cutters, however; we have them made by various suppliers, and we use lots of insertable carbide cutters, with special high-tech coatings and even diamond cutters.

scientist Hermann von Helmholtz). This describes the resonance of the air mass inside the guitar's body, which influences the guitar's voice. A familiar example of this is the note you hear when you blow air across the top of a bottle. Generally, if the air chamber or guitar body is the same, a smaller hole will tend to make a lower note, and a larger hole will make a higher note. On the other hand, if the size of the hole stays the same and the air space inside the body changes, you'll find the air note is higher with a small body, and lower with a larger one. Rather than trying to balance this air resonance note and make it identical for all our body sizes, we like to emphasize the different sounds each body makes. Keeping the

soundhole size consistent allows us to keep that variable fixed and lets the body size have a bigger impact on the guitar's voice.

I owned an earlier model Taylor 615ce for about 11 years until I purchased a redesigned 816ce about three years ago. I have always been impressed with the excellent finishes on all Taylor guitars and was excited that my new rosewood 816 had the [3.5-mil] finish. I can't argue with the fantastic sound, but the thin finish has proven to be a little, let's say "delicate." My question has to do with the finishing process itself. I know

from experience that rosewood and mahogany in particular are “open-pored” woods, and that these pores must be filled to achieve the kind of smooth-as-glass finish that Taylor guitars have. Do you fill these pores with the finish material and sand or buff off the excess to achieve the desired thickness, or do you use a pore filler to accomplish this... or another method? Also, which of these do you feel has the least negative impact on the sound of the instrument, thus producing the truest sound?

Mike Pomykala
Taylor 816ce

Mike, you're right – the finish is more delicate. Not as delicate as French polish shellac, even though it rivals its tonal qualities, but certainly more delicate than its thicker finish counterpart. To answer your question, both versions use the same pore filler. The difference is in how much topcoat we put over that filler. The thicker one, which is 6 mils on the top and 6-8 mils on the backs and sides, receives a heavier coat, a leveling by hand with sanding blocks, and then a smooth topcoat. The 3.5-mil application is just a thinner version of that, only it's super hard to accomplish. It's like working with a soap bubble! But Andy was going for optimal sound, and he helped our finishers reach a new level of craftsmanship, and they're the best anyway, so after some practice they achieved what's not so easily done. We know it's nice to keep a guitar shiny and new, but we also love the look of a well-played, well-worn guitar. That's when a guitar really shows what it's been up to: making music.

I am a fingerstyle guitarist living deep in the rainforest on Maui. I live in a beautiful area that gets 160 inches of rain on average per year. I play an Emerald guitar (carbon fiber) because it has held up through everything. I also worked in the desert in Qatar, which is the polar opposite of my current location, and the guitar survived. I have fallen incredibly in love with your Builder's Edition K14ce, but I am afraid of what humidity will do to it over time. I have a Collings (Waterloo model), and it kind of dissolved! They repaired it once but are not willing to do it again. I have a mini Taylor, and that turned out bad over time as well. But before I shell out \$5,000, is there a case that would adequately protect it? This guitar would be used only indoors, never on the beach...

maybe on the lanai, and I am willing to spend a lot to protect this. I love my Emerald, but I want a great wood guitar.

Bruce Scheer
Haiku, HI

[Ed. Note: This question was originally answered by Jonathan Ortiz from our Customer Service team when received via email. Bob agrees.]

Bruce, we have dealers and customers in Asia with 80 percent average humidity who are able to enjoy their guitars and keep them within proper humidity levels (45-55 percent). All you have to do is have the right tools to maintain the guitar when being stored. A hygro-thermometer will help you monitor the humidity in the case or gig bag. After that, use the hygro-thermometer reading to know how many de-humidifiers you'll need to keep the humidity level at bay. You can use Eva-Dry products or charcoal bamboo. Keep in mind that you will need multiples of those to absorb enough humidity to keep the guitar healthy, but it is possible to maintain a Taylor in any type of climate.

Bob, we all know about the use of Adirondack spruce during World War II and the scarcity of this highly desired wood today for instrument making. I am wondering about several things. Why Adirondack in particular? Was this due to proximity to aircraft plants? In which states? Are habitats gone, or was any large-scale replanting attempted at a level similar to that you describe in your reply to Paolo Barbera [Winter 2019 edition] regarding Italian replanting after World War II?

Andrew Bizon
Calgary, AB, Canada

Andrew, Adirondack spruce was chosen because it was in the backyard of Martin Guitar, as well as other makers. That was the spruce they had in the 1800s, and lucky for them it's one of the finest in the world. Europeans use spruce from their mountains, and Russians use spruce from theirs. By the 1920s Adirondack was cut out pretty severely in our northeast region, as it was used for building materials. (Read about The House at Shelburne Farms in Vermont: an enormous house along with a barn that, until it burned down a couple years ago, was the largest open-span wooden building in America. The architect's specifications called for creamy white spruce from the local mountains.) Guitars comprised a fraction of a fraction of a percent of the

spruce used. Eventually all the large trees were cut, and our ancestors in the eastern U.S. heard about big spruce trees in Washington, Oregon and British Columbia called Sitka. So they sourced some and it worked! By then there wasn't much sense in cutting the little Adirondack trees, so they were left alone until some became large enough for a guitar top at the same time that the guitar industry was developed enough to notice it was nice spruce. I don't think there has been any major replanting; it has more or less been a process of just letting regeneration happen naturally.

I know that you and most guitar experts believe that an acoustic guitar sounds better as it ages, but I have my doubts. I am a professor and researcher, and I like to see scientific proof. To my knowledge, this has never formally been studied, and the evidence is what we call anecdotal. I suspect it is based on a belief that many people observe of how over the years, a guitar does seem to sound better in its later years than in earlier years. I don't doubt that fact. But I believe it's largely attributable to the fact that the guitarist is undoubtedly a better player. I think this fact could easily explain why an older guitar sounds better, and if it doesn't explain all of it, it could explain a lot of it. Feel free to convince me I'm wrong. I would be happy to admit it, but until I see the evidence this alternative explanation sounds just as plausible and maybe more so.

Don M. Chance

Well, Don, I'm a worse guitar player now than I was 20 years ago because of lack of practice and a busy life, and my 20th anniversary guitar that sat in the entryway of my house for that time certainly sounds better than the sister guitar that was locked away in a case. It has that “whatever it is” tonal character that is chiefly anecdotal – unprovable like wine tasting, better after it's cellared for a time. Human perception is both useful and unreliable at the same time, but if you can hear the difference between a good guitar and a better guitar, why not admit that you can hear differences? We proclaim the ability of some dogs to smell cancer now. Biological systems do indeed detect and record, so it's nice to just allow that to exist. Maybe it can be proven, but maybe the effort versus the results would be like me asking you to prove you love your wife. To me and many others it's a “thing,” we don't

mind saying it, enjoying it, and leaving it out of the realm of science for now. But you don't say anything that I disagree with. Both things can be right in cases like this, because you might have to define sound in the first place. Is sound the output the guitar makes, or is it my brain recognizing patterns, recording them, noticing different versus familiar patterns, and qualifying them for me? Certainly, a bee does not see the world the same as me, so perhaps we need to define sight and which view is prettier? We could discuss for a weekend, couldn't we? It would be kinda fun.

I'm the proud owner of an 810, 615e, 615 (1986 Lemon Grove), 414ce and a koa GS Mini. I've often wondered about the value of Taylor guitars relative to the series number. With the 100 and 200 Series being made outside the U.S. and with laminate tonewoods, they are obviously geared more towards the entry level. On the other hand, the 900 Series is the cream of the crop with high-end appointments and cosmetics. My question is about the “middle” series. Intuitively, one would assume that the higher the series number, the higher the value. But this doesn't necessarily seem to be the case. I realize each series is associated with a particular tonewood, but is it safe to say that on balance, a 300 Series guitar is not necessarily of a higher “value” than an otherwise similar guitar in the 700 Series? Or are the tonewoods in the higher series of a higher value than those in the lower series?

Ryan Phillips

Ryan, your perceptions are correct, and here I try to just tell things like they are. In this case, it's a delicate ecosystem of value, cost and price. When we started, pricing was simple! We made a couple models, and this one cost more than

that one. These days, it's not so simple. But there is a beautiful balance in there. We try to make every guitar be of high value. It's true that it costs more to get more, but a GS Mini has incredible value. The price reflects a combination of what it costs us, what it costs you, the guitar's historical position in the price matrix, its materials, and the level and amount of work required to build it. One thing some customers might not believe or understand is that sometimes we make a guitar's price lower than we should in order to help a player afford it. So a player might say, “Why is that one more than this one, since it appears to cost about the same to make?” And we think about the same guitars, “Why does this one cost less than that one, when it doesn't cost us less to make?” It may be less of a mystery to us than to you, but maybe not much less!



Got a question for Bob Taylor?

Shoot him an email: 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.

ACOUSTIC FLIGHT PATH

ACCLAIMED JAZZ GUITARIST MIMI FOX TALKS ABOUT HER NEW ALL-ACOUSTIC ALBUM, *THIS BIRD STILL FLIES*, AND HER INVENTIVE APPROACH TO COMPOSING, ARRANGING AND IMPROVISING

BY SHAWN PERSINGER

When we last wrote about internationally renowned guitar virtuoso and music educator Mimi Fox (summer 2018), she was still enjoying the honeymoon phase with her new Builder's Edition K14ce. As Fox shared at the time, she was returning to her acoustic roots and looking forward to using her new Taylor on an all-acoustic album she was getting ready to record. The release, *This Bird Still Flies*, is now available, and listeners are bound to be enthralled by this latest installment of Fox's improvisational magic.

Fox is best known in the jazz world – she's a six-time winner of *DownBeat Magazine's* International Critics Poll; she's performed or recorded with jazz guitar icons including Charlie Byrd, Kenny Burrell, Mundell Lowe, Charlie Hunter and Stanley Jordan; and none other than the late, great Joe Pass once observed that Fox "can do pretty much anything she wants on the guitar." And yet to frame Fox as an electric jazz guitarist (she plays a signature-model archtop made by Heritage) would be to shortchange her expansive artistic range, as her eclectic acoustic collection so eloquently testifies.



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"There's so much music that I love, and I refuse to be pigeonholed," she says. "I'm very proud to be a jazz musician, and yet it's not all of who I am. Though no matter what I play, I'm an improviser." Like many guitarists, a steel-string acoustic was Fox's first instrument, and she spent her teenage years learning to play the folk songs of Joni Mitchell, James Taylor, Paul Simon, and Crosby, Stills and Nash. Her latest project reconnected her with the intimate nature of the acoustic playing experience.

"I feel like when I play acoustic, there's an immediacy to it," she says. "I love the wood reverberating against my body. This album reflects more than half a century playing this instrument, and in a way it feels like coming home."

The record also channels her refocused creative mindset in the wake of two transformative life events: a successful fight against breast cancer and a major relationship breakup. Coming out the other side of those experiences, she says, felt like a rebirth.

"I'm in the best place of my life, and I wanted my music to reflect that," she shares.

This Bird Still Flies treats listeners to a scenic sonic journey that blends original compositions with fresh interpretations of standards, folk, R&B and pop hits (including a pair of Beatles songs). Fox performs this wide-ranging material both solo and as duets with herself (along with one duet with rock guitarist Andy Timmons) – but always with a singular voice. She recorded the album using both her Builder's Edition K14ce and her Taylor Baritone 320e. Frequent *Wood&Steel* contributor Shawn Persinger recently talked with Fox about her influences, technique, composition and, of course, her Taylor guitars.

– The Editor

remained immune to California's mellow vibe. It's true, I have. I wrote a tune on one of my earlier albums called "East Coast Attitude," and I think I've retained that intensity and that fast pace. But I've never thought about it. It's a good question. I don't know if it's a conscious choice or organic. But I am a very passionate person and I think that comes out when I play.

W&S: I couldn't help thinking that the jazz standards on your new recording, which were played on your Taylor Builder's Edition K14ce, would have been performed very differently had you played them on a traditional jazz arch-top guitar. Is that true? Does playing jazz on a Taylor modify your approach?

MF: Absolutely. When I sit down and play an acoustic guitar, because that's what I started on, it always feels like I'm coming back home to an earlier part of my musical personality. So even though now I have all my jazz chops, and a distinctive voice on my hollow-body guitars, when I play an acoustic there is a visceral feeling I get. Also, my early influences were not jazz artists; they were Stephen Stills, Joni Mitchell and other folk artists. For instance, I had Stephen Stills' first solo album, and it has this great acoustic number on it called "Black Queen" that I used to play. There were also classical guitarists: Julian Bream, Segovia and Christopher Parkening. So, yes, playing acoustic guitar definitely comes from a different place. Not to mention, I love my new Builder's Edition, I am completely smitten with this guitar. It is gorgeous to look at, and it's beautiful to play. When I first got it, I could not put it down; it was like being a kid again.

W&S: What are some specific features you like about that guitar?



MF: I explored that a little, years and years ago, and it would really throw me off. I did record "Footprints" [by Wayne Shorter] once, on a 12-string, and I tuned the low E strings down to C, the song is in C minor, so occasionally I will...but to answer your question honestly, no, not really. It's similar to when someone says to me, "You should try a 7-string guitar." I know I should theoretically, but I feel like I'm just finally learning how to play the guitar in standard tuning, so honestly the alternate tunings just confuse me! Now I could write and play a piece in an open tuning, but then I couldn't really improvise on it because the fretboard is all messed up [laughs].

W&S: When listening to your new record, even though much of it sounds like fingerstyle guitar, I couldn't tell how much was fingerpicked versus flat-picked versus using hybrid picking. Do you fingerpick on the new record?

MF: No, I'm really wed to my little jazz picks, so I use mostly a hybrid picking technique, the pick plus my middle finger. Sometimes I use another finger to grab chords but never just my fingers. Well, I do palm my pick when I play octaves, but that's about it. And when I'm practicing at home, sometimes I'll play without the pick, but otherwise the pick is what I'm most comfortable with.

W&S: Speaking of practicing: How much do you practice these days? That is to say, serious, deliberate study of new techniques and approaches as opposed to serendipitous playing?

MF: It's a little bit of both. If I get called by someone to go on the road and it's a good gig but there are tunes I need to learn, obviously I need to practice them – I don't like to read on the bandstand; I like to get rid of the charts. I think the only time I mess with tech-

"Melody to me is sacred."

Wood&Steel: I find your playing to be unusually aggressive for an acoustic guitarist, and I mean that in the best way. You have a large dynamic range, and you can play laid back and delicately, but you also, frequently, really dig in and get a lot out of the guitar. Is this a natural tendency, or have you made a concentrated effort to play more aggressively than the average jazz or acoustic guitarist?

Mimi Fox: I moved from New York to San Francisco over 30 years ago, and one reviewer out here said that I had

MF: This one has something very special. The koa wood on the back and the spruce on the top create this beautiful sound: It's warm but not too warm, bright but not too bright, it hits that sweet spot. Also, I really admire Taylor as a company, I like their values and I like how they treat their people, and, of course, their guitars are amazing.

W&S: If I can jump back a minute to what you said about Stephen Stills: He uses a lot of alternate tunings. Do you play in any alternate tunings?

nique is if I'm working on something and I'm having trouble with the articulation. I can give you an example: There is this really great Chick Corea piece called "Got a Match?" It's not a hard tune harmonically, but the head [melody] does not lay comfortably on the guitar. And, originally, I was using too much of a legato, slurring articulation, and I thought, maybe I need to use a separate, picking-each-note technique, and that worked. So it's specific to what I'm working on.

But I'm always working on new ideas. I do work from the Slonimsky book [Nicolas Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*], and I like to play through classical guitar studies, Vivaldi and Bach, so yes, I do still practice. But because I'm a composer I also like to leave room to follow my muse as I'm composing. And sometimes a song will come out of something I'm practicing; though, more likely, when I'm writing, it has to be an inspiration that comes from a person or someplace I've been.

W&S: On that compositional note, let's talk about some songs from your new album. The playing in "Textures of Loving" seems to refer to the many different attacks, articulations, and tempos you perform during the course of the tune. You play harmonics, arpeggios, single-note runs, even some light guitar-as-percussion-instrument techniques. What came first: the concept or the music?

MF: Well, that piece is one of my earlier compositions. I think I wrote that piece when I was about 22, and you can hear that I had been studying classical guitar, but to me it is never a conscious decision – am I going to play harmonics or do this or do that – it's more, as a composer, where is the song taking me? The music shouldn't be contrived.

W&S: While most of your new album features you performing solo, "Twilight in the Mangroves" and "Against the Grain" are both duets, with you performing both parts. When do you decide that a piece is going to work better as a duet rather than as a solo piece?

MF: A lot of it depends on how the piece evolves as I'm composing it. In the case of "Against the Grain," there were always two separate parts, because the bass is in 5/4 and the head that plays against it is more 4/4; that's why it's called "Against the Grain." So in that case it felt like it had to have two guitars. "Twilight in the Mangroves" I can, more or less, play

solo, but it just plays easier with two parts. Also, on both pieces I like to solo, so I need another guitar backing me up.

W&S: Although, on other tracks, notably your cover of The Beatles' "Day Tripper," you play a lot of single-note lines, without accompaniment, more like a violinist or saxophonist, which is something many guitarists shy away from.

MF: Well, like most solo jazz guitarists, at any point I could go into walking basslines with chords that would fill it out, but, honestly, after playing solo guitar for so many years, I get a little bored with walking basslines. I figure if my time is strong, listeners can hang with some long single-note lines. I'll still put some chords in, or I'll reference the bass here or there, but I'm hoping the piece will still be cohesive, it will still hang together, if my time is solid. I tell my students, when playing solo guitar, if your time is not like a rock you will not be successful at it. You can sit and play pretty little things rubato, set arrangements of pieces, but if you're going to take chances you have to have this big forward motion where you're able to propel the piece forward even though there are no chords. It's a little bit more demanding of my audience....

W&S: I was going to say, you run the risk of asking too much from the listener, which I think is admirable. You're talking about having your time being rock-solid, but you don't play like a metronome. You know where the pulse is, you're aware of the time, but you're not trying to emphasize it by playing every downbeat or straight eighths throughout. There is an awareness of the pulse, but your playing is still free and capricious.

MF: Exactly. It's an intuitive process, and I hope that listeners can hear where I'm coming from and follow along. If I'm authentic as an artist, I figure if I'm bored with something then that's not cool. Maybe some folks in the audience could follow it better [if there were accompaniment], but if it's not moving me, how can I expect it to move other people?

But when I do shows I do mix and match. I do have a set arrangement of "America the Beautiful," and even though I'm improvising some of it, it is an arrangement that I came up with that is going to be, more or less, that way whenever I play it. And then I will add different things, because I like to improvise even on arrangements. But then if I'm doing a piece like "Blue Bossa," something I've played a million

“If I’m doing a piece I’ve played a million times, I’m going to try something different. If I don’t have something new to add to it, I have no business playing it.”

times, I'm going to try to do something different. Otherwise I have no business playing that piece if I don't have something new to add to it.

W&S: Ah yes, "Blue Bossa," the curse of every first-year jazz student! A cliché I avoided for years and years and then I went to a jam one night and these cats tore it apart! They basically played it as a high-octane samba, and I thought, "Oh, it's not the song, it's the uninspired performances I've heard in the past."

MF: Right, it's not the song's fault.

W&S: Getting back to "Day Tripper" for a minute, you play that on your Taylor Baritone, correct?

MF: Correct. The 320e, and that guitar has this kind of funky and meaty sound that I thought would be fun for "Day Tripper." I love it. I also have a Taylor 12-string, which I didn't use on this particular album, but I like having the variety when I'm doing mostly solos or duets.

W&S: You also perform a distinctive version of The Beatles "Blackbird," focusing more on the melody than the iconic fingerpicking guitar accompaniment that so many players fixate on. When you create an arrangement, do you try various approaches, or do you start with a fixed idea – for instance, avoiding the obvious – and try to stay true to that, despite the challenges it might present? Or do you mix it up?

MF: Probably a little of everything. Whenever I do an arrangement... first, the melody has to be compelling. Now "Blackbird" is a tune that I would talk about in a jazz composition class. That piece has an AABA form and is

going to stand up with Rodgers and Hart, with Cole Porter, with Gershwin, with any of the songs from the Great American Songbook. It's a masterpiece. I mean, forget the lyrics, which are just gorgeous...but the melody is everything. And melody to me is sacred. So if I have a beautiful melody, then I take the next step, which is... Paul McCartney already recorded that tune, it was perfectly done, so I'm not going to replicate that. The only time, at the very end of the piece, I play a little of the [sings McCartney's guitar part for "Blackbird"] as sort of a whimsical moment at the end of the piece to reference that I actually do know what the original sounds like. But I always try to think, "What can I do to make the piece mine?"

For instance, I recorded Miles Davis' "All Blues" on an earlier album, and I completely tore it apart, what they call "deconstructed." I basically said, what if I start with some open chords and a Delta blues kind of feeling, and then eventually I reharmonized it? Whenever I do a tune that has been done so many times, I think, What can I do that will bring something fresh to the piece?, or else, why bother?

W&S: That innovative approach comes through on your version of the jazz standard "You Don't Know What Love Is," which seems to pay homage to a variety of guitarists such as Joe Pass, Herb Ellis, even Heitor Villa Lobos, without ever compromising your own voice. On a performance like this, are you trying to pay homage to your influences or do they appear instinctively?

MF: You just named all people that I've listened to, [some of whom] I've had the opportunity and pleasure to play with...but yeah, I listen to everything. I tell my students, "Be a sponge and

never have a closed mind." Before I signed to Favored Nations, I really didn't know much about rock at all, and certainly not any metal, and then Steve Vai sent me a lot of his recordings, and I heard some Joe Satriani, and years later Paul Gilbert asked me to come and be a guest artist at one of his Great Guitar Escapes, and all of these guys are fantastic musicians. So yes, you're hearing people I've listened to or played with, but you're also hearing a smorgasbord of music because that's what I like to listen to. And you don't get your own voice unless you honor the people that you're standing on the shoulders of. **W&S**

To see Mimi Fox perform with her Builder's Edition K14ce, visit our blog at taylorguitars.com or go to mimifoxguitar.com.

DOUBLE COURSE DELIGHT

Our first-ever V-Class 12-string guitars mark another milestone for our new bracing platform. Get ready to hear a 12-string the way it was truly meant to sound.

By Jim Kirlin

Andy Powers is sitting in his office cradling one of his newest guitar offspring, a near-final prototype of a 12-string Grand Concert 562ce voiced with V-Class™ bracing. In a year that has brought Andy's V-Class architecture to our Grand Concert body shape, this guitar delivers another sweet spinoff of his adaptable V-Class framework: an incredibly pitch-friendly 12-string guitar. The only problem is that at the moment he's having a hard time talking about the design process with the guitar in his hands.

"I really want to play it instead," he laughs, picking a melodic chord progression that reveals the 12-string's double-course shimmer with remarkable clarity and precision. "With the V-Class architecture inside, I feel like I finally get to play a 12-string that's in tune."

If you think about it, a 12-string guitar presents an even greater test of V-Class's sonic capabilities, in particular the ability to produce greater pitch accuracy and harmonic agreement between notes. After all, twice as many strings vibrating against a vibrating diaphragm means more notes and overtones to control. In order to better understand the application of the V-Class platform to a 12-string design, Andy says it helps to revisit some of fundamental problems associated with 12-string guitars in general, especially when using a traditional bracing approach.

For starters, 12-strings tend to be more difficult to tune. Not because there are more strings, but because of the way the paired strings relate to – and sometimes fight – each other.

"You're taking a string and adding another next to it that has the same musical note but is expected to double up a perfect octave overtone of the first note," Andy explains, referring to the octave relationship between the E, A, D and G string pairs. "That's tricky because you want a mathematically perfect octave harmonic of







this lower fundamental note, but since it is a second independent string, it will generate its own harmonic series.”

To illustrate the problem, he says, as a player tunes the two strings to pitch, when they have *almost* the same resonant frequency, a curious thing happens – they start to act like the same poles of two magnets and actually repel each other until you get them right.

“As an example, if I play the open G, and I play the octave open G next to it, even though they’re trying to vibrate at the same musical note an octave apart, the octave harmonic of the lower string will interact with the open high string if they’re not spot on. The flatter note will get shoved further flat and the sharper one further sharp.”

Although the phenomenon is noticeable with the paired octave strings, the same issue will also occur with the paired unison strings. It’s something mandolin players often have to contend with.

“On a mandolin, you are forever tuning and retuning, especially the A and E courses,” Andy says. “Sometimes it seems like you want to tune halfway through a song. You are definitely tuning between every song, looking for that dead-on pure unison, all because the two notes don’t want to occupy the same resonant space.”

For contrast, he plucks a fretted note up the neck on two paired strings

of the V-Class 562ce he’s holding.

“In this case, you don’t easily hear two strings, two independent notes anymore,” he says. “It sounds like one string. There’s no wavering or pulsing effect.”

Another traditional challenge of 12-string design is making the guitar body strong and stable enough to withstand the additional string tension. Despite the fact that each individual string of a 12-string set has a smaller gauge (thickness) than a 6-string set, there is a huge amount of string tension. (See our sidebar.) For example, light gauge strings for our 12-string guitars are .010 - .047 and .010 - .027, compared to .012 - .053 for light gauge strings on a 6-string. To compound the challenge, since each string is smaller than in a regular set, that means each individual string of a 12-string set has less energy to impart to the guitar.

Andy addressed this issue back in 2016 with the introduction of our smaller Grand Concert body as a more structurally optimized chassis for a 12-string. The more compact form meant more inherent body strength (there’s less top and back span to support), which in turn meant the body didn’t need to be braced as heavily. So even with the smaller string gauges, the top could be set in motion more easily.

The smaller body, with its smaller resonant cavity, also tends to naturally emphasize higher frequencies a bit more, which Andy feels complements the 12-string sound.

“I like a 12-string guitar to have a chimey, shimmery, crystalline sort of voice,” he says. “And when I apply the design to a smaller body, all the physical factors start working together really well.”

How V-Class Improves the 12-String Sound

Although the V-Class architecture was originally designed with a focus on 6-string guitars, once its improvements to a guitar’s intonation were proven, Andy immediately knew he’d be able to adapt it to a 12-string guitar and resolve its unique tuning idiosyncrasies.

“The similar note repulsion phenomenon was largely overcome with V-Class,” he says. “We hear everything as very in tune, whether unison or octave strings.”

Because the V structure creates so much stability parallel to the strings, a string isn’t nearly as able to alter the pitch on the small octave string next to it. Andy says the pitch benefits of the extra stability are actually similar to what the pioneering builders of solid-body electric guitars discovered.

“One of the reasons early electric builders moved toward a solid-body design was to eliminate the interplay between the string and top resonances,” he explains. “Builders were trying to combat the feedback problem, but they also were addressing this frustration between a moving diaphragm and a moving string interfering with each other. When you make the body solid, you don’t experience nearly as much of this problem. This V idea provides so much stability parallel to the strings that you start to get the benefit of a sol-

id-body guitar’s tuning and intonation accuracy. That translates to a 12-string as well.”

A New String Anchoring Design

Another area of innovation for these V-Class 12-strings is a new approach to anchoring the strings to the soundboard through the bridge. One challenge Andy faced was reconciling the positioning of the V pattern on the soundboard given the unique space constraints inside the guitar. Not only was he working with a compact body shape, but the guitars also feature a 12-fret neck, which means the bridge position is shifted away from the soundhole, closer to the middle of the lower bout. When you take into account the way the two braces that form the V become narrower toward the tail end of the body, plus the larger bridge and wider string spread for a 12-string guitar (the nut width is 1-7/8 inches), the reality was that there was limited soundboard real estate available to anchor the strings without having to drill through a brace.

The solution: a new double-mounted string anchoring design in which each string pairing shares an anchor point through the bridge. It’s not an original design – other instruments featuring a double-course string arrangement have incorporated this approach – and Andy himself used it years ago on some traditional Hawaiian-style ukuleles he built.

“Typically, because a uke body is so small, when you build a 6- or 8-string taro patch uke, you just automatically double up the anchor point and put two strings in one hole,” he says.

The double-mounted string anchoring design resolves several issues, both spatial and tonal. For one thing, the bridge can be smaller and lighter, which makes it easier to fit in relation to the bracing pattern, in addition to improving the sound.

A significant tonal benefit comes from the ability to create a consistent break angle over the saddle for all 12 strings. On a typical 12-string bridge, there are two rows of bridge pins. As a result, the strings that are anchored closer to the saddle have a stronger, more acute break angle than the ones anchored farther back.

“The string angle over the saddle affects the way each string of a pair interacts with the top,” Andy says. “They each vibrate the top in different ways with a different angle. Typically, it’s a real challenge to get these two strings to sound similar, even when they are tuned in unison. A more consistent downward pressure against the saddle helps them behave in a more uniform way and benefits both the tuning and response of the string pair.”

High-Tension Wires

What’s the difference in string tension between a 6- and 12-string (steel-string) acoustic guitar? While it can vary depending on the metal alloy and brand of strings, on a Taylor 6-string Grand Concert, with its scale length of 24-7/8 inches, a standard set of light gauge strings will exert 155-160 pounds of string tension when tuned. A 12-string light gauge set will exert 240-250 pounds of tension.

Those differences in pressure against the saddle also made it necessary to reposition the ES2 pickup (closer to the treble-string side) on previous 12-string models in order to create a more balanced amplified sound. Now, with the shared anchor points and common break angle, the acoustic voicing is naturally more consistent, and the pickup position is more centered in relation to the strings like on our 6-string models.

The Playing Experience

As with our 6-string V-Class guitars, one of the first things players will notice on our 12-string editions is how easily a tuner can find the note, which will make the tuning experience even smoother. And the improved intonation of V-Class will likely be even more noticeable on these guitars.

"It plays so clearly and tunefully balanced across the whole register that, even with a relatively delicate touch, you get this organ-like sustain," Andy says. "It's pretty crazy for a 12-string."

Like their 6-string Grand Concert counterparts, these models boast the other benefits of our V-Class architecture, including more volume, projection and sustain, along with a pleasing tonal consistency from note to note across the fretboard. And as 12-fret models, the different bridge placement will help infuse the sound with extra warmth and sweetness.

The improved voicing of these 12-strings will also make them appealing for songwriting.

"You can play your familiar repertoire, and the newness of this clear voice gives you some new musical places to explore," Andy says. "It's a different flavor. It's got a natural reverb-like shimmer, but with such precision, I don't hear it as a 12-string in a typical sense."

Those sonic traits will also make a V-Class 12-string Grand Concert an amazing guitar for recording applications.

Models

Starting this summer we'll be updating our four Grand Concert 12-string models to feature V-Class bracing and new bridge design: from the 500 Series, the all-mahogany 562ce and mahogany/cedar 552ce; and from our 300 Series, the blackwood/mahogany 362ce and sapele/spruce 352ce. All four models incorporate our shorter 12-fret necks, with a 24-7/8-inch scale length. Between our sleek neck profile, the slinky handfeel, compact neck-to-body relationship, and intimate feel of the Grand Concert body, these guitars offer players arguably the most physically accessible 12-string experience on the market.

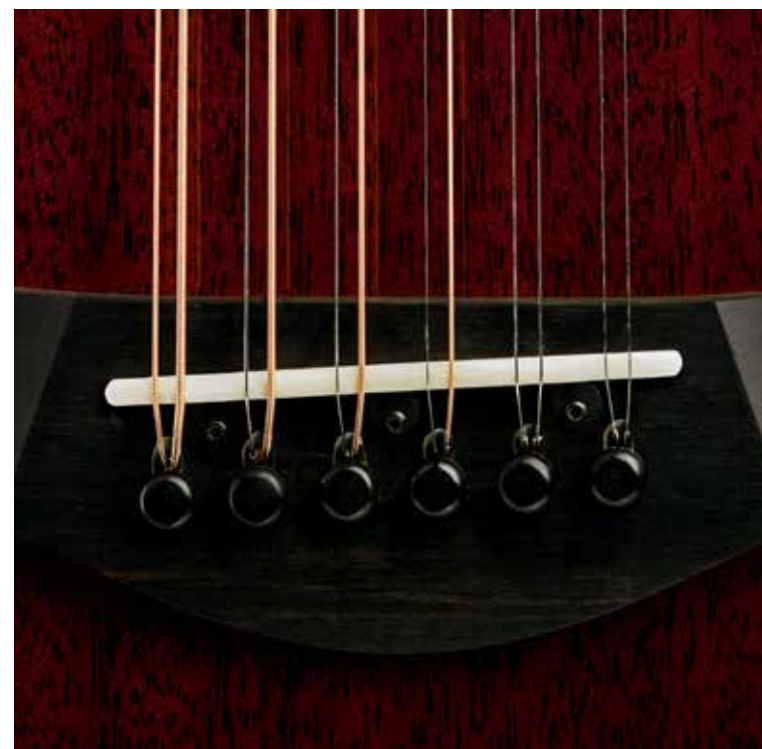
“
With the V-Class architecture
inside, I feel like I finally get to
play a 12-string that’s in tune.
”

In terms of sound, each delivers a unique flavor, so for interested players, it might come down to your sound-board preference (mahogany, cedar and spruce) or the visual aesthetic – perhaps the dark, vintage allure of a shaded edgeburst mahogany top on the 562ce or 362ce. Tonally, Andy has been enjoying the 562ce.

"Everything about it works so well – the mahogany top imparting its natural smoothness, plus mahogany's classic dry voicing," he says. "The clear fundamental character allows all the overtone shimmer from a 12-string to be heard."

The wood doesn't overwhelm the strings with its own overtone series."

For more details on the new V-Class Grand Concert 12-string models, visit taylorguitars.com. Better yet, head over to your local Taylor dealer and take one for a spin. **W&S**



The new double-mounted string anchoring design features a shared anchor point for each string pairing. With a single row of bridge pins, the strings all have a consistent break angle over the saddle, which contributes to more tonal consistency in the guitar's voicing. The bridge pins are the same as those used on our six-string models, but with a wider string ramp coming out of each bridge pin hole to accommodate both strings.



L-R: 352ce, 362ce



Clockwise from front: 912ce 12-Fret, 712e 12-Fret, 612ce 12-Fret

More Grand Designs

V-Class bracing joins the rest of our Grand Concert family

By Colin Griffith

Great news for those awaiting the next wave of V-Class Grand Concert guitars: They're here.

We began the year with an initial launch that featured our 300, 500 and 800/800 DLX Series, including both 12-fret and 14-fret models and an appealing mix of tonewood pairings. So far, the reaction from dealers and customers has been overwhelmingly positive, with players raving about the impressive volume, sustain and tonal depth these small-bodied guitars produce. Those compact dimensions continue to attract players seeking a physically comfortable acoustic guitar, which includes the hand-friendly 24-7/8-inch scale length.

Starting this summer, you'll find V-Class Grand Concert guitars from

the 400, 600, 700, 900, Koa and Presentation Series at Taylor dealers everywhere. That means that all Grand Concert models built at our factory in El Cajon, California, now feature V-Class bracing. Here are a few of our favorites from the latest mix.

Rosewood with a Boost

This summer's rollout includes a pair of rosewood guitars we can't stop playing. The 412ce-R (Sitka spruce top) and the 712e 12-Fret (Lutz spruce top) may come from different series, but they share rosewood's heritage of rich, sparkling tone, with all that harmonic content further enhanced by the V-Class architecture. The 412ce-R makes a great choice for working musicians who need a pro-level guitar that isn't too pre-

cious to load in and out of the van, with minimal appointments, a sweet musical voice, and great-sounding onboard electronics for gigging. Meanwhile, the 712e 12-Fret displays the sonic benefits of V-Class bracing in another appealing way, as the repositioned bridge (part of the 12-fret neck/body configuration) opens up even more warmth and sustain. We happen to love the look of the optional Western Sunburst top.

For those craving more decorative flair, the 912ce's elaborate aesthetic character makes it a showpiece that sounds as beautiful as it looks, thanks to premium-grade Indian rosewood, our radius armrest, and artfully rendered appointment details featuring abalone, mother-of-pearl, ebony and Hawaiian koa.

Maple Motherlode

By applying his V-Class voicing framework to a maple guitar, Andy Powers has opened up a broader palette of sonic colors for players to explore. The 612ce 12-Fret leverages maple's player-reflective properties to offer new levels of tone control and versatility, blending touch sensitivity and acoustic power in a way that gives this 12-fret Grand Concert remarkable dynamic range for its size. The 12-fret design also reveals surprising low-end warmth when the player wants it. Together with the slinky handfeel of the 12-fret neck, this guitar is an inspiring discovery waiting to happen.

Crushing on Koa

It's easy to see why players practically fall over themselves to play koa guitars – between the dazzling wood complexion and ever-evolving tonal properties, each koa instrument presents an acoustic personality all its own. A non-cutaway that's sure to please traditionalists (and show off more koa beauty in the process), the all-koa K22e 12-Fret blends balanced articulation, smooth sustain, and pleasing warmth and depth of tone. Plus, the sound of a koa guitar grows sweeter over time as its midrange overtones emerge, which means this stunning Grand Concert is an heirloom-quality guitar in the making.

Ready to try one yourself? You'll find these models and more from Taylor dealers this summer. **W&S**

[New Model Spotlight]

Builder's Edition K24ce

**This all-koa masterpiece
is a feast for the senses**

When we unveiled our first Builder's Edition guitar to celebrate the debut of V-Class™ bracing in early 2018, it was an exciting time. Master guitar designer Andy Powers had been inspired to match the innovative sonic virtues of his V-Class framework with an array of comfort-enhancing playing features, some of which we'd never offered before. That first model, a Grand Auditorium K14ce sporting Hawaiian koa back and sides and a torrefied spruce top, established a bold new benchmark of feel and sound for Taylor.

As our V-Class voicing platform has been integrated into the Taylor line, our Builder's Edition concept has slowly expanded into a family of guitars that now includes the maple/torrefied spruce 614ce and a pair of award-winning new Grand Pacific models: the mahogany 517 and rosewood 717. (For the latest reactions to those guitars, see page 24.)

This summer we're proud to introduce another model to the fold. The Builder's Edition K24ce marks a return to our Koa Series, with a couple of notable distinctions. The most obvious is that koa's seductive beauty is on immediate display with a gorgeous koa top. And with its sleek and inviting body contours, the curve appeal is every bit as satisfying as its visual charms.

Like its Builder's Edition K14ce sibling, the K24ce's player-friendly features include chamfered body edges, a beveled armrest, and our elegant double-carved cutaway, which incorporates a compound curve that flows cleanly into the neck heel, along with a finger bevel, making upper-register notes comfortably accessible. We've also adopted the contoured Curve Wing

bridge that debuted on our Grand Pacific Builder's Edition models.

Tonally, the koa top on the K24ce will give this guitar a slightly darker voicing than its spruce-top counterpart.

"Koa is special in that it dampens some of the ultra-high frequencies," says Andy Powers, "so you'll hear a warmer response."

With our V-Class architecture inside, the guitar will yield other enhanced acoustic traits – improved volume, sustain and intonation – including wonderfully balanced articulation across the frequency spectrum. Between the V-Class framework and the controlled response of the hardwood top, this guitar will shine in an amplified setting or in front of a mic.

Visually, thoughtful aesthetic details tastefully elevate koa's natural beauty. The finish treatment features our Kona Burst (first developed for the Builder's Edition K14ce) together with our proprietary Silent Satin finish. Beyond the artfully muted sheen and smooth feel, the finish reduces the sound of the player against the instrument – a benefit for recording applications. Elsewhere, paua abalone and koa trim trace the body's contours in the form of top and back purfling with a complementary soundhole rosette; the fretboard and peghead showcase paua Spring Vine inlays with thin koa purfling lines adding an elegant finishing touch; and Gotoh Gold tuners (21:1 tuning ratio) complete the premium look and feel of the guitar.

With a guitar like this in your arms, you'll never be at a loss for inspiration. You'll find the Builder's Edition K24ce at Taylor dealers starting this summer. For complete details, visit taylorguitars.com.

W&S



[Guitar Reviews]

A Grand Reception

Here's what reviewers are saying about the Grand Pacific

The first half of 2019 has brought a torrent of glowing editorial coverage of our Grand Pacific guitars. Between the immersive media preview event we hosted last September in Nashville, the many interviews Andy Powers gave both there and at the Winter NAMM Show in January, and the guitars we sent for review, writers and other content creators both in North America and abroad had plenty of story fodder to chronicle the development and musical merits of the guitars.

The resulting coverage ranged from feature-length articles and interviews to print and video reviews. Some stories delve into Andy's design inspiration and reveal how the birth of the Grand Pacific is intertwined with the creation of V-Class bracing; other coverage featured traditional reviews of our Builder's Edition 517 and 717, along with our sapele/spruce 317. With dozens of pieces now published, we're happy to say the Grand Pacific has made a stellar first impression among some of the most discerning guitar players in the industry. Here are some highlights from the reactions thus far.

Guitar Player

March and April 2019

Guitar Player Senior Editor Art Thompson wrote two pieces on the Grand Pacific: a feature story for the magazine's March issue, followed by reviews of the Builder's Edition guitars in the April edition. His feature article ("New Gun in Town") tells the Grand Pacific's origin story with insightful commentary from Andy Powers. Thompson also offers his initial take on the guitars.

"There's still the same in-tuneness across the span of the fretboard that is one of the benefits of V-Class bracing, but the new guitars have a certain complex, old-soul richness to them, as well as a very balanced delivery compared to most dreadnoughts," he shares.

Thompson gets more detailed in his guitar reviews, especially as he compares the mahogany and rosewood personalities.

"Choosing one over the other isn't easy," he confesses. "The 517's mahogany construction gives it abundant mid-range complexity and warmth, while the rosewood 717 sounds brighter and has a little more low-end extension. Both



sound excellent for fingerstyle playing, and it's really a matter of taste as to which would better suit a bluegrass lead picker. One common characteristic is how both guitars are voiced to blend together to create a rich composite sound."

In the end, Thompson gave both guitars the magazine's Editors' Pick Award.

"Bottom line, the Builder's Edition Grand Pacific guitars bring a cool new

flavor to the Taylor line and will certainly establish themselves as every bit the studio and stage workhorses that so many players have depended on from Taylor flat-tops," he concludes. "Kudos to Andy Powers for creating an entirely modern guitar that in many ways is the one he has always dreamed of."

Acoustic Guitar

March/April 2019

Like many reviewers, James Rotondi received both the Builder's Edition 517e and 717 models in order to compare the mahogany and rosewood versions. Rotondi suggests the Grand Pacific may be our most adventurous guitar yet, affirming Andy Powers' claim that it delivers what many would consider "the most un-Taylor-y Taylor we've ever built."

After admiring the Grand Pacific's ergonomic playing features and aesthetic details, Rotondi begins with the mahogany 517e, which he says "responded exceptionally well to being whacked quite hard, even emitting a sweet, grainy growl, with gutsy mid-range, on hard-struck chords between the fifth and tenth frets. Elsewhere, single flatpicked notes bloomed beautifully, even when played quickly, with excellent volume and sustain..."

Switching to the rosewood 717, he noticed "a bit more top-end airiness and sweeter, more pronounced overtones" compared to the 517e. He also recognized the different sonic personality compared to a Taylor Grand Auditorium: "Notes are broad and full,



sure, but they also layer in an almost creamy way compared to the articulate, grainy crispness of, say, a 714 or a 314."

"The 717 is surely one of the best all-around acoustic guitars I've played," he adds. "With its full-bodied, weighty notes for fingerpicking, it would be entirely at home single-tracked live with a solo vocal, but with its lush harmonics popping out in full strum, there's little doubt it'd produce a nice filtered zing effect as well for rock and acoustic pop rhythms. (Both guitars' low-end character changes dramatically as your picking hand moves across, and to either side of, the soundhole, for lots of tonal possibilities.) There's simply nothing missing from its sound, and like the 517, it has a decidedly un-woofy and punchy low-end, which, perhaps the result of the V-Class bracing or just Taylor's top-shelf guitar design, is immensely appealing."

Playing the 717, he says, gave him "all the bodacious benefits of a dreadnought, but with the contoured bass response and bold mids of a slightly smaller-bodied guitar."

Rotondi wraps up with a thoughtful reflection on the Grand Pacific's almost time-warping identity in the chronology of Taylor history: "It's a guitar that, in cinematic terms, could be seen as the prequel to Taylor's blockbuster success with bright, vibrant, modern-sounding guitars," he says. "The Grand Pacific 717 and 517e (and its sapele little brother, the 317) are, in a sense, post-modern legacy instruments in an imagined early-20th century past for a company that only began making guitars in the mid-'70s. But with V-Class architecture leading the way structurally and sonically, the Grand Pacific line could well be seen as a journey back to the future."

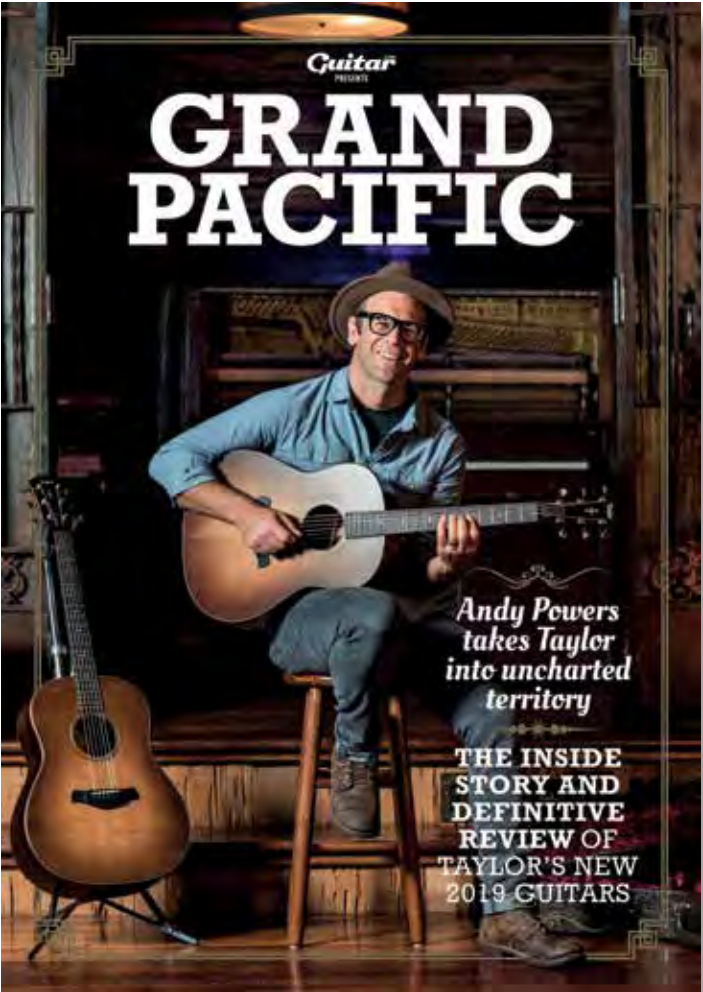
Guitar Magazine (UK)
Guitar.com
March 2019

The UK publication rolled out an expansive editorial treatment of the Grand Pacific with an in-depth story about the guitar's design, along with reviews of all three models, including the 317. Chief Editor Chris Vinnicombe gave readers a good sense of Andy's design inspiration, observing that the guitar "has been crafted with an affinity for the crackle of vinyl records and an appreciation for an altogether older and more elusive steel-string acoustic sound." He adds that "the elegant simplicity and symmetry of the Grand Pacific body shape immediately lends the instrument more of a blue-collar vibe than many high-end Taylors."

Vinnicombe also lauded the guitar's ability to artfully blend the old with the new.

"First impressions suggest the Grand Pacific might just be that elusive best-of-both-worlds flat-top," he writes. "With all the benefits of a modern Taylor – precision manufacture, tuning stability and environmentally conscious materials – the Grand Pacific's sound has a warmer, less crystalline hue and more of an old-time drawl in its voice. We'd call that a job well done."

Vinnicombe's colleague Huw Price handled the formal guitar reviews and



picked up on the player-friendly attributes of the neck's compound carve profile.

"We detect the merest hint of a V and softer shoulders at the cowboy end, which gradually becomes rounder, and the result is a very comfortable neck shape that provides substance without unwieldy bulk," he writes.

Price compared both Builder's Edition models, which helped him discern the unique sonic characteristics of each.

"The 717e sounds and plays like a very high-end, hand-built guitar – the type that'd cost substantially more if it had been made by an artisan luthier.... There isn't a harsh tone to be had, the sonic character is boldly clear and assertive and there are plenty of dynamics and tonal variations."

Yet in the end he seemed to give the edge to the mahogany model.

"Something keeps drawing us back to the 517e," he writes. "It's just that bit punchier, earthier and grittier. If the 717e won the aesthetic battle, the 517e is the most characterful and interesting-sounding guitar in a very strong field."

Both guitars earned a rating of 9 out of 10 and their Editor's Choice Award.

Price also had good things to say about the 317e, acknowledging that

"the V-Class bracing elevates the tone and intonation."

"Despite its quick response and naturally bright tone, the 317e has a remarkably balanced and even character," he observes. "It's as though high-end studio equalization and compression has already been applied – by a very competent recording engineer."

"All of the strings have a rounded tonal quality, which means the wound strings don't pop out and the plain strings retain body and punch even in the higher registers."

PegheadNation.com

The popular online hub for roots music instruction and gear reviews featured written and video assessments of both Builder's Edition models. Co-founder and producer Teja Gerken did the honors with our mahogany 517e and was quick to notice that the guitar introduced a new sound for Taylor.

"Without question, the addition of the Grand Pacific line results in a great expansion of the tonal options that the company has available," Gerken says. "Players looking to combine dreadnought tones with Taylor's famous precision would do well to check out this new guitar."

Gerken also weighed in on the rosewood 717e in a piece that accompanied colleague Scott Nygaard's video demo of the guitar: "The rosewood back and sides had a bit more bottom-end punch and perhaps a touch more sustain, and as Scott Nygaard's demo (which includes strumming, single-note passages, and a flatpicked fiddle tune) shows, the guitar excels within traditional dreadnought territory. But with its great tonal balance, precise intonation, and quick response, the guitar is also at home playing jazz or fingerstyle, making it a great guitar for anyone looking for a versatile flattop with a big sound and great playability."

Nygaard had this to say in his video: "The tone is so even from top to bottom that it means you can create your own voice. You're not compensating for little bumps in the sound like you would, say, with a traditional dreadnought that has a big bass.... I definitely would recommend you checking this out if you're looking for any kind of dreadnought, slope-shouldered or traditional style. It's very versatile with even tone all around."



Total Guitar (UK)
May 2019

Writer Rob Laing led his review of the 317e with a general observation about why our new Grand Pacific design is likely to inspire players: "Sometimes innovative guitars come along that change our perception of what we want and need, and they actually bring new things out of us," he says. "We think Taylor's Grand Pacific is one of them."

While Laing acknowledges the ultra-premium playing features of the Builder's Edition Grand Pacific models, he draws attention to the merits of the more accessibly priced 317e, which stakes its claim as an exceptional workhorse guitar. "The 317e is a looker, but it's not showy – more a player's guitar, ready to get down to work," he writes.

He also keys in on how the V-Class architecture expands the guitar's all-around musicality and expressiveness.

"The V-Class helps give notes across the board equal sustain and projection, and there are delights to be found, which will coax players into melodic territory at the dusty end," he writes. "The usual choked compromises of the higher frets don't exist here: there's presence and body, you don't need to dig it to make gains. It encourages a more measured approach, and we found ourselves playing in a freer way."

The guitar earned the magazine's Best Buy Award.

[Sustainability]



A Fresh Assessment

The conservation status of West African ebony was recently upgraded on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Scott Paul uses the occasion to delve into the murky details of ebony's previous assessment and highlights how the scientific advancements of the last 20 years have provided a more accurate picture of the species.

When I joined Taylor Guitars in November of 2016, I asked for a list of wood species we have used to build guitars over the years in order to cross-reference them against the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. The IUCN Red List is the world's most comprehensive assessment of the conservation status of biological species. Species are ranked across a seven-point scale, ranging from "Least Concern" to "Extinct." The Red List also serves as a bellwether for policy makers, conveying a degree of urgency

regarding species protection.

The list of woods used at Taylor, while not definitive, included 23 species. Ten were listed as "not yet assessed" by IUCN, and nine had last been assessed in 1998. (A Red List assessment is only valid for 10 years.) The worst-scoring species on my list was West African ebony (*Diospyros crassiflora* Hiern), classified as "Endangered." The good news is that IUCN recently changed this to a more optimistic status of "Vulnerable." This recent development was comforting considering the fact that Taylor co-owns an ebony mill in Cameroon and that

every Taylor guitar uses this species on its fingerboards and bridges.

To be honest, I've known this change was coming for some time. I attended the Red List re-evaluation workshop that took place in June 2017 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, 20 years after it was last evaluated. As I've waited for the results to be peer-reviewed and made official, I kept wondering how two decades earlier IUCN had reached its previous conclusion. Unfortunately, there is very little information available about that earlier process, and the participants at the 2017 evaluation didn't want to guess. I have great respect for

IUCN, but I am also familiar with the current state of knowledge pertaining to West African ebony, and I know that while a fairly precise description of the species' natural range was published in 1970, the world is only recently coming to understand its abundance or even the basic ecology of this species. Allow me to share a little more historical context to explain this relative lack of information.

While humanity has been studying the natural world for centuries, we have not really examined broader ecosystems or conducted species-level analyses in the tropics for that long. It wasn't until after World War II, when values and attitudes toward internationalism began to change, that we really got started. One of the earliest attempts to identify an inventory of threatened species came from IUCN when it published the first "Red Data Book," a loose-leaf file of 135 endangered mammals, in

The first list of endangered plants wasn't created until 1978.

generic name referring to a black, hard, dense, fine-grained wood sourced from several species of the tropics. Most ebony woods come from tree species belonging to the *Diospyros* genus from the *Ebenaceae* family. According to the Kew Gardens World Checklist of Selected Plant Families, the *Diospyros* genus currently includes 732 species worldwide. Of these, 107 are found in continental Africa. The island of Madagascar boasts 91

1996 at a Red List African Regional Workshop in Zimbabwe. The findings did not become official until 1998. In Zimbabwe, the official Red List process of that time was followed, and a series of specific questions were asked and answered, but from what I can gather, a major determining factor to list the species as "Endangered" was based on an assumption that the overall population of West African ebony either observed, estimated, inferred or suspected had

the resources have been over-exploited. In Western Africa, where the specific species of ebony we're focusing on comes from, the Portuguese first began to trade it, along with elephant ivory and slaves, in the 15th century. In the 19th century, with the abolition of slavery, the trade in ebony began to grow, but with few exceptions, mostly along the coast and navigable waterways of Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. Interior logging did not really begin until after World War II, following the development of road and rail systems under European administration. Today we know that the natural range of the species extends across millions of square miles from the coastline eastward across to the Republic of Congo and virtually to the eastern edge of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ebony's range also bleeds north into Southeastern Nigeria and the Central African Republic. If you understand this



The IUCN Red List uses a seven-point scale to assess the extinction risk of biological species.

1960. The first list of endangered plants wasn't created until 1978. Also remember that while Landsat satellite monitoring of the Earth began in the 1970s, researchers paid a hefty price to obtain even a single specific image, praying that it wasn't too cloudy the day the image was taken. And the World Wide Web did not get started until 1990. It was not until 2008, when the entire Landsat archive was made available to the public, that researchers were able to study historical trends. But the real milestone in monitoring forest cover didn't come until 2013, when Matthew Hansen at the University of Maryland released the first global-scale forest data with a granular enough perspective to distinguish change at a sub-regional level. Knowing all of this only deepened my curiosity as to the rationale behind that first IUCN listing, the results of which stood for 20 years as the preeminent fact available on the species. So I began to investigate.

Many Species of Ebony

Before we start, the first thing to keep in mind is that "ebony" does not refer to a single species – more often than not the word is used as a

described species. And according to the Missouri Botanical Garden, there are perhaps another 140 to 155 species in Madagascar alone that still need to be described. All this said, it's important to note that the majority of these species are small to medium-size trees or even bush-like plants, and only a few are commercially traded. The list of places that produce commercially traded ebony species includes Madagascar, Mauritius, India, Sri Lanka and Western Africa. *Diospyros crassiflora* Hiern (a.k.a. West African ebony), the species that IUCN just moved from "Endangered" to "Vulnerable," grows in the Congo Basin – more technically, the Guineo-Congolian region. Most of these commercially traded species have the density and durability to withstand the considerable wear-and-tear of a stringed instrument fingerboard, such as a violin and cello, and are superbly good for holding metal frets in place at a precise height over time on a guitar.

The 1998 Evaluation of the Species

It turns out that the original decision to list West African ebony as "Endangered" was actually made in

decreased or potentially decreased by 50 to 80 percent. This was justified in the assessment by the statement: "Virtually all large trees of this species have been felled for the ebony wood, except perhaps in the most remote parts of its range."

That "50 to 80 percent in the last century" decrease seems curious in hindsight, especially with some additional historical context and research data. The broader ebony trade traces back to the ancient Egyptians, who brought ebony species to the Nile River region through tribute and trade "from the south," likely from the transition zone between the continent's northern Sahara and southern Savanna known as the Sahelian. Elsewhere, the historical record tells us that different ebony species were traded by Arab merchants from the northern coast of Madagascar as early as the year 800. On the Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius, ebony (*D. tessellaria*) was heavily exploited during the 18th and 19th centuries, but is now the most common and least threatened species on Mauritius. Sadly, the same cannot be said for ebony from Madagascar or ebony from Sri Lanka and India (*D. ebenum*), where

range and then analyze historical deforestation data over this area (or in my case call a bunch of people who do), the previously estimated loss of 50 to 80 percent of the region's ebony trees cannot be substantiated.

Improved Inventory Technology

More recently, using a combination of satellite data and field research, the Congo Basin Institute estimated in 2017 that there could be as many as 30 million ebony trees with a breast-height diameter of at least four inches (10 cm) scattered across Central West Africa. That's the good news, and part of the reason that IUCN saw fit to change the conservation status of *Diospyros crassiflora* Hiern. The reevaluation process also considered the fact that an active restoration initiative, i.e., the Taylor-funded Ebony Project, was underway. Ultimately they concluded that the overall population of mature trees either observed, estimated, inferred or suspected was not believed to have been reduced by 50 to 80 percent.

I'm heartened by recent scientific advancements in our understanding

of this species and thankful that IUCN moved its conservation status to "Vulnerable." The Red List is indeed the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of biological species, but that's a relative term. The exercise to analyze and understand life on Earth is far from complete. In many ways it's just beginning – in particular when it comes to plants.

I would add only that while the listing of West African ebony (*D. crassiflora* Hiern) as "Vulnerable" is an improved forecast, the status should not be taken lightly. Indeed, the fate of the world's remaining forests, and the individual species within them, should not be taken lightly. There are 7.7 billion people on the planet, all in search of food, fiber and fuel. If the forests that provide the things we use are not scientifically understood and well-managed, then many of these things will simply not be available for future generations. On the other hand, if we understand and value them, then maybe they will.

Scott Paul is Taylor's Director of Natural Resource Sustainability.

[Sustainability]

Ebony Project Updates



As our ongoing work to create a more sustainable ebony trade in Cameroon continues, we wanted to update readers on some notable events that took place there this past spring.

On March 16, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs Tibor Nagy visited the Crelicam sawmill co-owned by Taylor in Odza, Yaoundé, as part of a trip designed to promote stronger business ties between the United States and Cameroon. Assistant Secretary Nagy toured the mill and spoke to employees and management about the improved wood-processing capabilities at the mill. Crelicam's Director General, Matthew LeBreton, and Taylor's Director of Supply Chain, Charlie Redden, led the tour. Redden says the Assistant Secretary was impressed by the transfer of technology Taylor has brought to the mill, and by the level of training employees have been given to operate and maintain the mill's custom-built machinery.

"He also said that what we're doing is a perfect example of American business investment in Cameroon," Redden added. "The technology, safety and

security, contract adherence, and even the on-site kitchen we built are all things that he aspires to see in all American investment there."

Crelicam was the sole U.S. business visited by Assistant Secretary Nagy during his two-day trip to Cameroon. The U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé later tweeted about the Crelicam visit and Taylor's efforts to improve the ebony trade in Cameroon.

"This partnership responsibly harvests ebony and shows how U.S.-Cameroon trade can improve the economies of both our countries while also helping the environment," the embassy said.

Back in 2013, the U.S. Department of State formally recognized Taylor's work in Cameroon, awarding the company the Secretary of State's Award for Corporate Excellence (ACE).

An Ebony Planting Milestone

In April, when the early rains came to Cameroon, our Ebony Project initiative made history with the largest known planting of West African ebony trees

in Cameroon's Congo Basin region. Over the course of several weeks, members of five different Cameroonian communities collectively planted over 2,000 ebony trees and hundreds of fruit trees with assistance from members of the Congo Basin Institute (CBI) and Taylor Guitars.

According to Taylor's Director of Natural Resource Sustainability, Scott Paul, who was on hand, there was a sense of enthusiasm and accomplishment as teams of villagers of all ages pitched in to help carry the young ebony plants into a range of locations, including agroforestry settings and dense rainforest.

This marked our third year of ebony planting. Paul was pleased with the progress to date.

"The trees we planted last year and the year before are growing and doing well," he says. "Also growing is the capacity of several small community nurseries that the project supports, which are now producing new plants by vegetative propagation that will be ready next year."

This year's planting was covered by several media outlets including the BBC World Service and National Geographic.

The planting initiative builds upon one of the underlying goals of the Ebony Project: to learn more about ebony ecology, since very little was previously known. Since 2016 Bob Taylor has privately funded the research project with CBI, which has since produced groundbreaking insights about ebony, including the most accurate estimates of the size and scope of ebony's native range, the roles played by insects in pollinating the ebony flower and mammals in distributing the ebony seed, and other effective methods of propagation.

The research findings were combined with an innovative community-based agroforestry program, which includes the planting of a number of locally used fruit trees along with ebony. The fruit crops provide communities with an immediate yield in terms of food and profit (they can sell surplus fruit), while the young ebony trees essentially grow in the background. After some basic care from the communities to help the ebony trees establish in the first years after being planted, they will be self-sufficient.

In the three years since the program has begun, more than 4,500 West African ebony plants have been planted in conjunction with the program, along with fruit and medicinal trees. Taylor and CBI are on track to surpass their larger goal of planting 15,000 ebony trees.



Clockwise from top left: U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs Tibor Nagy with Crelicam employees at the mill; ebony plants in one of the community-based nurseries; an ebony sapling is planted in the forest; Taylor's Scott Paul (background) with Dr. Vincent Deblauwe (left) from the Congo Basin Institute and members of a community participating in the ebony planting initiative. (Photos above by Chris Sorenson.)

Soundings

Notes From NAMM

The four-day **Winter NAMM Show** (Jan. 24-27) packed quite a musical punch inside the Anaheim Convention Center as makers of musical instruments and related products gathered to showcase their new wares to retailers, musicians, the media and other industry professionals.

Our big reveal at this year's show, the Grand Pacific, drew a steady crowd, while our first Grand Concert guitars outfitted with V-Class bracing also made their much-anticipated debut. Between the new models, the healthy representation of our 2019 line, and a wall of gorgeous custom guitars, our main showroom was steadily bustling with players vying for quality time with our latest instruments.

Because NAMM isn't officially open to the public, each year our marketing team finds ways to make our corner of the show accessible to people around the globe. Our crew built a video set inside our dealer room, where we broadcast live video via social media and recorded guitar demos, interviews and performances. Meanwhile, across the street in a hotel hospitality suite, another video team captured initial reactions to the Grand Pacific from an array of artists. Because we wanted to get their true first impressions, we encouraged the artists to play the guitars before we shared information about the design philosophy behind them.

Singer-songwriter and GRAMMY-nominated guitarist **Zane Carney** (John Mayer, Avril Lavigne) played some jazzy runs and was impressed by the full-bodied character of the upper register notes. He said it reminded him of something jazz guitarist Pat Metheny had once mentioned at a guitar clinic.

"He was talking about balance on the fretboard, where the top notes maintain that midrange, and a lot of times the high strings on an acoustic don't," Carney said. "It almost feels like there's some inspiration from archtops on this. I don't know if that's crazy, but it feels like that because a lot of acoustics, for me, are a bit of a bummer...I'll only sing with them, and then I'll go to my jazz guitar to improvise. But I could see this being a one-stop shop."

Carney liked the rosewood Builder's Edition **717**.

"It's a more pronounced midrange, which is really cool, especially for strumming," he said. "It also has a teeny bit of that small-body sound, like that John Lennon-y boxy thing, but it's accentuated in that midrange in a really nice way...surrounded by a lot of low and top end."

Genre-bending guitarist **Alex Skolnick**, whose eclectic fretwork has run the gamut from thrash metal with the band Testament to experimental jazz-rock to acoustic world music, compared our Builder's Edition **517** and **717**.

"Each wood brings out different types of playing," he said. "Somehow the mahogany brings out more of the slower, atmospheric things, and with the rosewood, I tend to get more into faster grooves."

He was also impressed by the rich sustain.

"It's got that resonance that's really hard to capture," he said, strumming a single chord and letting it ring out. "Here it is much later; I still feel it. This is what you look for when you shop for a guitar. That resonance stays with you. I almost still feel it – I realize it's kind of *Spinal Tap*. It's still playing [laughs]."

Champion flatpicker **Scott Fore** applied his blazing chops and liked the guitar's articulation.

"Wow, that's all I can say," he reacted. "When you hit those bass notes, there's such clarity there...[plays a run]...and it doesn't have some of that woofiness sometimes you get in the low mids. It's just clear and clean everywhere...It's got that thing that you look for in a guitar."

Back in the Taylor showcase room, our official Taylor performance lineup featured a mix of rising stars and longtime Taylor players over three days, many of whom played the new Grand Pacific on stage. Day one led with a beautiful set from Mexican indie artist **El David Aguilar** (who had recently earned four Latin GRAMMY award nominations) on a Builder's Edition **517e**, followed by LA rockers **Badflower** and award-winning Canadian pop songstress **Lights**. On day two, soulful singer-songwriter/actress **Sara Niemietz** and Emmy-winning composer and guitarist **Snuffy Walden** showed off their fantastic



Alex Skolnick

musical chemistry, followed by a smoking set of jazz-rock from the **Molly Miller Trio** and then the globally-inspired sounds of **Bambaata Marley**. Day three brought an Americana vibe with stellar appearances by Nashville guitar wizard **Daniel Donato**, who was joined by fellow guitar slinger/vocalist **Zane Carney**; blazing bluegrass pickers **Rob Ickes** and **Trey Hensley** (who blew minds with an epic cover of the Grateful Dead's "Friend of the Devil"); and finally, Jake Smith, a.k.a. **The White Buffalo**, whose brawny set closed out our performances with pummeling pub-rock swagger.



Nashville Neighbor

In honor of this July's Summer NAMM Show in Nashville, Tennessee, we thought we'd share an update on Taylor's permanent presence in Music City. Last fall we welcomed **Devin Malone**, a Nashville-based multi-instrumentalist, to our artist relations team as our rep there, and he's proved to be a valuable liaison between Taylor and Nashville's music community. Beyond understanding the realities of being a working musician in Nashville, Malone is knowledgeable, friendly and widely respected around town, and has played a big role in expanding our ability to serve the music community.

Working closely with Taylor Director of Artist Relations Tim Godwin and members of our marketing team, Malone recently helped upgrade our artist showroom within Nashville's Soundcheck rehearsal complex to feature a more diversified selection of Taylor models. This has resonated with musicians who've visited the showroom.

"Honestly, the most consistent thing about the many artist visits has been the wide range of personal preferences," Malone says. "It's an undeniable validation of having a broad model selection, including different body shapes and wood combinations."

The arrival of Taylor's V-Class guitars, including the new Grand Pacific models, has further underscored Malone's point.

"It's been entertaining to have a scenario where two players visit and one doesn't care for the 517 but loves the 717, and vice-versa for the other

person," he says. "Other folks have been more drawn to the new V-Class Grand Concert or Grand Auditorium guitars. It really shows the value of having the Nashville showroom set up to help our artists find their fit."

The Grand Pacific in particular, Malone says, has really grabbed people's attention, and in some cases, caused them to reconsider their previous assessments of the Taylor sound.

"The overall reactions have been incredibly positive," he shares. "The consistent response has been, 'I've never heard a Taylor like this! I've seen the look on quite a few faces, as though they're afraid they've insulted the company by saying, 'This doesn't sound like a Taylor!' My reply has been the same each time – why would we make a new guitar if it sounds like our old guitars? It leads to great discussions of exactly what they believe Taylors sound like, and then we dig into other guitars in the showroom. I get to show them the breadth of options in the line while still demonstrating the consistent build quality and attention to detail that makes a Taylor feel and sound like a Taylor."

Malone predicts the Grand Pacific will be embraced more broadly over time as more artists get a chance to play the guitars.

"It does harken back in its overall voice," he says. "It offers a familiarity of sound that a lot of Nashville players desire – packaged with those signature Taylor qualities that make the guitars such reliable instruments."

Exploring the Pacific

Multiple GRAMMY-winning singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and activist **Ben Harper** recently discovered our new Grand Pacific and was drawn to its inviting musicality. Harper says his criteria for evaluating an acoustic guitar for the first time are "sound, feel and potential."

"Does this feel like a guitar that I can grow with?" he told our marketing team's Jay Parkin during a recent interview. "I want a guitar that I'll take off-stage and bring home, take to my house, stand it on a stand in my house, and it's the same guitar."

A Southern California native who grew up immersed in folk, blues and other roots music while hanging around his grandparents' music store in the town of Claremont, Harper's own musical journey has been a passionate synthesis of roots-music influences from around the world. Over the years he has drawn inspiration from collaborating with others, from touring with Taj Mahal as a teenager to the 2018 album *No Mercy in This Land* last year with blues harmonica player Charlie Musselwhite. Harper's latest project is a new studio album with iconic gospel/R&B singer Mavis Staples, *We Get By* (released in May), featuring 11 tracks he wrote and produced.

In April, Harper appeared on the ABC TV show *American Idol*, performing a duet with contestant Alejandro Aranda as part of an "All-Star Duet" theme. As it turns out, Aranda is from a town near Harper's family's music store, and Harper says he remembers hearing him play in the store. Harper played his **717e**, while Aranda played his **110e**.

Keep an eye on Taylor's website and social channels in the near future – we'll be sharing more of Harper's story soon.

Soundings

continued



Photo: Getty Images

Props For Perry

It's hard to overstate the creative impact that acclaimed singer-songwriter, musician, multi-platinum producer and activist **Linda Perry** has had on the pop music landscape in general, and women artists in particular. After her breakout work as a songwriter and singer with 4 Non Blondes in the early '90s, Perry went on to collaborate with some of pop music's most successful artists, writing and producing songs with P!nk, Christina Aguilera, Alicia Keys, Britney Spears, Gwen Stefani, Adele and others. Earlier this year Perry was among the GRAMMY Award nominees for Producer of the Year, in the Non-Classical category, making her the first female producer since 2004 to earn that distinction. All the artists she was nominated for producing are on the We Are Hear record label/publishing house/production company she co-founded, home to Taylor artist Beatie Wolfe, Macy Gray, Angel Haze and Willa Amai. Back in February, Perry kicked off GRAMMY week by speaking at the GRAMMY Museum, emphasizing the value of community, creativity, respecting one's opportunities, and writing great songs. She also participated in the festivities to honor musical trailblazer **Dolly Parton** as the 2019 MusiCares Person of the

Year. Perry had worked closely with Parton as producer of the soundtrack to the film *Dumplin'*, which features Parton's songs re-recorded as duets with the likes of Alison Krauss, Miranda Lambert, Sia and Mavis Staples. (The lead single "Girl in the Movies" was nominated for Best Original Song at the 2019 Golden Globe and Critic's Choice Awards.)

Perry also performed with Parton at several events, including the MusiCares gala and the GRAMMY awards. Her newest musical accomplice is a sunburst-top Grand Pacific **717**, which she had on hand for the performances. Perry first heard the Grand Pacific while working with songwriter/producer/guitarist **David Saw (517e)** on the *Dumplin'* project, and later invited Taylor Director of Artist Relations Tim Godwin to bring our Builder's Edition Grand Pacific models for her to audition in her studio. Perry already had another favored acoustic in her guitar arsenal that the Taylor had to compete against, and after a head-to-head shootout, the rosewood 717 prevailed.

The guitar is likely to make another appearance in late June – the GRAMMY Museum has named Perry as the special honoree for their annual gala in Los Angeles, *Linda Perry & Friends: A Night at the GRAMMY Museum*.

Remembering Taylor Friends

We want to acknowledge the recent passing of two members of the extended Taylor family. **Erika Luckett** was a wonderful musician and extraordinary person, whose spirit instantly brightened any room she entered. An internationally acclaimed composer, performing musician and educator, Luckett's expansive body of work ranged from solo albums to musical scores for film, theater and television (earning an Academy Award nomination and two Emmy Awards along the way) to the music she created and performed with her partner, Lisa Ferraro.

Being born in Mexico and raised in Venezuela and Brazil exposed Luckett to the rich sounds and rhythms of different cultures, which she absorbed and artfully rechanneled into her own brand of world fusion, made more exotic through her ability to

sing in multiple languages. She was also a captivating performer and an inventive guitar player (she owned several Taylors and played some of our showcase events over the years), whose percussive techniques brought another level of seductive rhythmic texture to her songs.

Luckett wrote an inspiring story for *Wood&Steel* (summer 2013) about the healing power of music, drawing from her own life-threatening health challenges. In the years that followed, she and Ferraro traveled the country playing concerts and presenting retreats and workshops on the transformational effects of music and creativity as part of the healing process. To learn more about Luckett and explore her music, visit lisaandrika.com.

We also said goodbye to **Charlene Knode**, who, along with her husband, Emory Knode, owned and managed the Appalachian Bluegrass Shoppe in Catonsville, Maryland. As Taylor

co-founder/CEO Kurt Listug remembers, the support of Charlene and Emory helped expand Taylor's footprint in that part of the country starting in the mid-'80s.

"Emory and Charlene really believed in our guitars and in us in the early days," he says. "They got behind us and told our story to all their

customers, and were a heavy influencer in their part of the world, helping people discover Taylor. They believed in us when a lot of people didn't, and it's because of people like Emory and Charlene that we made it through those early lean years and were able to survive and evolve into the company we are today."

Veteran Taylor sales manager (and former customer service manager) Zach Arntz was our sales rep for Appalachian Bluegrass for several years. He had gotten to know Emory well during his time in customer service, and later worked closely with Charlene on the sales side since she handled the purchasing.

"We would talk once a week to go over sales and inventory planning," Zach says. "She was strong-willed and determined. She helped me become a better representative for Taylor."

Over the years Zach developed a closer friendship with Emory and Charlene and their family.

"Since I lived in San Diego, their store became my East Coast base," he recalls. "I could count on them to ship guitars or hold repair tools, and it was such a blessing to have that kind of trust with them. Some of my best sales events happened at their store. One weekend we sold over 20 guitars. Having their high-quality repair department as a resource at that store was a major factor. Whether selling guitars or just having dinner at the local burger place, it was always a pleasure to hang with Charlene and Emory."



Erika Luckett
Photo: E. Pedersen

Cuban-Canadian Connection

Award-winning Cuban-Canadian singer-songwriter **Alex Cuba** has been putting his sunburst-top **716e** to good use as he performs new songs from his forthcoming album. Cuba's latest single, "Ciudad Hembra (La Habana)," is a soulful pop duet with Cuban author/composer/singer Kelvis Ochoa. Cuba's 716e, which he says has "the perfect balance between highs, mids and lows," is prominently featured in the official video for the song. Cuba is a four-time Latin GRAMMY winner, has won two Canadian Juno Awards (for World Music Album of the Year), and his 2017 album *Lo Único Constante* was nominated for a GRAMMY in the Best Latin Pop Album category. Back in February, Cuba performed at the Folk Alliance Conference in Montreal and participated in a panel discussion on the topic of "How to Make an Award-Winning Song," a subject he clearly knows well.



Beyond writing and performing his own material, Cuba is a prolific collaborator with other artists. In 2018 he joined other Canadian artists to record an album of Harry Belafonte cover songs called *We Love Belafonte*, and he

recently recorded songs with several other Latin American singer-songwriters. Cuba will be performing at several music festivals throughout the summer, and then touring the U.S. and Canada in the fall.



The Craft

Homegrown

How guitar design is influenced by the surrounding environment

Here in our guitar shop, spring welcomes what I describe as our development season. Just like wildflower seeds waiting for a rain shower to sprout, spring is a time when new ideas waiting in notebooks on the back of the workbench sprout to life and start growing, eventually leafing out into something more tangible. With the helpful talents of our development team, they are up-planted and watered, eventually maturing into new musical voices for guitar players to explore.

During our development season, the projects on my bench reveal their influences like a Polaroid photo of their time. One particular design trait that stands out to me is how the physical location of a guitar's construction permeates an instrument's genes. On one hand, it seems logical that work like guitar making, or any artwork for that matter, could take place in any location and see largely the same result. And yet reality doesn't seem to pay much attention to that notion. Instead, every aspect of life is full of objects, art, instruments, even songs whose composition was dictated by their surroundings.

The influence of physical location can come in different forms — some tangible, like locally available materials; others less easily defined, like the aesthetic of a region. From my perspective, those tangible aspects of a design, like easily listed ingredients, are often outweighed by the maker's frame of mind or experience. Here on California's West Coast, there tends to be a creative disposition and culture open to fresh ideas and freedom from convention. For that reason, we've witnessed innovations take shape across industry and the arts in this region.

That said, the practical realities of making things closely follow a maker's outlook. Once an idea is ready to sprout from mere concept into physical reality, the next decision is to identify the physical materials it's formed from.

Within the music world, the story behind the materials our instruments are constructed from has become an epic saga. Centuries ago, string instrument makers would look around at the trees near them, choose the ones that best suited their purposes, and craft their instruments from the wood at hand. The reality is the logging and tim-

ber world is as much a transportation industry as it is a material industry. Logs and lumber are difficult to move — ask anyone who has tied a Christmas tree to the top of their car or wedged a sheet of plywood into the back of a van. Centuries ago, transportation of timber was far more difficult, often impossible compared to the merely arduous task it is now. As a result, makers would craft instruments not only influenced by the aesthetic or mindset of their region, but *literally built* from their physical surroundings, since those were the materials at hand. As time and discovery continued through generations, materials from farther and farther reaches of the globe were introduced. These woods were embraced because they might have a wonderful characteristic for some component, or just as often, to showcase the exotic excitement of some faraway land. In a way, instrument makers became like spice traders, introducing new ingredients into familiar recipes.

As it goes with human nature's desire for ever more, our love of exotic materials has driven us around the world searching under every rock,

beyond every stream, and around every bend looking for more exciting ingredients until one day we find ourselves walking back down the familiar streets of home — the region that first shaped us and our ideas. I've come to understand that part of the wonder of traveling is to return and see your home with fresh eyes and appreciate its beauty in a new way. As guitar makers, we're again looking around at what is right beside us with fresh eyes.

One local avenue we've been exploring lately is urban forestry. Throughout cities and towns everywhere, trees have been planted for shade, beauty, windbreaks and other reasons. Like all living things, each of these trees reaches an end-of-life phase, at which point they are removed and replaced with young upstarts. Of the hundreds of thousands of trees removed and replaced, most are simply shredded and spread on the ground to slowly return to the soil or cut into firewood. Following in the footsteps of builders long past, we've begun to take a new look at these local trees and wonder what stories they would tell if we gave them a chance to sing.

We have experience with and fondness for many woods we've discovered around the world, and love working with them as the treasures they are in the music world. We'll continue to use them, plant them, propagate them, and protect them. In some form of poetic irony, we'll also return to looking around our homes for materials to craft our guitars from as instrument makers did centuries ago.

This development season is a particularly rich one, filled with an abundance of new ideas and thoughts, some of which have been resting dormant for years, waiting for just the right time to sprout into new instruments. They'll be built with materials from nearby, and from the far reaches of the world. Some, like our Grand Pacific guitars, will feel like walking down a familiar musical street and experiencing it with fresh eyes and ears. Others are charting musical paths in new directions, all the while remembering who we are and where we're from, both as musicians and makers.

— Andy Powers
Master Guitar Designer

“Following in the footsteps of builders long past, we’ve begun to take a new look at local trees and wonder what stories they would tell if we gave them a chance to sing.”

The Taylor Line by Series

A snapshot of our series framework, tonewood pairings, and current models. For complete details, including photos and specifications, visit taylorguitars.com.



PS14ce

Presentation Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Figured Blackwood
Top: Adirondack Spruce or Sinker Redwood

Available Models

PS12ce, PS12ce 12-Fret, PS14ce

800 Deluxe Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

812ce 12-Fret DLX, 812ce DLX, 814ce DLX



814ce DLX

812ce DLX
12-Fret



Bambaata Marley, 814ce

800 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

812e, 812ce, 812ce-N, 812ce 12-Fret, 814ce

Koa Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Hawaiian Koa
Top: Hawaiian Koa or Torrefied Sitka Spruce (Builder's Edition)

Available Models

K22ce, K22ce 12-Fret, Builder's Edition K14ce, Builder's Edition K24ce, K24ce



Builder's Edition K14ce

700 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Lutz Spruce or Torrefied Sitka Spruce (Builder's Edition)

Available Models

712ce, 712ce-N, 712e 12-Fret, 712ce 12-Fret, 714ce, 714ce-N, Builder's Edition 717, Builder's Edition 717e



Builder's
Edition
717e
Natural

714ce



914ce

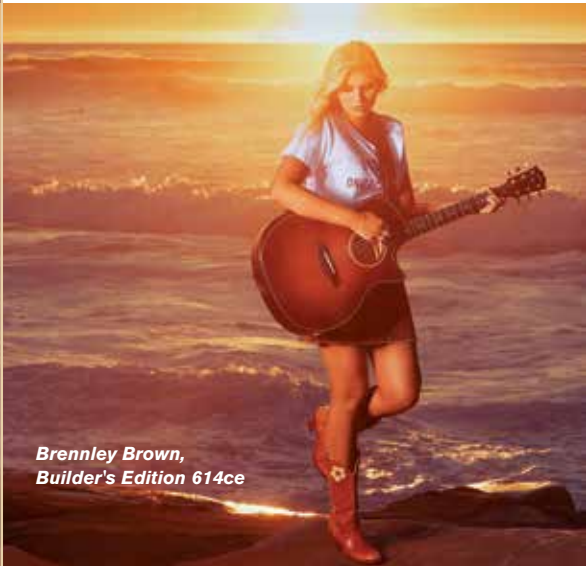
900 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

912ce, 912ce 12-Fret, 914ce



Brennley Brown,
Builder's Edition 614ce

600 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Figured Big Leaf Maple
Top: Torrefied Sitka Spruce

Available Models

612ce, 612ce 12-Fret, 614ce, Builder's Edition 614ce, Builder's Edition 614ce Wild Honey Burst

500 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Tropical Mahogany
Top: Mahogany, Lutz Spruce (GS), Cedar (GC, GA) or Torrefied Sitka Spruce (Builder's Edition)

Available Models

512ce, 512ce 12-Fret, 522ce, 522e 12-Fret, 522ce 12-Fret, 552ce, 562ce, 514ce, 524ce, Builder's Edition 517, Builder's Edition 517e



100 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Walnut
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

110ce, 110e, 114ce, 114ce-N, 114e, 150e



T5z

Specifications

Body: Sapele (Hollowbody)
Top: Koa (Custom), Figured Maple (Pro), Spruce (Standard) or Mahogany (Classic)
Electronics: Proprietary 3-pickup configuration (magnetic acoustic body sensor, concealed neck humbucker, visible bridge humbucker), 5-way switching, onboard tone controls



Available Models

T5z Custom, T5z-12 Custom, T5z Pro (Tobacco Sunburst, Molasses Sunburst, Pacific Blue, Borrego Red, Gaslamp Black), T5z Standard (Black, Tobacco Sunburst, Honey Sunburst), T5z Classic, T5z-12 Classic, T5z Classic DLX

400 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Ovangkol or Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

412e-R, 412ce, 412ce-R, 414ce, 414ce-R



Academy Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Sapele
Top: Sitka Spruce or Lutz Spruce (Nylon)

Available Models

Academy 10, Academy 10e, Academy 12, Academy 12e, Academy 12-N, Academy 12e-N



T3

Specifications

Body: Sapele (Semi-Hollowbody)
Top: Figured Maple
Electronics: Proprietary high-definition humbuckers (optional vintage alnicos), 3-way switching, onboard tone controls, and coil-splitting capability



Available Models

T3 (stoptail bridge), T3/B (Bigsby vibrato tailpiece)

To see our full range of top options, color finishes, and other appointments for each series, visit taylorguitars.com.

200 Deluxe & 200 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Koa, Rosewood or Maple (BLK Model)
Top: Sitka Spruce or Koa

Available Models

214ce, 214ce DLX, 214ce-BLK DLX, 214ce-SB DLX, 214ce-K DLX, 224ce-K DLX



Baby Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Sapele
Top: Sitka Spruce or Mahogany

Available Models

BT1, BT2 (Mahogany Top), TSBTe (Taylor Swift Model), BBT (Big Baby)



300 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Sapele (Spruce Top) or Blackwood (Mahogany Top)
Top: Sitka Spruce or Mahogany

Available Models

312ce, 312ce-N, 312ce 12-Fret, 322e, 322ce, 322e 12-Fret, 322ce 12-Fret, 352ce, 362ce, 314, 314ce, 324e, 324ce, 317, 317e

GS Mini GS Mini Bass

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Sapele, Koa, Walnut or Maple
Top: Sitka Spruce, Mahogany or Koa

Available Models

GS Mini, GS Mini-e Mahogany, GS Mini-e Koa, GS Mini-e Walnut, GS Mini-e Bass, GS Mini-e Maple Bass



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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 Taylor Accessories

We want to help you enjoy your guitars to the fullest. That's why we've developed a new line of premium Taylor accessories and guitar care products. If you're looking to add custom touches to your guitars, we offer an array of tuner upgrade options along with a rich selection of high-quality Taylor-branded guitar straps. New performance accessories include proprietary picks that will help you broaden your tonal palette (see page 11), plus an innovative capo. And to help you keep your guitars in top condition, we're pleased to offer several excellent new products.

You'll find these new Taylor products at authorized Taylor dealers and in our online TaylorWare store at taylorguitars.com.

Guitar Straps

Made in North America, our new line of premium guitar straps features a range of all-natural materials that include genuine leather, suede and natural cotton textures, in a variety of colors and designs that complement the aesthetic diversity of the Taylor line. Strap widths include 2-inch, 2-1/2-inch, and 3-inch options, and all are slotted to easily fit the tail-end strap pin on a Taylor guitar. Choose from series-specific styles with embossed inlay motifs and other designs that will complement an array of models. Each strap is comfortable, durable and uniquely Taylor, ensuring that you'll wear your guitar with renewed pride.



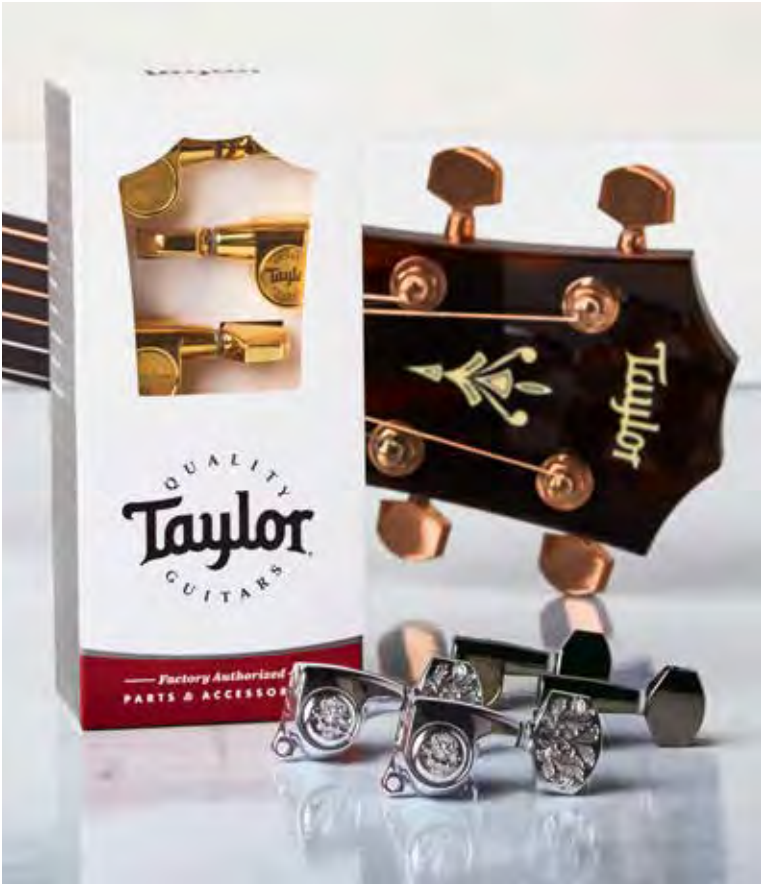


Capos

Our new capo provides a high-performance, easy-to-use alternative to the common spring-loaded design, which often places uneven tension on the guitar strings, resulting in sour notes and chords. Made in the U.S., the capo is curved to match the contour of a Taylor neck, and because the yoke wraps all the way around, it applies even pressure on all the strings to offer unmatched tuning stability and pitch consistency. The locking gate design features a quick release and incorporates side bumpers that protect the neck when you slide the capo to a different position. The capo can be conveniently stored behind the nut when not in use. Choose from two widths, 6-string or 12-string/nylon-string, in either a bright nickel or black nickel finish.

Guitar Care Products

Our guitar-friendly care products will help you polish, clean and condition your guitar to keep it in great condition. Our new Satin Finish Guitar Cleaner is the first of its kind, and the ultimate product to preserve the original satin sheen. The wax-free formula removes residue from finger oils without leaving silicone or waxy residue. Our new Premium Guitar Polish enhances the luster of your high-gloss guitar. Our Fretboard Conditioner cleans and nourishes your fretboard, leaving it looking new, playing great, and feeling smooth. We also have two new polish cloths – a suede microfiber version that folds up small to fit in your case compartment, and our premium plush microfiber towel.



Tuners

With our new line of genuine Taylor replacement hardware, you can easily customize the look and feel of your guitar. If you have a 100 or 200 Series guitar, you might consider upgrading your 14:1 gear ratio to a tuner with an 18:1 ratio. Choose from different plating finishes, including satin black, polished gold, polished nickel, and smoked nickel. (It's easy to change the tuners yourself.) Premium options include Gotoh tuners (18:1 or 21:1) in Antique Gold or Antique Chrome (professional installation recommended), or for guitars that already feature Gotoh tuners (800 DLX Series and up), you can upgrade to beautifully engraved Gotoh luxury edition tuners (quantities are limited).



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Wood&Steel

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Shimmer Ring

A rosette of intensely colored paua abalone adds a vibrant flourish to this dark-hued all-blackwood 12-fret Grand Concert. A charcoal-black stain, satin finish, and black binding emphasize a dusky vintage aesthetic over blackwood's deep, ribbon-like grain pattern. Tonally, players can expect a response similar to an all-mahogany guitar – dry, woody and warm – with additional richness and sweetness in the midrange. It's one of an assortment of custom models specially designed for our dealer network. To inquire about availability, contact your local Taylor dealer. (Custom guitar #11223)

