

Wood & Steel

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GT[™]

**SMALLER SIZE.
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SERIOUS FUN.**

The American
Dream Series

New:
Grand Symphony 326ce

How to Record
an Acoustic Guitar

Letters

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12-String Love

Today I picked up my new Builder's Edition 652ce WHB. It's a fantastic guitar. Previously, I had a 562ce, and it had been the best 12-string ever. But this 652ce is really something! Thanks, Andy, you really did a great job putting this guitar together.

John Carter

Wood&Steel Online

There is really a special feeling when I get a new print issue of *Wood&Steel* in my mailbox. I usually carry it around with me and read it cover to cover. Today I was on your website and discovered a new electronic version of your magazine: 2020 Issue 2. I couldn't help but click on it to explore what is new in the wonderful world of Taylor!

So, with this digital copy, I quickly checked out a real go-to section for me: "Ask Bob." This absolutely blew me away! Not only because Bob does such a wonderful job of explaining his response to the bearclaw question, but because additional pictures and video from the supplier made a world of difference for an easy-to-understand explanation. Home run! Use this technology going forward and it will continue to help educate all of us!

Bart Marshel
Goodyear, Arizona

Ed. Note: Glad you enjoyed it, Bart. Incidentally, Bob answers more questions via video in the digital edition of this issue.

All in the Details

On the "Strings and Picks" episode of *Taylor Primetime*, Andy Powers was asked why Taylor guitars were shipped with Elixir Strings. Part of Andy's reply was that by using a coated string (like Elixir), they knew the guitars would arrive at a dealer with good-sounding strings on the guitar. I just wanted to tell you how good that idea is. Two years ago, I went to Guitar Center in Tyler, Texas, with my mind made up that I was going to buy [another guitar brand]. I had done my research and was comfortable with what I had learned about the "low-end" models. When I got to the store and found the model I was interested in, I picked it up and strummed a chord... and it sounded like crap. I looked at the guitar and saw that the strings were nasty and worn. So much for that idea. I then played every guitar (under \$1,250) in the store looking for something to fill my need. Then I spotted the Taylor 110ce and gave it a go. It rang like a bell. I had never even considered a Taylor until that moment. Fresh strings are the reason that guitar sold that day. That's what I like about Taylor – attention to detail.

Marshall Endsley
Athens, Texas

Code Name: Project Ebony

Ed. Note: This letter is from a long-time Taylor owner and acquaintance of Bob Taylor. The two have emailed back and forth over the years.

Bob, I wanted to share something I thought you would get a kick out of. As you may recall, I work in corporate strategy for Mitsubishi Chemical, focused on our long-term planning and mergers/acquisitions. Last week we announced our latest acquisition, a carbon fiber recycling company in Germany. When we work on acquisition projects, we always use an internal code name to avoid using the company's real name. In this case, the code name was "Project Ebony," and you were the inspiration. I have admired the work you are doing in Cameroon on the conservation and responsible use of ebony since you made your first investment there. I remember reading about the huge

percentage of ebony that ends up as waste because it's not perfectly black, and your conviction to use your market power to change this.

The carbon fiber world is in the same situation. About 30 percent of the carbon fiber that is manufactured globally ends up as waste and generally goes to landfills because people don't have access to or confidence in recycled carbon fiber. I decided three years ago that this is a big company problem that only someone with the proper market power can solve, and I set out to do something about it. We have since made a number of investments in establishing a complete supply chain for this waste material so we can give it a second life, and Project Ebony was the latest move in this direction. We have built a new factory in Mesa, Arizona, that will make compounds with recycled fiber, and are currently building a new facility in Germany that will use it to make large, stiff panels for automotive and consumer electronics. We aren't there yet, but we will get there, and it will be the crowning achievement of my career.

When my Japanese colleagues asked why I called it "Project Ebony," I explained your work with ebony and how you used your company's brand reputation and market power to make a difference. I wanted to share this with you to let you know that your admirable work is cascading into some unexpected areas – something you should be very proud of indeed. Thanks for the inspiration, and keep up the good work!

Ron Denoo

Bob replies: Ron, what a fantastic program you've started. It's wonderful to have vision and position to make such initiatives come to pass. Good on you. And thank you for informing me that my work added a little inspiration for your work. I refer to mine as demonstration projects. I tell our team and the press that while we can't change the world with the small size of our projects, we can perhaps inspire bigger, better, more capable companies to follow suit in their own projects. That's where the real impact happens! And I always say that things happen because some person wants them to happen. So this story from you is another proof of the concept that we influenced something good. Thanks, my friend. It puts wind in my sails.

Birthday Gift

Today my guitar had its 15th birthday. On July 20, 2005, my 714ce began its trip from the factory floor in El Cajon to my home in University City [in San Diego]. Not a great distance, as I think of the 160,000 guitars that Taylor cre-

ated last year and all the corners of the world they must have touched. But UC was a good place for that guitar to land.

A good guitar is like a birthday gift, and that's exactly how I feel each day when I take my 714ce from its case. Like unwrapping a gift only better, since I'm always pleased with what I find: lovely, understated design, beautiful materials, impeccable fit and finish.

The tone of the Engelmann spruce top and Indian rosewood back and sides has matured, but it still has the qualities that appealed to me at the start. The Engelmann is warm but not cloying, and the overtones are lovely under a clear, fundamental tone across the musical range. I've considered replacing this guitar, but in multiple head-to-head comparisons, I've never found anything more pleasing to my ear or as versatile.

As a guitar player, I'm still a novice, let's say advanced intermediate, in fingerstyle. I also pick and strum, and this guitar sounds great in each of those styles. I'm pleased to say that I continue to improve (shout-out to Mark Bacilla, my terrific teacher). And again, like unwrapping a gift, I'm increasingly able to draw out more of this guitar's beautiful sound.

I've read about your history, and it's fun for me to draw the line from your high school industrial arts background to the guitar in my hands. It makes you a part of my musical endeavor, and so it seems natural, on my guitar's birthday, to write you this fan letter. Thanks very much to you and the Taylor team, and my best wishes for your continued success.

Harry Eisner
San Diego, California

House Concert

My son, Uriah, and I were stuck home on quarantine for 10 days, and we spent countless hours playing guitar. That kid has become addicted to the guitar. I swear, he can hear me start to play from across the house and he'll come running with his guitar in hand. It's been a blast.

Chris Cassidy

Explore Wood&Steel Online

If you're a *Wood&Steel* subscriber and wonder why you never received a mid-year print edition in June or July, it's because we didn't print one. Instead, we published it in a new digital format, which you can access at woodandsteel.taylorguitars.com.

As we look ahead, we plan to continue publishing *Wood&Steel* three times a year. Our mid-year edition will be exclusively digital, while the other two, including our early-year product guide issue, will be produced both as print and digital publications. As a Taylor owner, you'll have the option to receive both, or a digital-only format for all three issues if you prefer.

We love the tangibility of a printed magazine and know many of you do too. We're also excited to leverage the latest digital tools and content platforms to give you a more immersive Taylor experience. For example, the digital version of this issue includes video demos of the guitars we showcase, including our new GT model and our new American Dream Series. We've also expanded regular features like Ask Bob and Soundings with additional video content. To create a bridge between the print and digital editions, you'll see QR codes placed within several stories in this issue. Just scan the code with your smartphone and it will take you to the related piece of content.

We invite you to explore our digital *Wood&Steel* experience and let us know what you think.

— Jim Kirlin, Editor



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Fighting the Good Fight

It's anything but business as usual at Taylor as we continue to adapt to a changing world.

This has been a year of extremes, and the last six months have felt more like six years have passed! These have been the most disruptive and uncertain times we've experienced since 9/11. In March, our El Cajon facilities were forced to close, followed a few weeks later by our facilities in Tecate. We were facing the fight of our lives, a fight for our survival.

We brainstormed, and Bob had the bright idea to speak with our local government officials and seek their blessings to keep skeleton crews in place in order to continue shipping guitars and developing new products. They enthusiastically supported us. We felt it was important to fast-track the development and release of new guitars we'd planned because we would definitely need them as soon as we were able to resume production. And it was imperative that we continue shipping guitars as they were ordered so we would have future income.

With the help of the "Taylor Days" promotion we launched in March, we had a strong April and May in terms of shipping guitars, though our factory operations remained suspended until late May. As of early June, we had no idea what would happen next. This successful promotion had ended, and we'd depleted our inventory. We had

just started making guitars again, but at a greatly reduced level.

Then as we got into June, we saw how the world was changing. People were working from home if they were able, and taking up healthy hobbies like playing the guitar. We started having bigger and bigger weeks in terms of orders received from our dealers, as our guitars were selling so quickly. Our manufacturing folks pulled out all the stops and worked their magic to make as many of the guitars being ordered as possible. This continued right through June and July, when we had the two biggest months in a row in terms of orders received, in the history of the company. By the time we got into August, we had sold out much of our production well into Q1 of 2021. The future is looking bright again, in terms of having a healthy guitar market.

Our work itself has changed dramatically, and I don't foresee it returning to how it was pre-pandemic. Most of our sales, marketing and finance staff has been working from home since March, although people are starting to go back into the office a few days per week. We've made great use of online meeting applications to have virtual meetings that used to be in person. We've definitely become more productive with our time, and we're not

traveling to conduct business meetings either. This has really changed how we see our ability to stay connected with the business but not be tied to our work locations. On the other hand, we miss the social aspects of seeing our co-workers.

Making guitars while maintaining a clean, safe environment and providing for social distancing is a much bigger challenge, but we're having success. We've recently reorganized work shifts at our factory in Tecate to maintain safety protocols, keeping people more spread out. It will take some time before we're able to reach our pre-pandemic production levels, but we're on a good path with a solid plan.

Undoubtedly the biggest positive we've gained from living through this has been the incredible teamwork from us all pulling together and working hard to survive and succeed. We're all tremendously grateful for each other's efforts and contributions, and of course the enthusiastic support of the extended Taylor community around the world. We wish you a safe remainder of the year. Thank you!

— Kurt Listug, CEO

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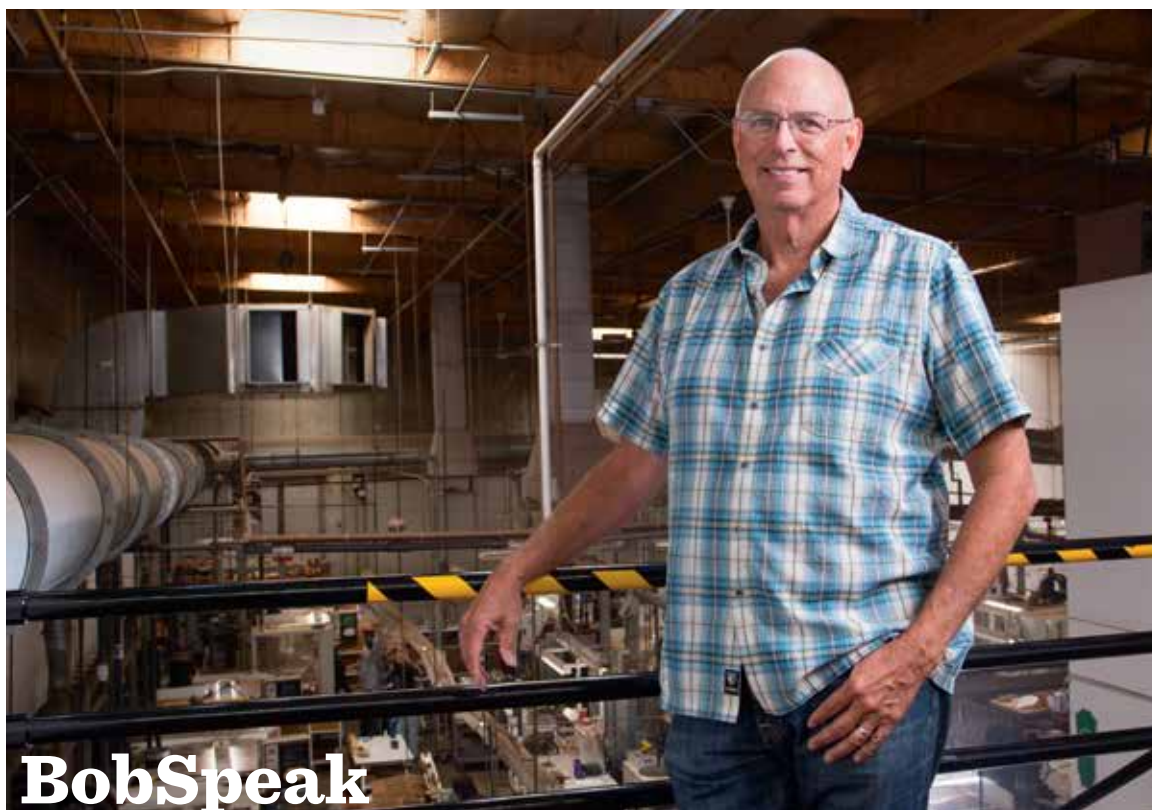
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BobSpeak

Manufacturing Complex

Bob shares some real-world perspective on the business ecosystem of manufacturing and creating a new guitar series during a pandemic.

You might want to pour a cup of coffee because this is a little longer than I normally write. I thought I'd use the introduction of the American Dream Series as an opportunity to talk about manufacturing.

For nearly half a century, I've been engaged daily in manufacturing, and I have developed some understanding on the topic. I think it's safe to say that my experience, which started with me and a chisel and led to where Taylor is now, is probably more filled out than if I'd been a manufacturing engineer working for a firm, due to me being the one who has made the lion's share of manufacturing decisions for us along the way and having to live with the consequences of my decisions. I know what it's like to work nearly alone and to have well-developed operations in four countries, each with different laws, languages and cultures.

I'm pleased that our company has grown to be successful and kept everyone's interests in mind, from customers and employees to vendors, shareholders and the community around us.

The Different Costs of Manufacturing

All companies sell a product while trying to make a profit through a fair balance between their costs and what

they receive upon a sale to their customers. As for the individual employees of any company, we all want to earn the highest salary possible for ourselves. But what happens when we each want to pay the lowest price for the things we buy for ourselves? We all look at competitive products, and often buy products that are made in places where costs are lower, which usually means lower wages. When wages are lower in a different country, the other supportive costs can also be lower since their infrastructure carries lower costs as well, all based on the equilibrium of their local wages and economy.

A good current example of cost difference is our Urban Ash guitars, made from wood we get from here in Southern California. Some people have asked how we take a "free" street tree that was going to become firewood and make guitars that cost as much as guitars made from traditional woods.

Simply put, it's because the costs are higher, and nearly all those costs go to people living here and doing the work to that tree. Well-paid Americans safely remove the trees 10 feet from a road or house, transport them, saw them, and transport them again, all with American wages, on domestic roads, paying taxes, complying with OSHA standards,

earning health benefits, etc. In other words, it's you or your neighbor who is being paid to convert that tree into guitar wood for us. If we wanted only the cheapest wood, we could find places where the situation is the opposite of the attributes I just described, but if you want to do it here, it costs more.

Cross-Border Localism

Buying locally is an idea that interests many of us in our own home towns. But it shouldn't end with food or independent retail shops. I admit that you can't always get what you want locally, but we might all want to appreciate the work our neighbors do, and if it's possible to support them, it comes back around to them supporting us.

Even so, our guitars are made in two different countries. When I leave my house in the morning, I can turn left and be at our American factory in 20 minutes. Or I can turn right and be at our Mexican factory in 40 minutes. This is somewhat accidental that we are so well-poised to operate in two countries.

Here at Taylor, we understand cross-border relations from a real-world, workaday perspective, as well as a family and friend perspective. Both factories operate as one company, even with two languages and two cultures. That's easy from our proximity to each other. We understand and enjoy each other. It's an advantage for us as makers and you as players that we are able to make guitars across a wide range of prices, and to

provide jobs in both the United States and Mexico.

We didn't move our U.S. production to Mexico. Rather, we started fresh there, making guitars we would not have been able to make here in El Cajon. I am content with the ethics of expanding across our border. In fact, I'm proud of it. There are over 500 people in Tecate who have good jobs building guitars that otherwise wouldn't exist.

Tecate seemed far away during those months, but soon we realized we have a legitimate presence there and that we are part of that city, just like we are here. We quickly converted gig bag sewing into mask production to help the local health care workers. We got permission to run that small sewing line during the closure. Eventually the lights started to come back on in the other areas of the factory. We began working

“

I can turn left and be at our American factory in 20 minutes, or turn right and be at our Mexican factory in 40 minutes.

”

There is something elusive about making a very good guitar, and many factories around the world haven't figured out the secret sauce yet. We don't think of ourselves as having secrets (we tend to share), but we're dedicated to doing the things needed in order for our guitars to be good enough for players to notice the difference. Having our twin factories allows us to do that rather than outsourcing our lower-priced products to other companies across the ocean.

Adapting to Upheaval

When COVID-19 locked down people and businesses all around the world, we found ourselves with a closed El Cajon factory, then a few weeks later, a closed Tecate factory. After some time, El Cajon began to open slowly while Tecate stayed closed. We asked ourselves, "What would happen if we couldn't deliver our Tecate-made models into the market?" We knew we wouldn't have any hope of delivering GS Mini, Baby, Academy or 100 Series guitars. They're just not possible to make here. The 200 Series might be possible, but the tools and systems are there; we simply don't make that guitar here. We make solid-wood guitars here in El Cajon.

So we began to form the idea of what became the American Dream Series, which combines some special building techniques with normal tone-woods that we'd set aside over the years due to some cosmetic attributes, odd sizes, or species we don't currently use in our lineup. We like to say that we're cooking with what's in the refrigerator. The event thrown upon us this year caused us to think and act this way.

with government labor, economic and health officials to outfit our factory for an eventual safe re-opening. This was the test of a lifetime of our relationship with the city and country we are in.

Meanwhile, the American Dream Series was born here in El Cajon. We didn't want to wait to see what might or might not happen in Mexico. A lot of thought went into this guitar, and we moved quickly to break down mental and physical barriers so we could produce the guitar. People started trickling back to work in El Cajon. We felt optimistic and creative. This guitar was a triumph for us during this time.

Move forward to today and our employees are back to work in both places under such strict social distancing that we have to use 24 hours of every day and all 7 days of the week to get our work done. But we're healthy and safe, and our livelihoods are restored. Our dealers are thrilled because their livelihoods are better, and customers have rediscovered the joys of homemade music. We're shipping, dealers are selling, and you're playing.

It's all good. And these thoughts I wanted to share are meant to relay that stuff comes from places that make stuff, from people who work in those places that make that stuff. Many of those people are you, your neighbor, your family or me. We all work to provide something that is sold, and we all buy things that others make. It's symbiotic. You support us, we support you. This year has caused many of us to think about things – what's good, and what's not. I think we can all agree that music is good.

– Bob Taylor, President





Dream Machines

Born from adversity, our new American Dream series was designed to respond to our fundamental need for musical expression.

By Jim Kirlin

Each of us probably has our own clear memory of when the COVID pandemic officially flipped the switch on normal life. At Taylor, we'd been tracking its global progression like a slow-moving weather front, and on March 19, we temporarily suspended guitar production at our California campus, not knowing when we would be able to reopen.

For master builder Andy Powers, the stark, far-reaching reality of the situation hit home from another perspective when he woke up one morning around that time and scrolled through text messages from musician friends from all around the world.

"I realized every single one of my musician friends was now unemployed," he says. "Everyone's tour, everyone's show, their crew, the backline, the bus driver. Even the local restaurant and coffee shop gigs were cancelled. The entire live music world had just changed."

As people everywhere began to reckon with the uncertainties ahead, Andy sensed that despite the massive disruption of life as we knew it, and more specifically, the music industry, playing music would become more important to people than ever. And not just for the working musicians of the world, but for recreational players and anyone in need of an outlet to express themselves, especially in a time of social distancing, when people were taking time to evaluate what was important to them in life.

Andy remembers thinking about what people might need – and what Taylor as a company might need to make – one morning when he came to

the factory after production had been halted.

"It's bizarre to walk around a factory that's completely shut down," he recalls. "The lights are turned off, there's nobody here, guitars are sitting in racks awaiting our crew to come back."

And when our California production team did return, what types of guitars would they build?

"I thought, these are strangely uncertain days, so we should build guitars for uncertain days by going back to the basics. Let's build what we can. We've got tools here. We've got wood. We've got guitar strings. What kind of guitar will serve the needs of a person sitting with their family, strumming their favorite songs? We want to build that guitar."

During the production hiatus, as the Taylor factory was being modified and new safety protocols put in place, Andy and Bob Taylor spent a lot of time together on campus discussing the way forward for our product development and production strategies in this new reality. Andy shared some ideas for a guitar offering he felt would be appropriate for the times and could be made in our California factory. Something utilitarian, with all the essentials of a great guitar – solid-wood construction, Taylor's V-Class bracing, the kind of performance versatility to cover a range of playing styles – but also something that could be produced in the U.S. and sold more affordably.

continued next page



Singer-songwriter Shane Hall with an AD17e Blacktop

"I started putting together these guitars with very spartan appointments; very modest, honest guitars," Andy says. "When Bob and I started talking about these guitars, it was obvious he was in the exact same state of mind."

When it came to wood selection, the two embraced a "cooking with what's in the pantry" approach, taking into account the potential disruption of Taylor's supply chain.

"We started going through our wood inventory and the stocks of wood we had set aside, which had more individualistic character than we'd usually use in our existing series of guitars," Andy says. "We've got great sapele and unique mahogany tops with the kind of character we were looking for. We have lots of mahogany for necks, we have ovangkol, plus some great spruce. All these woods are wonderful to make instruments with, they just weren't being utilized within the exacting criteria for our existing menu of guitars." (For more on the character of the woods selected, see our "Character-Grade Wood" sidebar.)

Leading with the Grand Pacific

When it came to choosing body styles, Andy wanted to introduce the new guitar using Taylor's Grand Pacific shape, knowing its robust voice and musical versatility could cover a lot of ground and serve as a reliable workhorse.

"There's a broad appeal with the sound that comes from this design," Andy says. "I think of it as a general-purpose acoustic that responds well to a strumming style, to a fingerstyle player, a flatpicker, or someone who wants to play with a vigorous, robust approach. I was picturing a group of family and friends outside around a campfire or in their backyard, strumming songs that everyone can sing along with. The GP makes such a beautiful accompaniment guitar."

The American Dream Series is Born

As we detailed in our lead story from the last issue of *Wood&Steel* (2020 / Issue 2 / Vol. 97, part of our first digital edition, which you can

access at taylorguitars.com under the Owners tab), Taylor's ability to respond to the upheaval of the pandemic was a testament to the grit and determination that have become baked into our company culture.

Co-founders Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug were reminded of the struggles

Dream Series, these guitars embody the resilience and problem-solving spirit of our company.

Though Andy hadn't even been born when Taylor Guitars was founded, one of the reasons he loves Taylor's culture, as he pointed out last issue, is the way Bob and Kurt have preserved

“The Grand Pacific makes such a beautiful accompaniment guitar.”

of their early days, and all the obstacles they overcame along the way. So when it came time to name this new guitar series Andy had designed, it seemed appropriate to acknowledge the American Dream Guitar Shop where Bob and Kurt met, and which they eventually bought and turned into Taylor Guitars in 1974. Christened the American

“that scrappy, fearless mentality of an upstart.” And that mentality, that passion, that relentlessly innovative drive to inspire people to make music, has only been amplified since Andy's arrival, as anyone familiar with Taylor's many groundbreaking product launches over the past decade can attest.

Character-Grade Wood

In episode 33 of Taylor's *From the Factory Podcast*, Andy joined Cameron Walt and Jay Parkin from our marketing team to talk about the new American Dream guitars, providing more context around the idea of "character-grade" tonewoods selected for these guitars, and how they might differ from the grading approach for woods used to craft other guitars within the Taylor line.

"As woodworkers, the material we use already starts at the margins in the world of timber," he explains. "We're working with the top fraction of a percent of the most exact, pristine cut of any piece of wood available. From that perch, we further grade those materials into groups that are appropriate for every model or design."

A good example of that is Sitka spruce, which we use for multiple series across the Taylor line. We do that in order to make ultra-consistent guitars within a series or for a particular model.

What Andy characterizes as "character-grade" wood sets — selected for our American Dream guitars — still fall within our elite instrument-worthy specifications, but for one reason or another (sometimes cosmetic) are considered outliers.

"We know these woods will make an amazing guitar, but because they aren't within the same defined grading spectrum of what we typically put in a particular guitar model, we'll set it aside and save it for something else," he says. "These American Dream guitars are the perfect opportunity to build with those 'orphaned' pieces of wood — the outliers. They have amazing character. They sound great. We can encourage each one of these guitars to be a deliberately unique individual."

A Design for the Times

The creative nucleus of the American Dream guitars, particularly the highly distilled, “everything you need, nothing you don’t” design sensibility, actually traces back to Andy’s early experiments with V-Class bracing and what would eventually become the Grand Pacific body style.

“One of my practices as a guitar builder when I’m working with a radically new design is to distill the form down as far as I can go with the most

minimalistic finish, the most primitive trimmings, to see exactly what the design will do on its most fundamental level,” he says.

It’s an approach that clearly informed the development of Taylor’s Academy Series, introduced in 2017 – a guitar design stripped to its purest essentials to create the most rewarding experience for developing players with budget considerations.

In many respects, the American Dream Series embraces and extends

that same ideology with its professional-level performance features: solid-wood construction, V-Class bracing, smoothly chamfered body edges, premium tone and playability, and optional ES2 electronics. It also needed to be a guitar series we could make in our California factory to help rev up our production once we resumed. Keeping the appointments understated would streamline our production process and allow us to pass extra value along to customers, making them the best-

priced solid-wood, U.S.-made guitars in the Taylor line, sitting below the 300 Series. (The new Taylor GT guitar, introduced elsewhere in this issue, shares the same price point.)

Thanks to the coordinated efforts between our product development and production teams, we were able to make the American Dream guitars production-ready in short order. Our California complex resumed full-time factory operations on May 18, and even with the time needed to acclimate our

craftspeople to new safety procedures, workstation setups, and other modified workflow processes, we were able to begin making the guitars in June.

The Models

Based on our wood inventory, we arrived at three core models to launch the American Dream Series: two featuring the tonewood pairing of solid ovangkol back and sides with a solid spruce top, and a mahogany-top offering matched with solid sapele back and sides. One new wood choice featured across the series is smoked eucalyptus for the fretboard and bridge. (We’re also using eucalyptus with our new GT models, also featured in this issue.) The species we’re using is comparable to rosewood in weight and density, making it ultra-durable and ideal for holding frets.

“We’ve been experimenting with this material for quite some time,” Andy says. “It makes really good-sounding fingerboards and bridges, and these seem like appropriate guitars to introduce it.”

AD17 / AD17e

Our first Grand Pacific model to feature an ovangkol/spruce wood pairing is a great match for the V-Class-powered GP body. Ovangkol’s rosewood-like tonal range and natural midrange warmth are supercharged here, anchored by clear low-end power and enhanced by the harmonic agreement between notes made possible by the V-Class architecture. The dynamic range underscores the workhorse versatility – the guitar is responsive to light fingerpicking and more than happy to comply with an aggressive flatpicking or strumming attack. One other tone-booster comes from the ultra-thin matte finish that minimizes damping – an extra bonus considering the remarkable sustain made possible by V-Class. On this model, the ovangkol back and sides visually bear a resemblance to rosewood with the application of our dark Urban Sienna stain.

AD17 Blacktop / AD17e Blacktop

This blacktop ovangkol/spruce American Dream model offers a visually striking alternative to its natural-top sibling. Andy’s aesthetic choice here was informed in part by the same thinking as wood selection – using materials that were available at the factory. In this case, we had some water-based black paint on hand from another project we had undertaken, so Andy made a prototype with a matte-black top and black pickguard and liked how it turned out.



“It’s as straightforward as a black t-shirt,” Andy says. “It’s very much in the vein of the Henry Ford mentality. A lot of the guitars that I admire, especially those built back in the Depression and during wars or other disruptive events, were finished in materials that happened to be available.”

While the chamfered body edges are unbound, the carefully executed edge treatment on the top artfully highlights the spruce’s natural color to give the aesthetic appearance of a bound guitar. The aesthetic is complemented by a wood rosette featuring alternating black and maple rings. For these models, the ovankol back and sides retain their natural color and variegation.



Scan the code with your smartphone to watch a video demo.



“
You’ll feel the actual texture
of the grain structure because
these are very open-pored, thin
finishes.
”

AD27 / AD27e

Boasting a hardwood mahogany top, this American Dream acoustic blends dark, rich-grained wood hues with a voice that’s warm and robust, with consistently meaty notes that blend smoothly across the tonal spectrum. As a soundboard, mahogany’s natural compression will level out the rough edges of a player’s attack and amplify well with the ES2 pickup. Between the power, responsiveness and sustain of the V-Class/Grand Pacific chassis, the guitar accommodates virtually any playing style. Walking basslines will never sound muddy, the midrange is thick and sweet, and even the treble notes deliver pleasing depth that will coax players into the upper register.

Visually, the natural color blend between the mahogany top and sapele back and sides feels seamless with

rolling, chamfered edges, and the thin matte finish amplifies the natural woody character of the guitar.

Less Finish, More Character

Beyond the tonal benefits of using a super-thin finish (2 mils, or two-thousandths of an inch) on these guitars, Andy says part of the intent was to further reveal the unique character of the woods selected in a way that can be both seen and felt.

“Every aspect of these designs is geared toward an individualistic ideal,” he says. “Even the type of finishing we’re doing on these guitars is deliberately restrained, chosen so the very nature of each piece of wood can be revealed in a very obvious way. You’ll feel the actual texture of the grain structure because these are very open-pored, thin finishes. You’ll feel

how smooth a piece of wood wants to become as it gets sanded. You’ll feel how wide or narrow the grain of the spruce top is with the way that the finish shrinks into the grain as it ages, becoming part of each individual guitar’s identity. Every one of these instruments becomes a very unique individual.” **W&S**

Additional Content

You can watch a video demonstration of the American Dream guitars in our online digital edition.

Listen to our entire discussion with Andy on the creation of the American Dream Series in our *From the Factory Podcast*, Episode 33, available at taylorguitars.com and on most streaming platforms.

What the Critics Are Saying

This past summer we sent out some American Dream guitars for review, and the early reactions have been strong.

Art Thompson from **Guitar Player** reviewed the AD27 for the magazine’s October edition and responded to what he deemed the most rewarding aspects of V-Class bracing: “rock-solid intonation all along the neck” and “enhanced sustain, which always makes an acoustic guitar more enjoyable to play.”

“The AD27 has a big voice and it rings out clearly and has nice complexity in the midrange and lots of low-end girth,” he writes. “And the way this lightweight guitar transfers string vibrations through the body and neck is unreal. It’s resonant and dynamic, and the touch responsiveness is something that fingerstyle players will definitely appreciate.” The guitar earned the publication’s Editors’ Pick Award.

Meanwhile, over at **Acoustic Guitar** magazine, reviewer Emile Menasché spent a few weeks with the AD27 and found it delivered on many fronts. Immediately he picked up on some of the characteristic personality traits of Andy’s Grand Pacific design.

“The tone is deeper than almost any acoustic I’ve played,” he writes. “It sounds thick and full – but not dull. Although the treble range sounds clear and articulate, it’s accompanied by a rich undertone that gives single notes a stamp of authority.”

The guitar also responded with what he considers one of Taylor’s signature strengths – “strong sustain, accompanied by a complex decay full of bright overtones.”

Menasché also had fun exploring its dynamic range.

“If single notes and arpeggios ring sweetly, strummed chords can sound loud, massive, and robust,” he says. “Physically and sonically, the AD27 was able to stand up to my very heavy right hand. It never lost composure or sounded strident – no matter how hard I strummed.”

In the end, he found it to be a remarkably versatile workhorse.

“For weeks, I attacked the AD27 with everything in my arsenal: gentle melodies, aggressively bendy blues, jaunty gypsy jazz, Pete Townshend-esque strumming, bass-style snaps and pops, and country picking. The Taylor handled it all without complaint. It was also comfortable to play for long periods.... I finished each AD27 session with far less hand fatigue than usual.”



Sound, Feel and Focus:

3 Ways to Improve Your Playing

Music director, songwriter and guitarist Nicholas Veinoglou kicks off a new video instruction series with three foundational tips.

By Colin Griffith, featuring Nicholas Veinoglou

In the print edition of *Wood&Steel*, we've always enjoyed sharing new musical ideas and playing techniques to encourage you along your guitar-playing journey, from the basics of slide guitar to writing catchy, compelling songs and plenty more. Now, our new digital format has expanded our platform for helping players improve their skills, and we're excited to introduce video lessons from

professional players and guest instructors.

If you're reading this in our print publication, we encourage you to head to our digital edition to watch the videos, or scan the codes to the right with your smartphone. Developing players know that aside from one-on-one instruction, seeing and hearing an idea being presented often helps us grasp it more firmly. As we move forward,

we hope these lessons inspire you to explore fresh paths and deepen your enjoyment as a guitar player.

To kick things off, we asked multi-genre guitarist, songwriter, producer and recording artist Nicholas Veinoglou to share some basic tips for adding color to your guitar's tone, relaxing your fretting arm, and making the most of your practice time. **W&S**



[video 1]

Picking Location and Tonal Colors

In his first segment, Veinoglou demonstrates how shifting the location of your picking hand when you play can add warmth or brightness to your tone, depending on the sound you're seeking. Veinoglou compares it to the world of electric guitar pickups, where a neck pickup and bridge pickup will produce different tonal colors. Many acoustic players keep their strumming or picking hand in one position – often near or right above the soundhole – but Veinoglou demonstrates how shifting the position of your hand closer to the neck or bridge can alter your tone quite dramatically. Strum or pick near the saddle, where the strings feel stiffer, and you'll hear a much brighter, treble-emphasized tone. Move toward the fretboard extension for a warmer, more rounded tone.

As Veinoglou describes, this is a great way to add color and tonal dynamics to your music.



Scan the code with your smartphone to watch the video.



[video 2]

Relaxing Your Grip

Next, Veinoglou addresses a common tendency among newer acoustic players to tense up while fretting, especially as they're learning new chords or guitar lines. Forming chords, especially slightly more complex shapes, can be a challenge, and many learners become frustrated by dead notes or buzzing. Though many instinctively compensate by trying to clamp down harder on the strings, Veinoglou demonstrates how only slight pressure is needed to make the note ring clearly. Instead of squeezing the strings with a vice grip, Veinoglou says, focus on relaxing your fretting arm, wrist and hand. This will help you adjust the position of your fingers to clear up any dead notes, and will help save you from cramped fingers and potential wrist problems down the line.



Scan the code



[video 3]

Practicing with Focus

Finally, Veinoglou suggests an alternative practice strategy to help you focus on productive exercises during your guitar practice time. Instead of setting aside one large chunk of practice time (say, an hour per day), which makes it more likely that we'll get distracted and lose focus, try blocking out shorter intervals of 15-20 minutes and allowing yourself to take breaks in between. Devote each block of practice time to a specific subject and try to block out potential interruptions (e.g., set your phone to airplane mode). This makes it easier to stay on-task and work on the skills you want to improve.



Scan the code

Ask Bob

Eucalyptus fretboards, Micarta saddles, case humidification, and can Bob still build a guitar?

Ed. Note: With this edition of Ask Bob, you'll find an extra helping of questions, plus some additional content we hope you'll enjoy. For starters, now that we've also launched a digital edition of *Wood&Steel*, Bob answers a couple of questions via video, which allows him to leverage the visual format to illustrate some of the topics he discusses. (If you missed Bob's video on bearclaw spruce from our last edition, be sure to check it out.) For this print edition, we've provided a shortcut to his video responses. If you see a QR code, simply scan it with your smartphone, and it will take you to Bob's video response.

Also, in July, Bob joined our weekly *Taylor Primetime* livestream show (episode 10), hosted on Taylor's YouTube channel, for a rapid-fire Ask Bob Q&A based on submissions from Taylor fans. As always, Bob shares his insights in an engaging and forthcoming way. Now onto the latest batch of questions for Bob...

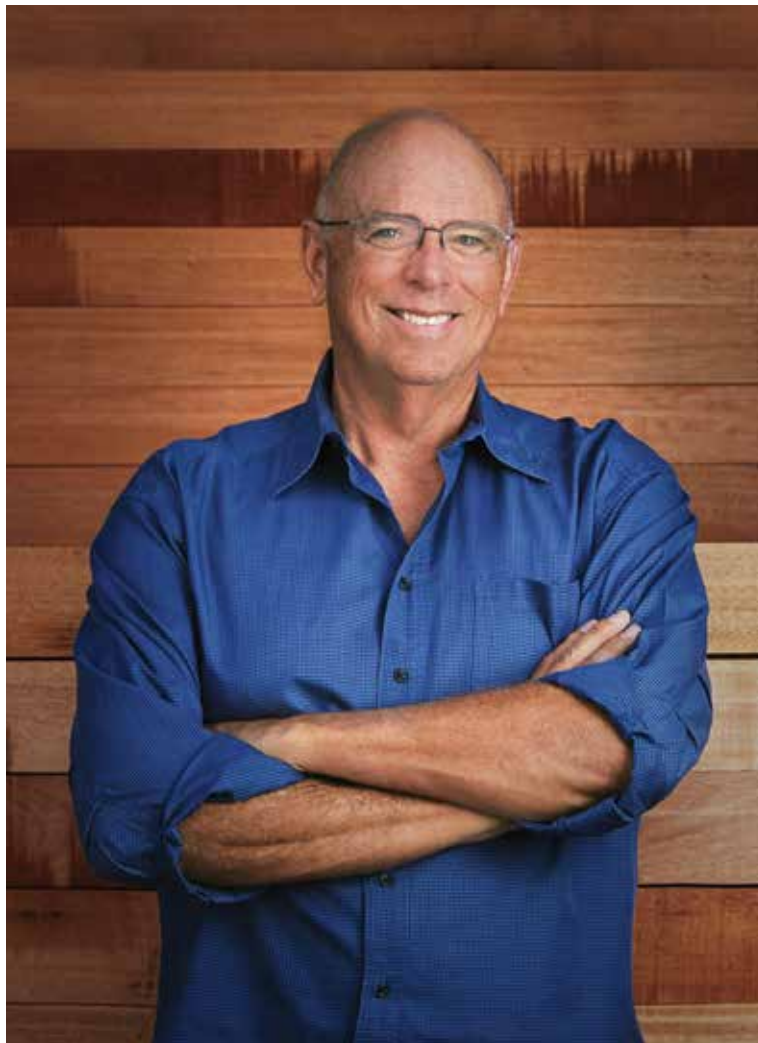
I'm quite excited about the new American Dream guitars. I've never heard of using eucalyptus for a fretboard! How and why did you decide to go that route, and what "regular" fretboard would it be considered similar to in hardness and feel?

Geoffrey Crooks

Scan the code with your smartphone to see Bob's video response.



Yes, Geoffrey, we're on to something new here. There are many species of eucalyptus, each with different properties. The one we're using for fingerboards is fairly easy to darken its color through and through. I'd say it's quite close to an Indian rosewood fingerboard in color, hardness and tone. This same wood can be used for sides and backs as well, and is in plentiful supply as it's been planted all over the world for a hundred years. I should take a moment to repeat my opinion that there's not much reason for me to get excited about using synthetics to make guitars. I've always said that there are so many good timbers to use if we run shy on the most popular species,



or if we just want to not increase their use or even slow the use down. This is just one new example. And we all know about our Urban Ash. I'll take these materials over carbon graphite or high-pressure paper-based laminates any day. A little more work, but guitars made from wood are nicer, easily done, and easily sustained into the future. I think you'll like these fingerboards.

With the retirement announcement from Chris Martin IV and with fellow luthiers Jean Larivière, Richard Hoover, Ren Ferguson and yourself, not to forget Bill Collings (RIP),

looking to pass the baton to the new crop of master luthiers, what do you think your generation's legacy will be?

David VanderMolen

Good question, David. All these people you mentioned are great friends of mine. People have often asked me what I'd like said about me in relation to guitars when I pass on, and my answer for years has been, "He left guitars in better shape than he found them." I think everyone you mentioned has done exactly that. That's an honorable legacy, in my opinion. Truly, guitars today are so much more advanced, and good,

than they were in the early '70s when we all came on the scene. When I think about the options to buy a guitar back then, it was nothing like it is now, and all these luthiers from our generation made it this way.

Why do some think the fretboard wood type makes a tonal difference, when the string vibration is from metal to plastic or bone? You don't seem to hear a difference when the fretting finger moves over the fret markers.

Alan Kelman

Well, it does make a difference, Alan. Electric guitar players are sure that rosewood fingerboards sound different than maple fingerboards. Actually, everything makes a difference because it's all vibrating and interacting. That's actually what's going on. The whole guitar is set into motion, and it all adds up to the sound. But can you perceive it? If I sit on an elephant, will he weigh more on the scale? Yes. But probably nobody, including the elephant, can feel it. Some changes are small in comparison to the whole, and may make a difference in one kind of guitar more than in another. If I sit on a horse, it's more easily perceived because me and the horse are closer in size than me and the elephant. Frankly, on steel-string acoustics, I personally don't hear a difference from one fingerboard to another. But maybe across hundreds, I might hear the flavor of one compared to another. What about a classical guitar? Maybe the difference is more pronounced there. People do tend to focus on tiny changes, hoping to inch their way to the "best" result. I believe in that, because those all add up to a whole. But take one of them out and replace it with something that's 90 percent the same and it's hard to perceive when blended into how the things work together as a whole. Replace it with something awful and you can hear it. Replace it with something twice as good, you can hear it. I wouldn't choose pine for a fingerboard, as that's going too far. But if they're all in the ballpark, you still have a good guitar.

Why did Taylor switch to Micarta saddles over Tusq?

Dean Nottis



Scan the code with your smartphone to see Bob's video response.

Dean, it's because of the structure of the material. Tusq is a great product. It's injected into a mold, so it can have micro spots inside where its density changes. We began to hear that when we made the ES2 pickup because different saddles sounded different from sensor to sensor, or even saddle to saddle. The Micarta we use is made up of layers of paper, pressed with resin into a sheet. We cut our saddles from this so the sheets run bottom to top of the saddle, and the layers run front to back. This gives uniform vibration transfer and sounds better in our opinion. It's more balanced from string to string and guitar to guitar, so pickup balancing becomes easy. The funny thing is, once we heard it in the amplified state, we began to perceive it in the acoustic state as well. We still use Tusq at this time for nuts because of tooling issues. There will come a day when we're able to make nuts from Micarta. By the way, Micarta is a brand name, in the same way that Formica is a brand name. The material we use, and what most Micarta is, is paper-based phenolic sheet. It's important to find the right one. We had to look far and wide to get the one that worked. It's all in the manufacturing of the product itself, and we're happy to have found this one.

In addition to my other Taylor guitars, I proudly own a 712ce 12-Fret WSB, which I purchased nearly three years ago. I love them all. However, I have a problem with the case that came with my 712. It does not hold the humidity in the case. I use D'Addario Humidipaks, which need replacing every month. No matter the time of the year or the location of my guitars around the house, the packs in the 712 dry out quickly. The other guitars are OK. The case I got has six latches. I saw some cases in the store

I once heard that a certain guitar maker turned CEO went on the factory floor and made a guitar. When the quality checks were done, they trashed it because it didn't meet their standards. Could you go onto the floor, make a (Bob Taylor) guitar, and have it pass the quality checks these days?

Tom Rogel

Tom, yes, I can. There isn't anything in the factory that I can't do unless my aging eyesight gets in the way of a detail. But I don't mind saying that I know how to make guitars, or machines, or fixtures. Becoming the president of this company didn't take away those skills.

Ed. Note: *Tom, that's a great question, so we thought it would be cool to open it up to a few other longtime Taylor employees who've learned from Bob and might have their own perspectives to share. Hopefully it paints a more vivid picture not only of Bob's guitar-making skills, but of the high standards of craftsmanship he established throughout the company.*

**Ed Granero (24 years)
VP of Product Development**

When you build a company from the ground up, you end up knowing every detail. I worked in production making guitars for many years, and it never ceased to amaze me when Bob would walk by and point out a detail I was working on that wasn't quite right. He would always leave me thinking, "How does Bob, who has so much going on and doesn't work day-to-day in my department, 'see' everything that is wrong?" It wasn't until years later when I finally realized that I was able to do the same thing that Bob would do to me. It was because Bob knows and cares about every detail of not only the guitar itself, but of the process, the tools, the space, the layout...everything.

For those of us fortunate to have worked with Bob over the years, we understand and share the commitment to paying attention to the details. It's that attention to detail that leads us to sustained success.

**Terry Myers (31 years)
R&D/Special Projects**

I have a thousand stories. What we all learn quickly is Bob fully understands and obsesses over every aspect of what he does, and he has done nearly every aspect of what Taylor Guitars is. Not only can he build an amazing guitar, he can conceptualize and build the machinery behind it. His depth of awareness will catch you off-guard every time.

**Rob Magargal (29 years)
Service Network Manager**

In 1991-92 I was learning how to fret to our standards. I was struggling with why my work looked great when I left, yet when I came back the next day, the fingerboards had changed, and I had slight lifts at the end of the fingerboards. I said, "Bob, I need help." He looked at one guitar and said, "Rob, you're thinking electric guitars. They are straight down to the last fret. These are acoustics, and the relief must stop at or around the body joint. That way you can add a slight drop-off over the body. The extension only follows the body." Talk about being hit with a brick! From that

point on, my sand-outs and fret jobs were as good as anything we could ever do. Four months later, I'm training everyone how to fret. That continued all the way until our patented Taylor neck – which Bob designed – came along.

Side note: I personally dreaded when Bob would come into the Final Assembly room and look at guitars. Here's why. One day he walks by my four guitars in the bin behind me. Without missing a step, as he walks by he says, "Rob, the washer on the tuner for the B string, second guitar back, is upside-down." I turned around and...it was upside-down. If he saw that just walking by, what does he see when he's holding the guitar!

**David Judd (28 years)
Product Development**

There are dozens of times when Bob would come by and try to impart some wisdom on me. The worst was when you would proudly show him your work and he would push his glasses up and look close. One day when I was managing the Body department, I got in early, and Bob was waiting for me with a trash can. He made it quite clear that we were wasting too much sandpaper, and proceeded to pull out handfuls of half-used sandpaper to make his point. We got the point.

**Chris Wellons (28 years)
VP of Manufacturing**

I recall a time Bob was walking through the factory, stopped dead in his tracks, turned on a dime, and walked directly to the table saw where someone was working. He had heard the sound of the blade cutting wood and knew the blade was dull. Or he would walk by a cart of guitar necks or bodies and randomly pick up the one that had an issue or blemish...it's instinctive and always has been. I've spent time with Bob on weekends as well on personal projects and have learned hundreds of things from him along the way – he is very well-versed not just in guitar building but in everything he gets into, from machinery to off-roading, woodworking, cabinet-making, you name it!

that have only 4. Please explain. By the way, this 712 has brought romance back to my guitar playing. These 80-year-old hands feel young again!

Pastor Bob Carroll

Pastor Carroll, I think it might be a good idea to get your case itself humidified. I'm assuming it's a bona fide Taylor case with our brown color and brass logo. We haven't made a case with six latches for some time if I'm correct. Sometimes I'm not! If it's not a Taylor case, I'd get one for sure. You must live in a dry area if the packs are drying up once a month. Here are some tips that I can think of. Keep your case closed even when you play your guitar. If it sits open while you play, it can dry out, and then you're trying to humidify it with the Humidipaks, and it can use up a lot more water than the guitar. Our case isn't meant to be moisture-sealed, but it does do a pretty good job. When we make cases, we actually make sure the humidity inside the case is just right before we put a guitar in it; otherwise it can suck the moisture from the guitar. We also put the case and guitar in a plastic bag when we box them. In your case (no pun intended), you might want to put a larger water source like a Dampit inside the case and open it once a day for a few days. If the Dampit is dry after a day, then the case needed that water. Re-wet it. Repeat until the Dampit stays supple. Then put in a double bag of Humidipaks and see how it goes.

Have your neck profiles changed in the last couple of decades? I've got a 2000 312ce and find the new necks don't feel the same.... I think the shape of the older neck is pretty splendid.

Matt Hayden

Yes, Matt, they have changed slightly over the last couple of decades. One change is the neck profile curve doesn't bite into the fingerboard as much. This was an improvement to ensure longevity of the neck binding, which

results in better re-fretting possibilities. It was also a result of being able to hold our design better. Earlier in our history, there was much more hand work that deviated from our intended shape, removing wood where we didn't want to. People might have been too aggressive with a sander! Over time, as we listened to the average comments, the neck became the tiniest bit bigger. Not much, mind you, but you can feel it. We do have slimmer shapes available as custom options. The neck on your guitar from 2000 is probably a bit smaller than we make now on our normal guitar, but you can always get a slim-carve neck if you want to order one.

I was wondering about plans for the future. In the past, much of the drive and growth has come from the vision of you and Kurt. Andy Powers has definitely made his mark on the luthier's side of the business, but do you see anyone coming up who could have (or has) a similar impact on future sales and marketing of the brand?

Ken Nesbitt

Ed. Note: Taylor co-founder and CEO Kurt Listug was happy to respond.

That's a good question, Ken. The company has incredibly talented and hard-working staff who majorly impact the present and future sales and marketing of the brand every day. Same thing in Finance, in Human Resources, and in every other part of the company. These are the people running the company, and making it work every day. We have great leadership throughout the company, and I'm very proud of the work they do.

I don't see Bob and I having successors with the same exact talents and skill sets that we have. Andy is probably the closest to fulfilling that, but he's not a duplicate of Bob. They don't have the same exact talents and skills. In a company, that's OK, because as the company grows, it needs specialists to wear the different hats, not generalists. The company will always need strong leadership, such as Bob and I have shown, but it won't need a couple of guys who can do everything Bob and I have been able to do.

I have owned an 810 since 1998. I love it so much I would never dare take it on a trip. I'm thinking of buying an Academy 10 or a GS Mini to travel with. How would you compare the sound, durability and ability to stand

up to the elements of those two? I am a heavy strummer of chords.

Mark Much

P.S. My Taylor 810 has brought me more joy than anything I have ever owned, even more than my Nellie Fox baseball bat, my Wham-O frisbee, my 1958 MGA, and my Dunlop Maxply McEnroe tennis racquet made in England of maple, beech, hickory and ash.

Wow, Mark, that's quite an endorsement. I'm so pleased you've gotten so much pleasure from your 810. I have a 1978 810, and I love it too! If size isn't an issue, I'd recommend the Academy 10. It's going to make you happy. It's a super nice guitar that sounds amazing.



Academy 10

Why are guitars not finished on the inside? Wouldn't finishing them on the inside slow down the rate at which they take up and release moisture, and wouldn't that be a good thing?

Bill Johnson

Two reasons, Bill. One is that it wouldn't make a difference, as humidity goes right through a guitar finish, especially a thin one. Think of a sticking door at your house, or your grandma's old house in the rainy season, even with its thick coats of exterior paint. And then when the weather dries up, the door

You recently redesigned the Grand Symphony in the 800 and Koa Series. Are there any plans to extend that redesign to other lines? I'd really love to have a 500 Series Grand Symphony, and I'm worried I've missed my chance other than ordering a custom guitar.

Tim Lane

Tim, custom guitars are fun! Feel free to order. But, as you'll see in this issue, we're introducing the 326ce now, so that's some movement across the line. I'm not sure if or when we'll introduce a 500 Series option, so you'll want to keep your eyes peeled. Or ask your dealer to do that for you, even if it comes as a limited edition one day.

no longer sticks. Water and humidity are different, so in the case of the door, you can hose it down with water and it won't swell and stick because the paint protected it from water, but when the humidity is high it will swell and stick.

The other reason is that it would add huge cost to the guitar, for no benefit. And actually a third reason is that it doesn't look good. I've done it. It's a yucky mess in there when you do that. Other than that, great idea, Bill! Ha-ha! (I'm only joking because I've thought the same thing, enough to do it, only to find out that it doesn't work.)

Whenever my work gets hard, I think about the stories you tell of dealing with corrupt foreign governments, making wood legal, interacting with tribal chiefs to show your vision, etc. How do you break down these large, impossible-looking [endeavors] into manageable blocks and then execute? Do you use a visual system for brainstorming, for instance?

Dzuy Nguyen

Dzuy, I just take it as it comes. Often the solution is to just work, make small, obvious improvements, and in time things get better. I never stop thinking about it. Honestly, I'm not very well organized. I don't use any system.

I don't keep notes. I just try to implement change that makes sense. It's hard to change a government system, so I don't even try. I prefer to find out what's required to be legal to the letter, or even better than that, and then improve the business so it can afford to take those hits, even the unfair hits. I believe it was Benjamin Franklin who said, roughly, "You complain about your taxes, but you're taxed twice by your laziness and thrice by your folly." Whether I got the quote exactly right isn't important; the idea is quite true in my opinion. Work your way out of messes. Stay in for the long haul. Do something to improve each day, and it finally adds up. Time goes by whether you do something to improve or not, so don't waste the time waiting for something big to happen. And don't blame your plight on others if you have any freedom to think and change. We all need help, I know that, but one must put themselves into a situation to receive help. The smallest changes for the better can lead to success. Anyway, it's hard to answer this in one paragraph, but this is how I think, and I believe that's what you're wondering.

What is worse for a natural-wood guitar: overly humid or dry conditions?
rjamesprof

Both. "Overly" being the key word. A little dry sounds better. Really wet sounds...well, wet. No kidding. A guitar can live pretty nicely in terms of its construction and sound in the 45-60 percent range of relative humidity. An overly dry guitar will crack, shrink, implode. An overly wet guitar will come undone. Literally. They're both bad.

Bonus Content

Watch Bob show the color range of ebony in the digital edition.



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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.

Adding

CURVE APPEAL



Scan the code with your smartphone to watch a video demo of an 814ce

L-R: 814ce, 812ce

We've upgraded select models from our flagship 800 Series to feature an armrest as we streamline our rosewood guitar offerings.

By Colin Griffith

Back in 2017, we launched the 800 Deluxe Series, conceived as something of a love child between our rosewood/spruce 800 and uber-premium 900 Series. Taylor's sales team had seen a steady stream of orders from Taylor dealers for 800 Series models upgraded to include our premium Player's Package, which at the time included Adirondack spruce bracing to supercharge the sound, along with Gotoh tuners. Around the same time, master builder Andy Powers had been developing his new radius-style armrest design. So we decided to combine those elements into a distinctive deluxe-edition series that would be readily available within the Taylor line.

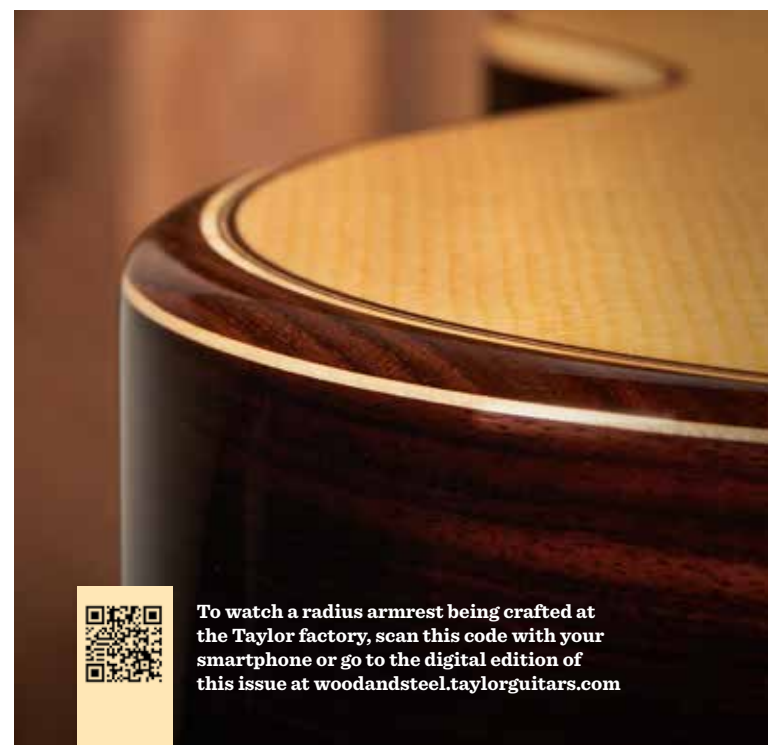
Since then, we've introduced V-Class bracing across the Taylor line, and the shared benefits of those tone-enhancing properties essentially put the standard 800 and 800 Deluxe models sonically on a more level plane. With rosewood well-represented across the Taylor line (also featured in the 400, 700 and 900 Series), it felt like the right time to consolidate the two-tiered 800s into a single 800 Series.

The most notable migration is the addition of our radius armrest to popular models such as 814ce, 812ce and 812ce 12-Fret. Sculpted into the bass side of the guitar's lower bout, the rounded armrest helps ease some of the pressure off your strumming or

picking hand, elevating the comfort and enabling players to pick or strum in a more relaxed way.

Producing our radius armrest requires careful attention from our most skilled craftspeople. In the 800 Series, the armrest will be made from East Indian rosewood to match each guitar's back and sides, complemented by contrasting maple binding. The 814ce and 812ce feature Taylor smoked nickel tuners, while the 12-fret has slot-head nickel tuners with ebony buttons.

Some guitars within the 800 Series, such as the nylon-string 812ce-N, will remain unchanged by this year's update. Others, specifically the new Grand Symphony Builder's Edition 816ce and Grand Orchestra 818e, feature distinctive identities of their own within the 800 Series, and will retain their current specifications. Look for revamped 800 Series guitars at authorized Taylor dealers in-store or online this fall. **W&S**



To watch a radius armrest being crafted at the Taylor factory, scan this code with your smartphone or go to the digital edition of this issue at woodandsteel.taylorguitars.com

**New
Model
Spotlight:
326ce**

**Urban Ash and mahogany
infuse our redesigned
Grand Symphony with
an inspiring new sonic
personality.**

By Colin Griffith

Between introducing a sustainably sourced new tonewood – Urban Ash™ – and reimagining a venerable body shape – the Grand Symphony – Taylor's forward-minded pursuits have been on full display this year. No guitar braids those two threads better than the new 326ce, which brings the magic of our innovative GS design to the 300 Series. Powered by the musical engine of our V-Class bracing architecture and uniquely voiced with the help of a soundport cutaway, the new model showcases the sonic virtues of the GS design in a freshly compelling way, pairing Urban Ash with mahogany and giving players another rich acoustic soundscape to explore.

After the debut of our retooled GS models earlier this year, the rosewood/ Lutz spruce Builder's Edition 816ce and the all-koa K26ce, we wanted to bring the new body's high-fidelity resonance to another model in a more accessible part of the Taylor line. The 300 Series felt like a natural home – it's popular among musicians of all stripes, and it sits at an intersection of premium performance and workmanlike utility. Recently, we introduced the world to Urban Ash with the Builder's Edition 324ce, and the 317 was the first Grand Pacific model offered outside our initial Builder's Edition 517 and 717 tandem. So once again, the 300 Series plays host to a model that we believe deserves to be in the hands of more players.



The radically redesigned Grand Symphony body seems to fly in the face of tradition, but then again, that's the story of innovation at Taylor. The most visible alteration is the inclusion of a soundport cutaway tucked under the fretboard's high register. From the front, the bottom contour of the scoop visually follows the line of a Florentine cutaway with its sharp "horn." View the Grand Symphony from behind, though, and you'll see that the back has been left totally intact. The design balances the benefits of a cutaway with the lung capacity of the GS body.

The soundport itself also exerts a powerful influence on the Grand Symphony's musical response. Offset from the top by about 45 degrees, the soundport changes how vibration disperses from the guitar and through space, leveraging the body's large internal air capacity to produce an immersive effect that, from the audience's perspective, almost feels like being in the middle of a surround-sound field.

The 326ce capitalizes on the body shape's expansive musical qualities thanks to its combination of solid Urban Ash back and sides, a solid mahogany top, and V-Class bracing. Urban Ash, responsibly sourced from trees in California municipal areas scheduled for removal, tonally resembles old-growth Honduran mahogany, with a robust midrange characterized by strong fundamental notes. Focused and punchy, the 326ce's hardwood pairing takes flight with V-Class architecture under the hood. Enhanced volume, sustain and intonation come standard with all V-Class models; paired with Urban Ash and mahogany, you'll also hear more essential character from the materials – woody, warm tones that remain clear and articulate even as they propagate through the room. One of our new Grand Symphony's most alluring traits is the way its notes bloom and take on new musical colors as



they sustain out. The experience invites players to allow their notes and chords to breathe, and for recording enthusiasts, it opens up a whole new world in terms of experimenting with microphone placement to capture different acoustic textures.

The GS redesign also enhanced the body shape's playability and overall responsiveness, thanks to the slightly shorter 24-7/8-inch scale length and light-gauge strings, which one might not expect on a guitar body of this size.

Aesthetically, the 326ce incorporates ebony for the soundport cutaway scoop, which beautifully complements the color of the back and sides. Otherwise, the guitar shares most of the detailing associated with the 300 Series, with standard appointments such as black binding with subtle black-and-white pinstriped purfling around the top, plus a matching three-ring rosette. Other touches include Italian acrylic Gemstone fretboard and peghead inlays, satin black tuners, a black pickguard, and our Urban Sienna color treatment (top, back, sides and neck) with a shaded edgeburst top, all under a satin finish. The guitar also features our ES2 electronics and ships in a Taylor deluxe hardshell case.

With its radiant voice and room-filling projection, the 326ce promises to be a uniquely expressive tool for any guitar player looking to expand their acoustic frontier. **W&S**

To watch a demo of the 326ce, check out the digital edition of Wood&Steel at taylorguitars.com. Fingerstylist Lance Allen plays the 326ce and Builder's Edition 816ce.



To watch a video demo of the 326ce, scan this code or go to our digital edition.

“

One of our new Grand Symphony's most alluring traits is the way its notes bloom and take on new musical colors as they sustain out.

”



fun Serious

Introducing a vibrant new class of guitar in size, feel and sound. The new Taylor GT packs pro-level tone into a nimble, fun-to-play form.

By Jim Kirlin

“Does Taylor plan to make a parlor guitar?” It’s a question Taylor’s Customer Service team routinely hears. But Customer Service Manager Glen Wolff says people don’t always know what to ask for, so they lean on the closest reference point, like a parlor guitar, or, occasionally, a solid-wood GS Mini.

“It’s not that customers necessarily want a traditional parlor-style guitar,” Wolff says. “People love the comfort of a compact guitar, but they don’t want to compromise on sound. And they assume a smaller-body guitar like a parlor or a solid-wood GS Mini will deliver the best of both worlds.”

But here’s the rub: An all-solid GS Mini doesn’t deliver a dramatic improvement in sound. Trust us – Taylor master builder Andy Powers made a few as an experiment. He tried pulling out all the stops, using protein glue and other envelope-pushing materials and techniques to max out the tonal response. But in the end, it didn’t move the needle in a way that justified producing it.

“The dimensions of the Mini inherently have constraints on what you can coax from the design,” Andy says. “It’s a great guitar for its size, but you can’t make it sound significantly bigger until you make the strings longer.”

It’s the same truth that Bob Taylor discovered years ago when looking to turbocharge the Baby Taylor, our original travel-size guitar, to infuse it with a bigger, fuller voice.

“Usually we find that within the confines of an existing design, no matter how much we hotrod that, it doesn’t change it very much,” Bob said in a *Wood&Steel* story back in 2010 – detailing how Bob’s initial redesign efforts with the Baby led to the birth of the GS Mini. Bob eventually realized he would need a longer fret scale and a bigger body, and the rest is history. The GS Mini has gone on to become one of the most popular guitars Taylor has ever made.







But Bob also understands the Mini's sonic limitations based on its size.

"If I were to describe the Mini's tone, I would say it's fun, it's legit," Bob says. "But if you play a GS Mini for a long time and then you pick up an Academy 10, which is a bigger guitar, you're like, 'Oh, wow.'"

Travel-Size vs. Full-Size

If you think about the classification of steel-string acoustic guitars by overall size, they are generally separated into two basic categories: full-size and travel-size, the latter obviously named for their extra portability. One of the delineating factors is the string length, a.k.a. scale length or fret scale – basi-

cally the measure of the string length from the nut to the saddle, which represents the maximum vibrating length of the unfretted open string.

In general, travel guitars have a shorter scale length that ranges up to about 23-1/2 inches, which happens to be the scale length of the GS Mini. Full-size or full-scale guitars usually have a scale length between 24-3/4 and 25-1/2 inches. Taylor's standard full-scale guitars come in two scale lengths: 24-7/8 inches for our Grand Concert models and the redesigned Grand Symphony, and 25-1/2 inches for our other models, which sits at the longer end of the typical scale length range.

If you've paid attention to the guitar designs Andy has introduced since

his arrival at Taylor nearly a decade ago, you might have noticed that one area he has explored with successful results has been our hand-friendly 12-fret Grand Concert models. (Our Grand Concert has been our smallest "full-size" body style.) Updated for the modern era, their combination of a small body with shorter 12-fret neck and 24-7/8-inch scale length adds up to a guitar that's easy to hold in your lap, with a lower string tension and a fret span that's slightly reduced, making fretting easier.

Since their release, our 12-fret guitars have become an increasingly popular option among players, especially those looking to reduce the stress on their fretting hand. But those guitars

also pump out a lively tonal response, especially in the midrange frequencies, thanks in part to the location of the bridge closer to the center of the lower bout.

Andy has also leveraged the strengths of our 12-fret/Grand Concert design platform to introduce more player-friendly 12-string models, like the 562ce, 362ce and recent Builder's Edition 652ce, which took our already established reputation for making the easiest-playing 12-strings in the industry to another standard of comfort and musical utility.

All along the way, Andy has also been thinking about that middle zone between travel-size and full-size, and the possibilities of a guitar with propor-

tions that sit somewhere between the size and scale of the GS Mini and the Grand Concert.

"I looked at the unexplored areas between conventional travel and long scale lengths, and it seemed obvious that something was missing there," he says. "It felt like a whole other size category was hidden from existence. I wanted to make something that was big enough to sound good, yet small enough to take comfort and playability to a fun new level," he says.

A New Mid-Length Scale

Like a guitar's body proportions, its scale length is a foundational choice for a guitar maker.

"Of the baseline decisions made when a guitar maker sets out to create an instrument, among the very first choices is determining how long the strings should be," Andy says. "That parameter will direct nearly everything the maker does next."

As he began to work out the dimensional framework for this new guitar, Andy arrived at what he calls a mid-length fret scale of 24-1/8 inches, which is the same string length as playing with a capo on the first fret of a guitar with a 25-1/2-inch scale length.

"Some players, myself included on occasion, will drop-tune a guitar E-flat through E-flat," he says. "Some musicians prefer it because they can sing in that key more easily, but many simply like the lighter tension – when you slack the strings off a half step, they're slinkier, as if you stepped down a string gauge. While the looser string feel is very appealing, I don't always want to play E-flat through E-flat; I like playing at concert pitch, especially when playing with other musicians. To prove out this scale length, I took a more typical 25-1/2-inch scale length, drop-tuned it, and put a capo at the first fret."

Shaping a New Body Style

With the guitar's scale length defined, Andy set out to design a new body style with a set of proportions between the GS Mini and Grand Concert. He envisioned a non-cutaway shape and borrowed the curves of Taylor's large Grand Orchestra body, scaling them down appropriately. While the width of the lower bout (15") is the same as the Grand Concert, the body length (18-1/2") is an inch shorter, and the body depth (3-3/4" measured at the sound-hole) is shallower than the GC (4-3/8").

The body was named the Grand Theater to align with the "Grand" naming convention shared by our other standard body styles. But around the Taylor campus, calling it the GT seemed to suit the fun, inviting, youthful musical personality associated with the guitar.

The GT Car-Guitar Connection

The parallels between the musical attributes of the Taylor GT and the identity of the GT as a category of sports car in the automotive world weren't lost on Andy. In the auto industry, the GT designation – short for “grand tourer” (originally *gran turismo* in Italian) – blended the high-speed performance and nimble handling of a sports car with luxury features that made it comfortable and fun to drive for long periods of time.

— TAYLOR —
GT[™]

“This guitar has similar properties,” Andy says. “It delivers a mix of super-nimble handling and a high-performance response, and it’s been refined to the degree that it becomes super fun for everyone to play.” The guitar’s comfortably compact proportions and low string tension, he adds, make the GT the easiest-playing solid-wood guitar in the Taylor line – enabling longer playing sessions without hand fatigue.

Scan the code to
see a video demo
of the GT.





Anatomy of the

TAYLOR
GT

Nut Width: 1-23/32"

Taylor Nickel
Mini Tuners

Italian Acrylic Pinnacle Inlays

Scale Length: 24-1/8"

Light-Gauge (.012-.053) Strings

Solid Spruce Top

3-Ring Koa Rosette

Scaled-Down
Grand Orchestra Body Shape

2-Mil Matte Finish

Smoked Eucalyptus Fretboard,
Bridge and Peghead Overlay

Solid Urban Ash
Back and Sides

Taylor C-Class™ Bracing

New C-Class™ Bracing

To voice the GT, Andy leveraged the same foundational concepts that informed his innovative V-Class bracing architecture, namely the interplay of stiffness parallel to the strings to produce long-sustaining notes, and flexibility to produce pleasing volume. But with the slightly smaller body size, he wanted to manipulate the frequency response more, so he took a different approach, designing an asymmetrical bracing pattern.

“V-Class is intended to be very linear in how it responds over the whole register,” he explains. “Every note you play has a remarkably uniform characteristic. Working with this perfectly proportioned smaller body and string length, however, I wanted a more asymmetrical sonic response. With the asymmetrical architecture, I can exaggerate the guitar’s lower frequency response. It’s typically a challenge to make a small body respond well on the low end of the frequency spectrum – it doesn’t have as large a surface area to flex and move the air required. Using this altered bracing pattern, the response belies the overall smaller size, seriously upping the fun factor.”

Because the architecture employs a cantilevered design concept to voice the guitar, we named it C-Class bracing.

Debuting with Urban Ash

Both Andy and Bob Taylor saw the launch of this new guitar as another great opportunity to affirm our long-term commitment to using Urban Ash, a tonewood we introduced earlier this year on our Builder’s Edition 324ce and on our new Grand Symphony 326ce, which also debuts in this issue. Responsibly sourced from Shamel ash trees scheduled for removal from municipal areas in Southern California, this ash’s tonal properties rival those of high-quality Honduran mahogany – dry, woody and clear, with pleasing mid-range warmth.

It’s a wood Bob Taylor has fondly taken to calling the golden retriever of tonewoods.

“This ash just wants to please you,” he says. “It dries easily, cuts easily, bends easily, sands easily, machines easily, and performs really well musically,” he says. “Everything about it is perfect.”

The solid ash back and sides are paired with a solid spruce top. Like our new American Dream guitars, the fretboard, peghead overlay and bridge feature durable and attractive smoked eucalyptus. Astute observers will notice that the size of the bridge has been scaled down to be appropriate for the GT body.

We’re launching the new guitar model as the GT Urban Ash, with the option of our onboard ES2 electronics. Also like its American Dream model counterparts, the GT will make its debut at the most accessible price point among our U.S.-made guitars – in the range of our 200 Deluxe Series guitars, which make the GT and American Dream our best-priced all-solid-wood, U.S.-made guitars.

Appointments for the GT Urban Ash include Italian acrylic Pinnacle fretboard inlays, a three-ring koa rosette, black top purfling, Urban Sienna stain on the ash back and sides, a super-thin 2-mil matte finish, Taylor nickel mini tuners, and our lightweight but super-durable AeroCase™.

Andy and our product development group see great potential for the GT, with the possibility of releasing models in other series across the Taylor line in the near future.

The Feel: “Just Right”

As a guitar that was essentially engineered from the ground up – featuring a new scale length, body shape, neck dimensions and bracing – the magic of the GT is the integration of those elements into a unique harmony of feel and sound. From its design beginnings, Andy’s pursuit of another category of guitar that lived in the sweet spot between a travel- and full-scale instrument gave it a certain “just-right” identity around the Taylor campus. In fact, its official code name among the product development group was “Project Goldilocks.”

Strung with light-gauge strings (.012-.053), the GT has the same string tension as if you tuned a guitar with a 25-1/2" scale length down a half step (E-flat to E-flat). The reduced tension feels like the guitar is strung with a set of 11s (Custom Light, .011-.052), making every note feel slinkier, yet you still get the power and punch you’d expect out of a larger string.

The reduced fret spacing of the shorter scale length also makes some of those more complicated chords easier to play.

“When you try to finger a complex chord that spans several frets, you can actually do it on this guitar, where many guitars would make it a struggle,” Andy says. “Even for somebody with a long finger reach, this fret spacing is comfortable, just like playing higher on the fingerboard. It’s physically easy to press the strings down with the lower string tension, and the closer fret spacing offers better dexterity.”

Another unique neck specification compared to other Taylor models is a nut width of 1-23/32 inches – wider

than 1-11/16 and narrower than 1-3/4, providing comfortable string spacing. That, together with the compact neck-to-body relationship, naturally brings your hands a little closer together, which makes forming barre chords less stressful on the wrist of your fretting hand.

As much as Andy enjoys nerding out about the design elements that imbue the GT with its unique musical identity (and appreciates that many Taylor enthusiasts also love getting the inside scoop on the design nuances), he’d much rather hand the guitar to someone and simply encourage them to play it. Like the GS Mini, the GT’s comfortable feel gives it an inviting accessibility, while the sounds it makes will give any working musician a tool that inspires them in a new way.

“A player doesn’t necessarily need to know how or why this guitar works to enjoy it any more than they need to know all the technical mechanics of a car in order to enjoy driving it,” Andy says. “The important thing is to simply pick up the guitar and play it.”

Artist Love

Jay Parkin from the Taylor marketing team, who manages our content creation and also co-hosts our *From the Factory Podcast* and our weekly streaming video show *Taylor Primetime* on Taylor’s YouTube channel, has been working with our Director of Artist Relations, Tim Godwin, to get the GT into the hands of artists over the last several months. Across the board, players love the overall feel, the responsiveness, and the tonal output.

“This guitar is so great because I absolutely love the sound of a huge acoustic, but I’m a tiny person,” said Los Angeles singer-songwriter Sara Niemietz. “This fits perfectly, it plays fast, and it sounds real.”

Lead vocalist/guitarist Chris Conley from the rock band Saves the Day texted Jay: “Why is this thing so perfect? I can’t stop playing it. Like, I can’t!”

Keith Goodwin from the band Good Old War texted this: “OH MY FREAKING GOODNESS. I’ve never played a guitar like this in my life.”

Los Angeles-based guitarist Nick Veinoglou, who works as a musical director, songwriter and educator, and tours both nationally and internationally with Jordan Fisher and Atlantic Records recording artist Bazzi, swooned over the guitar after having a chance to play it.

“I don’t know that I’ve ever had a guitar feel so at home in my hands right out of the box,” he said. “This reminds me of why I started to play guitar.” (You can watch Veinoglou demo

the GT in the online digital edition of *Wood&Steel*.)

Jay formed his own impression after having a chance to record the guitar a few times for some video content.

“This is the perfect guitar for recording,” he says. “It sounds so unbelievably big, yet focused at the same time.”

Audio engineer and cinematographer Gabriel O’Brien, who penned the piece on recording an acoustic guitar in this issue, has been playing and recording with it.

“It plays so easily,” he says. “It delivers all the things people wish for in a premium GS Mini – lighter strings, wider nut, solid wood, slightly longer scale – but that’s what makes the GT

very much its own thing. I’ve been mixing it for other videos and it records really well. I’ve been keeping it by my mixing desk and taking guitar breaks regularly with it. In fact, I love the tone so much I decided to re-record my guitar parts on another project with it.”

Look for the new Taylor GT Urban Ash at authorized Taylor dealers starting in October. For more details about the guitar, including complete specs, photos, demos and additional video content, visit taylorguitars.com. You can also learn more about the development of the GT in our *From the Factory* video podcast, featuring an in-depth conversation with Andy Powers and Bob Taylor. **W&S**



Scan the code to see more artist reactions to the GT.



An Introduction to

RECORDING ACOUSTIC GUITAR

The author in his home studio. Photos: Tristan Yoder

Looking to do some recording at home? Here's how to get a great sound from your acoustic guitar.

By Gabriel O'Brien



Shure SM57

There are a lot of natural progressions in the life of a musician. Learning an instrument, playing with others, performing in front of people, and writing songs are steps many musicians take along their journeys. Often, those steps are now joined by home recording. Recording yourself playing acoustic guitar is a great way to hear where you are in your guitar journey, and to share music with others.

Home recording has become popularized thanks to innovations in technology and the increased availability of relatively inexpensive equipment. It's evolved from four-track tape recorders to digital audio workstations, or DAWs, and audio interfaces. When I started out, there weren't great resources to learn about recording at home. There were a few books you could find at the library, but in the pre-Internet days, resources were scarce. My dad,

a singer-songwriter, had long been recording at a friend's home studio, first on four-track and eight-track tape machines and then on ADAT. Most people were using analog machines or early digital all-in-one systems, though software-based recording was rapidly growing.

My first session in an Akron, Ohio recording studio was captured to two-inch magnetic tape. My goal was to write and record songs, so I bought an early USB interface and the least expensive condenser microphone I could find locally and began experimenting. That led to a lifelong love of recording that became a big part of my career.

I've been extremely fortunate to work with Taylor Guitars on several projects: *The Acoustic Sessions*, *Coffee & Guitars*, *From the Factory Podcast*, and now the Music Together Project (see Soundings in this issue).

I'm also one of the administrators of the Taylor Guitars Owners Group on Facebook and help moderate a home recording group.

Let's say you've got your first recording interface and maybe even a microphone. Now what? After a post to my groups, here are a few questions that consistently were asked about recording acoustic guitars.

What's the best guitar to record with?

Just like choosing guitars to play at home or in a band, tonewood combinations and body shapes play a big role in the end result of your recording. There are no hard and fast rules dictating what you should use. Much like selecting a guitar for yourself, this is all about personal preference. You may like bold strumming for folk and bluegrass sounds and want to try a Grand Pacific with rosewood or mahogany back and sides.

You may want the guitar to sit well in a mix and try a 600 Series Grand Auditorium with maple back and sides. You may want to play a delicate fingerstyle piece on a Grand Concert, or something more orchestral-sounding on a Grand Symphony. Or you may want to totally subvert those ideas and use things in a different way. There's no wrong choice to be made here, only different creative ones. Everyone who knows me knows I'm a big fan of mahogany, having bought a 514ce as my first Taylor back in 2005. I made a whole record with just that one guitar. When I got my Builder's Edition 517 WHB, that guitar immediately became the center of my "guitarse-nal." Nowadays I tend to use my Builder's Edition 517 WHB for up-the-middle strumming where I want to hear woody, warm mahogany tones and a rosewood/spruce 814ce for nearly everything else.

What's the best way to mic an acoustic guitar?

Where you place a microphone matters far more than what microphone you use, and moving a microphone during the recording process is a far better solution than anything you can do after the recording is made. Understanding how to capture the best sonic picture of your guitar to fit your purpose is a great place to start.

If you're recording acoustic guitar for an instrumental piece, you may use several microphones to capture the full range of sounds emanating from your instrument to give the listener an immersive experience and capture the sound of not only the guitar, but the room it's recorded in. Sometimes engineers will use two of the same microphone in a stereo position like XY, which is roughly the way your ears hear, to place the listener right in front of the guitar. In a pop or rock mix, you may only use one microphone to capture the guitar, focusing

“
Where you place a microphone matters far more than what microphone you use.

”

instead on its percussive qualities to cut through a mix. I typically use anywhere between one and three microphones on acoustic guitar. But my starting point is nearly always the same.

If you've Googled "recording acoustic guitar" or searched YouTube, you may have seen or read about placing a microphone somewhere around the twelfth fret of the guitar, or somewhere around where the neck meets the body. This is to avoid pointing a microphone directly into the soundhole of an acoustic guitar, which results in a big "puff of air," which Andy Powers talked about extensively when the new Grand Pacific models launched.

I have a slightly different starting position. I like to begin with a microphone aimed at the treble side of the upper bout of the guitar — the cutaway region — from approximately 12 inches away. I'll angle the microphone slightly away from the soundhole if I'm getting too much boom on the guitar. When someone tells me their guitar sounds too bright or stringy as they've recorded it, microphone placement is the first thing I ask about. More often than not, I find they've aimed at the standard twelfth fret region but with the microphone only a couple inches from the guitar's neck, eliminating all the body and resonance.

Keep in mind as you try microphone positions that a guitar top moves air, so you want to leave some room between the top and the microphone so you can capture some of that.

What's the best microphone for acoustic guitar?

That's a question I commonly see asked in home recording studio forums and Facebook groups. There are three key types of microphones people commonly employ to record acoustic guitars.

Dynamic Microphones

Dynamic microphones, like the ubiquitous Shure SM57, feature a moving coil glued to a diaphragm — a membrane — attached to a magnet. When sound waves hit the diaphragm, it vibrates, much like how a speaker cone functions, and the coil moves with it. The movement of the coil alters the magnetic field and is converted into an electrical signal. This requires higher sound pressure levels to produce sound, so often you see these mics used during live performance, but you can also use them to record. Dynamic microphones do require significant gain to capture quieter sources like acoustic guitars, as opposed to louder sources like snare drums and electric guitar amps. These microphones are unidirectional, meaning they only "hear" sound from one side.

Ribbon Microphones

Ribbon microphones, like the Royer R-121, follow a similar principle, but instead of the diaphragm and coil use a thin piece of metal foil suspended in the middle of the microphone. Because of this, ribbon microphones are bi-directional, meaning they pick up sound from both sides. Ribbon microphones, like dynamic microphones, generally require a lot of gain. An exception to this is the Audio Technica AT4081, which utilizes 48v phantom power, a current run back up the microphone cable from your interface or console.

Condenser Microphones

Condenser microphones, like the Shure SM81 or Audio Technica



L-R: Cascade Fat Head II ribbon mic, Audio Technica AT 4081 ribbon mic, Audio Technica AT 4080 condenser mic

AT4040, are a bit more complex. They use a diaphragm coupled with a metal plate that is electrified and run through a circuit that internally strengthens the signal, giving it far greater sensitivity and output. All condenser microphones require phantom power (save a few that offer battery operation for remote use). Condenser microphones are also typically denoted by the size of their diaphragm, and though one isn't necessarily better than the other, large-diaphragm condensers have slightly less noise, while small-diaphragm condensers preserve slightly more detail. Some condenser microphones can be made multi-directional by placing two diaphragms back-to-back.

The truth is there's no such thing as a best microphone. There is a wide variety of microphone types that can serve to color your sound in a range of ways. If you're just starting out, a small diaphragm condenser is probably the easiest of these to use. An interesting new option is a condenser microphone that pairs digital modeling technology in the form of plug-ins with microphones to change their characteristics to those of other microphones. Slate Digital's ML-2 is a great and inexpensive way to get a lot of sounds out of one microphone.

Can you plug in your guitar to record it?

If your acoustic guitar has an onboard pickup, you have another easy way to capture a recording of it. I've had great success working with Taylor's ES2 electronics. While a microphone will capture the most natural voice of the guitar, the onboard ES2 pickup system is a great way to get started and can be a great addition to using a microphone. In fact, anytime I'm recording instruments at a video shoot like the *Acoustic Sessions* videos, I always take a guitar cable and a direct box so I can record from the pickup along with any microphones I'm

using. This gives me a backup audio source if there's a noise in the room or the artist tilts or rotates away from the ideal microphone position. It can also be of help if someone plays delicately or plays a lot of single-note runs because the pickup will add definition. A direct box converts the high-impedance signal of a standard instrument cable to a low-impedance signal of a microphone cable. Some recording interfaces even have a dedicated DI built in as an instrument input. In fact, the intro guitar lick heard at the beginning of every *Acoustic Sessions* video is my 814ce plugged in and recorded solely via the ES2 pickup.

It's important to note that getting a recording of a pickup is a bit different than hearing it out of a PA system, where it's passed through a sound board, EQ, compression and speakers moving air into the room where you're standing. This is easily addressed in the mixing stage and is still a great option for recording.

I hope this helps you get started down the road to recording your guitars. Like playing guitar itself, recording and mixing audio is its own skillset to develop and enjoy, and a wonderful way to capture and share music. **W&S**

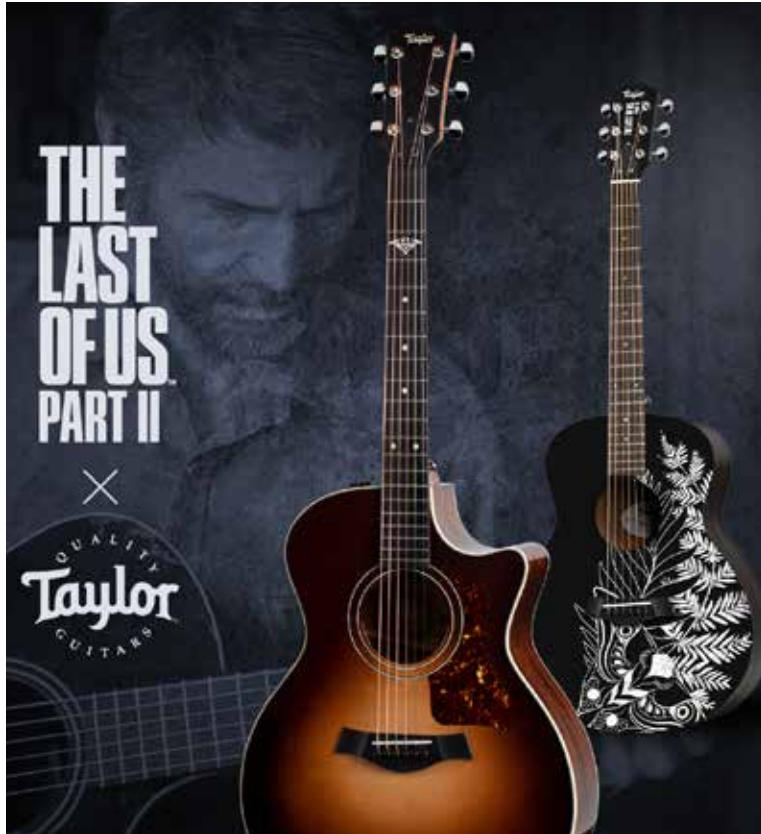
You can watch video demonstrations on different microphone sounds, microphone placement, and recording and mixing with the ES2 in our online digital edition.

Gabriel O'Brien is a cinematographer and audio engineer, as well as a long-time Taylor player. One of the administrators of the Taylor Guitars Owners Group on Facebook, he owns 10 Taylors and sold many more while formerly working as the sales manager at Larry's Music Center in Wooster, Ohio. He is the owner of Upperhand Studios. His spirit animal is a taco.



The mic is positioned 12 inches away from the guitar

Soundings



Taylor Makes its Video Game Debut

When society has collapsed, will there still be music? This summer, Taylor teamed up with the video game developers at Naughty Dog to show the world how essential music is to the human experience. Naughty Dog is responsible for the critically acclaimed *The Last of Us*, a 2013 survival-action video game that follows Ellie and Joel on a brutal journey of survival across the U.S. 15 years after a contagious fungus transforms the bulk of the human population into dangerous, infected humans controlled by the fungus. Now, Naughty Dog has returned with *The Last of Us Part II*, the highly anticipated sequel, and they reached out to get Taylor Guitars in the mix.

After working closely with Naughty Dog's visual artists and storytellers, we created two new guitars to be sold exclusively by the PlayStation Gear store in connection with the new PlayStation 4 game. Each model draws inspiration from elements of the video game.

The first model, which actually appears in the game itself, is a custom-

detailed 314ce with solid sapele back and sides and a Sitka spruce top. The guitar features an all-new fretboard inlay depicting a stylized moth. In *The Last of Us Part II*, the moth is a symbol that carries major narrative significance in the game's story, reminding Ellie of the value of humanity, beauty and art even in the bleakest times. The guitar is capped off with a tobacco sunburst top and includes our ES2 electronics.

The second guitar is a limited-edition black GS Mini featuring a stunningly detailed botanical pattern that mirrors Ellie's tattoo from the sequel. This model is made with layered sapele back and sides and a solid mahogany top. The back, sides and neck are finished in translucent black, while the top is opaque black with the screen-printed custom artwork, which includes two leafy fronds and a larger rendering of the moth. On the headstock, the game's logo accompanies Taylor's own.

The Last of Us Part II is available now on PlayStation 4.

When I'm 78: Paul McCartney at Home

What does one of history's most famous singer-songwriters do when the entire world shuts down? In a recent interview with the British edition of *GQ* magazine, legendary Beatle **Sir Paul McCartney** throws open the door to his life during quarantine. Talking to self-described "McCartney fanboy," *GQ* editor Dylan Jones, Paul (as he likes to be called) shares how he's kept himself busy during the weeks and months of isolation.

If you've ever fancied yourself a historian of classic rock or you're a Beatles fanatic like Jones, this interview supplies plenty of fascinating anecdotes and reflections on the world's most popular band, why their incredible run ended, and how McCartney continues to make music. Isolation hasn't held him back — at the moment, he's developing an upcoming stage musical based on Frank Capra's 1946 classic *It's a Wonderful Life*, along with an animated Netflix show and reissues of his first solo album, *McCartney*, as well as his tenth, *Flaming Pie*.

"I'm lucky," McCartney says, "because what I do, it all starts with writing, and I can do that pretty much anywhere so long as I've got a guitar."

The charming interview makes it clear that even under quarantine at his farm in Sussex, McCartney has remained creatively engaged with the help of his Taylor, an all-koa Richie Sambora model that, according to the piece, "is one of his favourite models and one of the few he uses when writing."

The Richie Sambora Signature Model, or RSSM, was designed in partnership with the Bon Jovi guitarist himself in 2000, created as a limited run of just 100 guitars. (You might recall seeing McCartney playing the guitar in the video for the 2015 song "FourFiveSeconds," a collaboration with Rihanna and Kanye West.)

The *GQ* piece features stunning photography by McCartney's daughter Mary, including several of McCartney with his Taylor. Paired with McCartney's ultra-stylish outfits for the shoot (many of which were designed by another



daughter, Stella), the nearly 20-year-old guitar looks as good for its age as Paul does.

Visit gq-magazine.co.uk to read the whole interview and see the original photos.

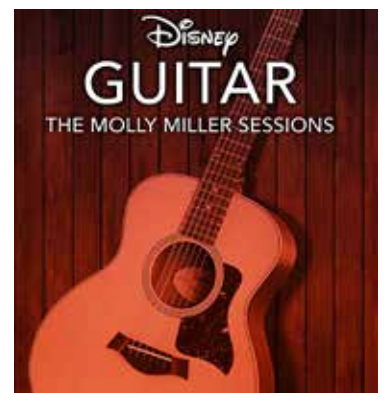


Once Upon a Taylor

From *Fantasia* to *Frozen*, Disney has long been a captivating musical force in the world. This fall, we're excited to join the magic as part of an ambitious new musical project led by Disney in partnership with Taylor and Guitar Center. The talented musicians and producers at Disney have been hard at work to adapt 50 of the most memorable tunes from their catalogue of audience-favorite films for the acoustic guitar. The result is collection of gorgeous new acoustic instrumental renditions of Disney classics that will be available on various streaming music platforms.

To celebrate this outpouring of creativity, the three companies are working together to offer a sweepstakes (U.S. only) where entrants can win an array of prizes. Taylor is giving away an all-new **GT** guitar, as well as **two custom Disney-themed GS Minis** and five of our premium guitar straps. Guitar Center will offer a full year of guitar lessons to two lucky winners, along with gift cards for another 10 entrants. Finally, Disney will give away 10 of their new all-acoustic vinyl collections. Check in at taylorguitars.com in October to enter for your chance to win.

To tie in with the project, Disney wanted to feature a Taylor artist, so we recommended Los Angeles-based guitar virtuoso and Taylor artist **Molly Miller (Builder's Edition 912ce)**, who performed with her jazz trio on the Taylor stage at NAMM this past January. Miller and the folks at Disney hit it off, so Miller was tapped to arrange and record three of the instrumental tunes: "Chim Chim Cher'ee" (*Mary Poppins*), "The Bare Necessities" (*The Jungle Book*), and "The Rainbow Connection" (*The Muppet Movie*). You can watch a video of Miller performing one of the videos in the online digital edition of *Wood&Steel*.



Taylor Artist Q&A George Ezra

From humble beginnings making his name at open-mic nights to being named the best British Male Solo Artist at the 2019 Brit Awards, singer-songwriter George Ezra's career has moved fast. The 27-year-old from Hertfordshire makes music that belies his youth, with a warm, gravelly voice that wouldn't sound out of place in a Southern rock song or old-school blues record. His intimate, catchy pop songwriting style has captured the attention of audiences around the globe, and a listen through his two albums – the 2014 debut *Wanted on Voyage* and its 2018 follow-up *Staying at Tamara's* – reveals a maturing sound that promises a bright future for this young up-and-comer. We caught up with Ezra recently to talk about his musical history, his influences, and the Taylor guitars that have helped inspire his songwriting.

Where/how did your career as a musician begin?

It's hard to pinpoint an exact moment or a specific show. I moved to Bristol when I was 18 to study, and when I look back at my time in that city, I can recognize a shift in my mentality towards music and my relationship with it. I was like a sponge for new experiences – I would perform at three or four open-mic nights a week, travel to any town as long as there was a fee to cover my train home. There was a work ethic I discovered in myself that has (mostly) served me well ever since. I'd say that my time in Bristol was when a career in music started to look like something more than just a hobby.

Who has inspired or influenced your songwriting and guitar playing?

When I was 14, I started listening to Bob Dylan and quickly became obsessed. My dad taught me the chords to "Knockin' On Heaven's Door," and it sparked something in me. I played the song using G, D, Am/C, and in these chords, I found complete creative freedom. I started writing over them again and again. It soon became obvious to me that the guitar was a vehicle for songwriting and not an instrument I felt the need to master. I still play every day, I still enjoy learning new bits, but it's the songwriting that got me.

What is your songwriting process like?

I'm still not sure myself. It looks something like jotting down lyric ideas and picking my guitar up each night to noodle. I mumble and hum little melodies over

whatever it is I'm playing, and let words fall out that fit the feeling. I very rarely think or say, "I need to write about X, Y or Z!" I try to let it come without question or interrogation. The meaning and emotion of a song are normally very clear to me after the fact.

How was writing and recording your new album, *Staying at Tamara's*, different from the process for your first album?

The main difference was that I had an idea of what it felt like to play to my own audience. When writing and recording the first record, I still didn't really have my own audience – I was mostly an open-mic act or a support act. By the end of the first record, I was playing main stages at festivals and headlining my own shows. That informed the writing for the second album – I knew what it felt like to have a field full of people singing the words back to me. I wanted to feed that beast a little.

How did you come to learn about Taylor and join the Taylor artist family?

I had friends who always kept a Baby Taylor on hand; they're perfect for moving around and getting little ideas down. It wasn't until I was touring in America a few years ago and was on the hunt for a tour bus guitar that I picked up a Big Baby for myself in Boston. I was amazed by the price and quality of the guitar. Since then it's almost all I play in the studio. I'm now lucky enough to own a beautiful Taylor 12-string [356ce] and a Taylor baritone. I love them all.

What qualities do you look for in an acoustic guitar?

It might sound obvious, but I really want an easy-playing guitar, especially in acoustics. They're the guitars I play most often around the house, and at home, I really want to be able to play without a lot of effort. It helps me wind down and bring the day to an end – playing the same four chords my dad first taught me and still getting the same warm feeling.

What would you tell aspiring songwriters about making a name for themselves?

Make sure you're enjoying it. It seems to me like a pointless pursuit unless you're enjoying it.

What are you working on right now?

Slowly but surely, album number three... Wish me luck!

Making Music Together

Among all the hardships the pandemic brought to communities around the world, the most difficult might have been the prolonged sense of disconnection. Here at Taylor, our factories and offices closed, and we watched the music industry we love grind to a halt, with venues, studios, production companies and road crews all losing their livelihoods virtually overnight. But then an interesting thing happened: musicians kept making music, even separated from bandmates and audiences by miles. Artists began recording new music and playing shows for live audiences around the globe via social media and streaming services, all in a shared effort to reestablish the musical bonds that connect people and give voice to our struggles.

For the Taylor team and our extended family of artists, as with so many other musicians, staying connected meant making music. That's the idea behind "I Know What Love Is," an original song and philanthropic project that will help raise money to support members of the music industry whose art and careers were put on hold by the pandemic. Conceived by the Taylor marketing team's Jay Parkin (*From the Factory Podcast*, *Taylor Primetime*), the song will be released for audiences to stream on platforms such as Spotify or iTunes.

Keith Goodwin (816e, AD27e), the singer, guitarist and songwriter of indie folk band **Good Old War**, wrote the song's melody and lyrics. Keith and Jay collaborated with producer and sound engineer Gabriel O'Brien to mix and master the original skeleton of the song, but hearing the finished product, they decided that something was missing. In his role as producer, Jay says he realized that the song could be even bigger.

"We were shooting for this 'Hey Jude' meets 'We Are the World' vibe," Jay explains, "and the song itself felt good. But this was always about supporting musicians and bringing people together, and we realized we needed the song to reflect that sense of community, too."

To accomplish that, Jay and Keith drew on their connections to the music industry to enlist dozens of Taylor artists for the project, from hobbyists and weekend warriors to touring bands and big-label acts. Each artist was asked to contribute their own version of a piece of the song that spoke to them. This obviously made Gabriel's job more complicated, and mixing the song became a gargantuan task that involved fitting together vocals, guitar parts, and other sounds sent in by artists around the world. **Jason Mraz**, **KT Tunstall**, **Chris Conley**, **Alana Springsteen** and many others contributed enthusiastically, responding to the song's inspiring message of solidarity among the musical community during a time of great need. Comprised of over 200 tracks, "I Know What Love Is" is a tribute to community, connection and the power of music.

All proceeds from the song will benefit MusiCares, an organization founded by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences to provide resources for artists, studio musicians, crews, producers, songwriters, venues, music students and families in times of need.

You'll be able to hear the completed song soon, and not just in its original form: We've decided to release the raw music files to the public for remixing and reimagining, and we can't wait to hear how our community transforms the song and builds on its message. Until then, follow our social media channels for updates.



Keith Goodwin

Taylor Acoustic Sessions: The Latin Edition

Our video series *The Acoustic Sessions* presents intimate performances from Taylor artists of every style and genre to audiences around the world. Last summer, our video crew

had the opportunity to attend the **Latin Alternative Music Conference** to capture some of these exciting artists playing their songs on their Taylor guitars. Featured performers included Latin pop act **Macaco**, from Barcelona, Spain; Argentinian singer-songwriter

Silvina Moreno; and Puerto Rican band **Los Rivera Destino**, known for their satirical takes on reggaetón hits. You can find the videos at the Taylor Guitars channel on YouTube or in the digital edition of *Wood&Steel*.



Scan the code with your smartphone to watch the video.



Clockwise from top left: Los Rivera Destino, Macaco, Silvina Moreno

Taylor Goes Primetime

After our part of the world was upended earlier this year, Taylor, like everyone else, found new ways to connect with people. In May, we launched **Taylor Primetime**, a livestreaming series on our YouTube channel, which serves up lively guitar-related talk and exclusive behind-the-scenes insights into our world of guitar-building. The vibe is fun-meets-informative, and if you love learning more about our approach to guitar-making, wood sourcing, and other guitar topics from our factory experts, or gleaning player-centric tips like how pick and string choices can change your guitar's tone, you should check it out.



The show is hosted by our marketing team's Jay Parkin, a content producer and wearer of many (baseball) hats, along with marketing crewmate Chris Sharp, who together keep things

lighthearted while also digging into the topic at hand. Each episode explores a specific theme with a relevant guest, and Taylor fans can submit questions in advance for Jay and Chris to choose from, along with live chat questions that roll in during the show. They've done more than a dozen episodes so far, and guests have included Bob Taylor (in a rapid-fire Q&A), master builder Andy Powers, sustainability guru Scott Paul, and other Taylor experts.

It's a fun virtual hang, and the show streams live on Tuesdays at 6 p.m. Pacific time. Follow us on YouTube to catch new live episodes. You can also find all the episodes on our YouTube channel.

Back at the Factory — The Podcast Returns

With a bit of technological tweaking, Taylor's *From the Factory Podcast* is back! Though we hadn't been using our on-campus studio during the pandemic, podcast hosts Cameron Walt and Jay Parkin kept the show alive with several "Home Edition" video episodes hosted on YouTube.

We kicked off with a special episode back in May featuring Andy Powers, who joined the show from his home workshop to talk about adapting to a new normal and creating from home.

Coy Bowles, known for his guitar work with the **Zac Brown Band**, offered stories from his life and career, while Bob Taylor chimed in with thoughts and stories of his own.

We also caught up with longtime Taylor player **Kevin Bacon**, who talked about writing music while working as an actor and his charity, Six Degrees, which asks Hollywood stars to support communities in need. Factory expert Rob

Magargal also hopped on the chat to talk about guitar care during quarantine and keeping old guitars in great shape.

In August, Andy Powers returned to tell the story behind the development of Taylor's new American Dream Series. Andy shares the inspiration that drove us to create this trio of guitars, describing how Taylor sought to craft a new series with a distinctly bold, seasoned personality — as he says, a personality "like a strong cup of black coffee."

Andy was back again a few weeks later, this time joined by Bob Taylor for a video podcast at the factory to talk about the design of our new GT guitar. The two discuss why the GT's unique dimensions make it such a uniquely compelling guitar, how Andy's new C-Class bracing came to be, and why we chose to use Urban Ash for the guitar.

You can find the *From the Factory Podcast* on taylorguitars.com, or listen and subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Play or Stitcher.

A Golden Opportunity

For the past year, Taylor has partnered with Nashville's iconic Bluebird Café to elevate songwriters making strides in perfecting their craft. In August of 2019, we launched the year-long **Bluebird Golden Pick Contest**, which encouraged artists to post a video of them performing an original song to their Instagram feed and tag @bluebirdcafe and @taylorguitars. Each month, a winner was selected, netting them a free GS Mini guitar and a choice performance slot at the Bluebird's Open Mic Night on the third Monday of every month. The arrangement guaranteed them time to perform two original songs on the Bluebird's house guitar, a Taylor Grand Pacific. Each monthly winner was also invited to the Taylor showroom at Soundcheck Studios in Nashville to shoot a video performance.

Though the COVID crisis forced the indefinite closure of the Bluebird earlier this year, the contest continued

through September, obviously without performances at the venue. The monthly winners included **Alex Amato, Trey Orberg, Eric Ryan, Chase Miller, Jerry Fiess** and **Michelle Pereira**. Each winner was also automatically entered into a grand prize contest for a chance to win a Taylor Grand Pacific guitar. The grand prize winner, **Simple Parade** from Littleton, Colorado, was selected in September.

The contest was also renewed for another year, and this time each monthly winner will earn a performance slot at the Bluebird's monthly open-mic night livestream event until the venue can reopen.

Visit the Bluebird Café's channel on YouTube to watch all the inspiring videos and learn more about the up-and-coming artists who poured their hearts into their songs. For additional updates, follow the Bluebird Café on Instagram.



Simple Parade



The Craft

Music: The Currency of Emotion

During challenging times, making music can feel as essential as food and shelter

"I f these trees could talk, what would they have to say?"

The question made me pause and consider what exactly I was looking at. Before me was a beautiful bench made from a single slab cut from a redwood tree. The man who asked this playfully unanswerable question, a friend nearly 70 years my senior, had seen more in his lifetime than most would be fortunate to see in two. He had built this bench – "a simple place

to sit awhile," as he humbly described it – from an ancient tree that had fallen in a storm some 30 years prior. Here was a man who had lived through so much, created a profoundly prolific body of work, yet was fully aware of how short a span of time a lifetime represents. When faced with a tree, centuries old, I suppose the timeframe of human events does seem to shrink.

I've thought about that question throughout the construction of nearly

every instrument I've made since I first heard it asked. What would this tree, this guitar, have to say if it could speak? I commonly hear questions about certain species of woods: where exactly a tree grew, or what differences there are between trees of the same type that grew in different countries. It's fun to imagine two spruce trees growing in neighboring countries and speaking different languages at each other, all because a surveyor decided to draw a line on a map, dividing the landscape. The reality is that many trees have a lifespan so vastly different from our own that they seem unconcerned about where we draw our lines. Yet, each of these trees does in fact have a unique story to tell, revealed across each grain line and colorful swirl of figure, all coming together in the guitar we so love. The fact that each guitar is made from so many different trees, with so many backgrounds, is amusingly apparent. Within one instrument, we can expect to see woods from the tropics, the northern climates, from Europe, Asia, Oceania and here in the

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Within one instrument, we can expect to see woods from the tropics, the northern climates, from Europe, Asia, Oceania and here in the Americas.
”

Americas. It's as if the guitar is built as a mirror to the varied backgrounds of its players.

The guitar has been regarded as a universal instrument, and I think that has to do with the fact that we as people have some shared experience, and a curious need for art and music. I say curious because, at first glance, music doesn't seem all that necessary. Food, shelter and protection all seem like elementary necessities, and rightly so. These are essential services, to use a now-common phrase. For that reason, much of our day-to-day experience is in pursuit of these, or the improvement of these needs. But when life's experiences overtake the need for mere physical sustenance, where can we turn? There is little comfort to be found in efficiency or productivity when we are trying to make sense of what we see going on around us. Words alone can't adequately express the loss we feel when coping with a friend's untimely departure. In the same way, they are utterly insufficient when trying to express a complete and expansive joy. For this, the human-experience aspect of living, art and music are no longer luxuries; they become sustenance, the currency of emotion.

As an instrument goes, the acoustic guitar offers everything we need to serve as the perfect companion through which to share our narratives: portability, accessibility, simple honesty that allows direct, unhindered expression of the human spirit. It's an antithesis of the detachment of virtual reality. The guitar can serve as a ballast to stabilize our thoughts and our connection in an age of existential crisis. For this reason, it should come as no surprise that an unprecedented number of people are taking up playing the guitar for themselves during these past weeks and months as, collectively all around the world, we grapple with the uncertainty we face.

So much has changed, and so quickly, it seems we haven't even had enough time to become aston-

ished yet. Even the way we take in music through live performances has changed. Sitting around a backyard campfire late one clear April night, a close friend who has made a profession from playing music remarked that since large crowds of people are his line of work, he wasn't sure how things were going to work out from there. But despite the change in musical setting, there we were again, using songs to sing what couldn't adequately be said. If anything, history will show us how, during the most uncertain of days, people turn to the realism of self-made music to connect with their families, their friends, their communities, and their own thoughts, and these days seem to reflect a broad and fresh renaissance of artistic creativity.

While we couldn't have predicted these current circumstances, some time ago we set in motion a project to bring to light a fresh instrument to play, which now seems more appropriate than we could have imagined when it was first created. Our new Grand Theater, or GT, as we call it, was intended to be a "just right" guitar: an instrument that is easy to hold, easy to play, easy to express yourself through. It's designed to be an inclusive guitar – having a voice that welcomes an experienced player, a new player, and all players in between. It's intended to be a universal guitar to make music for yourself, your family, your friends, the few, the many, for strangers who are strangers only because they are not yet known. It's a guitar on which to share your songs, because they are needed now more than ever, whether on a stage or around a campfire. It's made of solid woods – some trees young, some old. When we look at each of those pieces of wood and ask ourselves what they would say if they could talk, we know they can't speak a word. But together, they can surely sing. We hope you enjoy these instruments as much as we do.

– Andy Powers
 Master Guitar Designer

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Each tree has a unique story to tell, revealed across each grain line and colorful swirl of figure, all coming together in the guitar we so love.
”

[Sustainability]

Growth Potential

With two planting projects in the works, Taylor's collaboration with partners like West Coast Arborists sheds light on the challenges and benefits of creating a circular economy around urban trees.

By Scott Paul

Elsewhere in this edition of *Wood&Steel*, you'll find stories on two new guitars made with Urban Ash™: the GT Urban Ash and the 326ce, a new Grand Symphony featuring our soundport cutaway. These guitars join the Builder's Edition 324ce, released at the Winter NAMM Show to kick off 2020. We're sourcing the ash, also known as evergreen or Shamel ash, from our local arborist, West Coast Arborists, Inc. (WCA), who provides professional tree maintenance and management services for nearly 300 public agencies, including cities and counties across California and Arizona.

We love Urban Ash as a tonewood. In fact, Bob Taylor has taken to calling it "the mahogany of Southern California," but the truth is, until we embraced it, there was no cost-effective infrastructure in place to get the wood to our factory with the quality, quantity and

predictability needed to make it work. Shamel ash trees are scattered across the vast landscape of Southern California, on both public and private lands, governed by a patchwork of municipalities, each with their own subset of jurisdictions. When a city needs to remove a tree, an arborist safely takes it down, cleans up the mess, and plants another if instructed. The entire system is designed to dispose of the remains as quickly and cheaply as possible. It sounds logical, unless you want to make something out of the wood.

Of course, some small woodshops and artisans have long acquired urban wood through informal networks and personal relationships, but it's unpredictable, and the vast majority of good wood is disposed of before anyone knows it was even there. In the grand scheme of things, shopping for urban wood to build a dedicated model of

guitar is like looking for needles in a field of haystacks.

Why? Simply put, the practice and infrastructure of removing city trees evolved with little serious consideration for the need to identify usable wood or to make it available for woodworkers and manufacturers. With so many agencies, jurisdiction and lawyers, it's just simpler to get rid of it.

Several years ago, a beautiful black acacia tree (a.k.a. Tasmanian blackwood) was being removed from a school about a block from Andy Powers' house in Carlsbad, California. Andy being Andy, walked over and noticed a "very special" section of the lower trunk that had beautiful coloring, and from the area where the bark had chipped away, he could see some curly figure. The crew was cutting the tree into smaller, manageable sections for disposal and chipping up the branches when Andy asked if he could have the piece he'd seen, pointing to his woodshop and offering to pick it up himself with his little Kubota tractor. Not surprisingly, he was politely denied. That wood was all eventually mulched. I've heard that story more than once, and I can always hear the slight tinge of pain in Andy's voice when he thinks about the guitars he would have built.

The Perfect Partner

For a manufacturer like Taylor Guitars, complications surrounding the sourcing of urban wood in any meaningful way have long been a minor frustration. Bob Taylor has been building guitars for a long time, and when it comes to urban trees that have already been cut down, I've heard him say more than once, "The moment they know you want it, you can't have it."

But as it turns out, there was one place, and one company – WCA – where it all might work for Taylor to build a dedicated line of guitars using urban wood. And ironically, it was right next door to the factory. In fact, on some days I can look out my office window and see their trucks go by. WCA is our local arborist here in El Cajon. They also deal in volume, caring for over six million trees across the state. They have infrastructure, plus a tree inventory software program that shows the species and maintenance records of every tree where they work. As I came to learn, they also had a rather unique log sort yard in Ontario, California, about 120 miles from the Taylor factory. Most importantly, they were also willing to think outside the box.

Until about the year 2000, most of the wood that came to the Ontario yard was sold for firewood or landfilled, but to get ahead of state regulations and offset disposal costs, WCA began sep-

L-R: Bob Taylor, WCA Urban Wood Supervisor Big John Mahoney, and Scott Paul at WCA's log yard in Ontario, California

arating wood by species as it came in. In Ontario, they had the luxury of space. In time, they began sealing the ends of large, quality logs to prevent cracking, and they bought a Wood-Mizer portable sawmill, launching an urban wood

make economic sense, but nonetheless, people bought them because they felt it was the right thing to do. Much of the manufacturing momentum was fueled by subsidies and grants. Over time the technology improved, problems were

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Think of guitars made with urban wood like the early days of solar panels.

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recycling initiative dubbed Street Tree Revival focused largely on selling live edge slabs and dimensional lumber.

Still, the first time anyone from Taylor Guitars stepped foot on that property, only bits and pieces of a supply chain capable of turning discarded city trees into a Taylor guitar existed. WCA might have a sophisticated operation to plant and care for trees, and to safely remove them when called upon, but in the disposal yard they had only basic milling capacity and the ability to deal with urban wood peculiarities such as pieces of metal fence line or nails that are occasionally embedded within city trees. And although they had software to track trees across their network, only trees within a 25- to 50-mile radius were brought to Ontario. It simply didn't make economic sense to haul trees farther just to turn them into firewood, and they already had more rough slabs than they could sell.

Could this infrastructure really supply a dedicated line of Taylor guitars? Could it be sustained? A venture capitalist might have walked away, but to us, if it couldn't work here, it couldn't work anywhere.

To be clear, people have been running urban wood businesses for decades, but I think it's fair to describe them as provincial enterprises – persistent but small-scale and existing in relative isolation from one another. What we were proposing was something different. Several things would need to be worked out as we went, but in life things tend to happen because people decide to make them happen. And in this case, Bob Taylor, WCA founder Pat Mahoney, and Steve McMinn from Pacific Rim Tonewoods decided to make it happen.

Think of guitars made with urban wood like the early days of solar panels. For decades, solar panels really didn't

overcome by innovation, supply chains evolved, and a viable manufacturing infrastructure was created. Today, I see solar panels on roofs all over Southern California, and they are saving people money and reducing our consumption of fossil fuels. It's all come a long way since the University of Delaware created Solar One, one of the first solar buildings, in 1973. We're not asking for and don't need subsidies or grants to build guitars, but some interesting things are happening nationally in regard to planting urban trees, creating jobs, and providing environmental services.

Grants to Plant Urban Trees

When we introduced the Builder's Edition 324ce at Winter NAMM 2020 in Anaheim, I wrote in *Wood&Steel* about the importance of urban trees and the need to plant more. I also mentioned our interest in being a test case, helping to create a circular economy that generates jobs and supports the planting, maintenance, disposal and repurposing of urban trees. It's obviously still the very early days, but with the release of the 326ce and the GT Urban Ash guitar, we wanted to share some progress.

Here in California, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has an Urban and Community Forestry Program that provides technical assistance and administers grants to local governments and non-profit groups across the state to optimize the benefits of urban forests. Funded projects are designed to synergize with the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. Think of things like carbon sequestration, environmental services such as clean air and water, storm water management, reduced energy use, public health, and initiatives like urban revitalization and producing



Taylor now makes three models that feature Urban Ash: L-R: the Builder's Edition 324ce, 326ce and GTe Urban Ash

useful products like cleaner energy and quality wood. If you like any of these things, then plant and care for urban trees.

And thanks to Mike Palat, the San Diego Regional Manager at WCA, Taylor Guitars is now part of two such CAL FIRE grants. Mike was one of the first people I met when Bob asked me to start looking at urban trees, and he helped educate me on the issues,

Diego County, including reservation land in East County, in 2021. The project is called Branch Out San Diego and utilizes aerial imaging data provided by San Diego-based FireWatch, who is really pushing the envelope with aerial imagery to quantify and monitor the benefits of trees and urban forests. Local partners Mundo Gardens and One San Diego will help with community outreach, education and planting

diversify urban forests in disadvantaged and low-income communities throughout California by planting some 2,000 trees in cities statewide in 2021. The name "AMPlifying" was inspired by Taylor's commitment to support the project. We'll be talking more about this one too as details emerge, but confirmed project cities include: Chino, Concord, Glendora, Livermore, Orange, Palm Springs, Pico Rivera, Paramount, Santee, Tracy and Woodland. Both of these grants emphasize planting and caring for trees in disadvantaged and low-income communities because it's just a fact that well-off neighborhoods tend to have many trees (and all the aforementioned associated benefits), and less-well-off neighborhoods don't.

As mentioned in a previous article, it's important to understand that planting more trees ultimately means greater throughput and more trees that will reach end-of-life in the future. It's simple math, and even today, many arborists and city officials are struggling with disposal costs. Figuring out a circular economy that creates jobs and supports the planting, maintenance, disposal and repurposing of urban trees is going to be increasingly important. Taylor Guitars will have a bit more to say about this, too, in future editions of *Wood&Steel*. As Bob likes to say, "Invest in the inevitable."

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

“

Both of these grants emphasize planting trees in disadvantaged and low-income communities because it's just a fact that well-off neighborhoods tend to have more trees.

”

including the Kafkaesque labyrinth of associated politics that comes with it. Mike and I are now on the board of Tree San Diego, a non-profit dedicated to increasing the quality and density of San Diego's urban forest. There are similar organizations across the US and, increasingly, worldwide.

This year, Tree San Diego received a CAL FIRE grant to plant 1,500-plus trees on residential private property in disadvantaged communities in San

events, ensuring that once planted, trees are watered, mulched and monitored. Taylor staff will join in, and we will help get the word out. More on this when the time comes.

Taylor Guitars is also involved in a second CAL FIRE grant that was awarded to the California Urban Forests Council, a group that WCA has long been involved with. The AMPlifying California's Urban Forestry Movement grant seeks to improve and

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.



PS12ce

Presentation Series

Woods

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

Available Models

PS12ce, PS12ce 12-Fret, PS14ce

800 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce or Lutz Spruce (BE 816ce)

Available Models

812ce, 812ce-N, 812ce 12-Fret, 814ce, 814ce-N, Builder's Edition 816ce, 818e



814ce, 812ce



714ce

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 717 WHB, Builder's Edition 717e WHB, JMSM

Koa Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Hawaiian Koa
Top: Hawaiian Koa or Torrefied Sitka Spruce (Builder's Edition K14ce)

Available Models

K22ce, K22ce 12-Fret, Builder's Edition K14ce, Builder's Edition K24ce, K24ce, K26ce



K26ce

600 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Figured Big Leaf Maple
Top: Torrefied Sitka Spruce (618e: Non-Torrefied)

Available Models

612ce, 612ce 12-Fret, Builder's Edition 652ce, Builder's Edition 652ce WHB, 614ce, Builder's Edition 614ce, Builder's Edition 614ce WHB, 618e



Builder's Edition 912ce

900 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Indian Rosewood
Top: Sitka Spruce or Lutz Spruce (Builder's Edition 912ce)

Available Models

912ce, Builder's Edition 912ce, Builder's Edition 912ce WHB, 912ce 12-Fret, 914ce



514ce

500 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Tropical Mahogany
Top: Mahogany, Western Red Cedar or Torrefied Sitka Spruce (Builder's Edition 517/517e)

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, Builder's Edition 517 WHB, Builder's Edition 517e WHB

400 Series

Woods

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

Available Models

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



414ce-R

300 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Sapele (Spruce Top), Blackwood (Mahogany Top) or Urban Ash (Builder's Edition 324ce, 326ce)
Top: Sitka Spruce or Mahogany

Available Models

312ce, 312ce-N, 312ce 12-Fret, 322e, 322ce, 322e 12-Fret, 322ce 12-Fret, 352ce, 362ce, 314ce, 324e, 324ce, Builder's Edition 324ce, 326ce, 317, 317e, 327, 327e



327e

Builder's Edition 324ce

American Dream Series

Woods

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

Available Models

AD17, AD17e, AD17 Blacktop, AD17e Blacktop, AD27, AD27e



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



Academy 10e

Academy 12e

GS Mini

Woods

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

Available Models

GS Mini, GS Mini Mahogany, GS Mini Rosewood, GS Mini-e Rosewood, GS Mini-e Koa, GS Mini-e Koa Plus, GS Mini-e Maple Bass, GS Mini-e Koa Bass



250ce-BLK DLX

214ce-K

200 Series

Woods

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

Available Models

210ce, 214ce, 214ce-K, 214ce-N, 254ce, 210ce Plus, 214ce Plus, 214ce DLX, 214ce-BLK DLX, 214ce-RED DLX, 250ce-BLK DLX, 214ce-SB DLX, 214ce-K DLX, 224ce-K DLX

Baby Series

Woods

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

Available Models

BT1, BT2, TS-BT, BT1e, BT2e, TS-BTe, BBT, BBT e



BT2

BBT

100 Series

Woods

Back/Sides: Layered Walnut
Top: Sitka Spruce

Available Models

110e, 114e, 150e



150e

T5z

Specifications

Body: Sapele
Top: Figured Koa (Custom), Figured Maple (Pro), Sitka Spruce (Standard), Neo-Tropical Mahogany (Classic)
Electronics: Three-Pickup System with Five-Way Switching



T5z Classic DLX

Available Models

T5z Classic
T5z Classic-12
T5z Classic DLX
T5z Classic Koa
T5z Classic Sassafras
T5z Custom-K
T5z Custom-K 12
T5z Pro
T5z Standard

T3

Specifications

Body: Sapele
Top: Layered Figured Maple
Electronics: Taylor HD Humbuckers with Coil-Splitting (Optional: Vintage Alnicos)



T3/B HSB

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.

TaylorWare

CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS

taylorguitars.com/taylorware

Guitar Straps

A fresh array of premium guitar straps includes genuine leather, suede and natural cotton, plus new vegan leather options, in a variety of colors and designs that complement the aesthetic diversity of the Taylor line.



GS Mini Strap (Chocolate)
(#4001-20, \$24.99)



Blue Denim Strap
(#4301-20, \$59.99)



Academy Series Strap
(Jacquard/Leather, #4003-20, \$39.99)



Wings Distressed Strap
(#4109-25, \$149.99)



Embroidered Suede Strap
(Chocolate Brown, #4400-25, \$59.99)

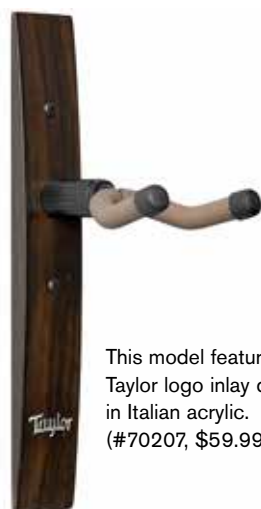


Reflections Leather Strap
(Spruce Ebony, # 4111-25, \$119.99)

Guitar Hangers & Stands

Ebony Guitar Hangers

These finely crafted guitar wall hangers are made from genuine Crelicam ebony, the same ebony that we use in the fretboards and bridges of our acoustic guitars. A cushioned yoke provides a secure hanging spot for your guitar without damaging the finish or neck, while ebony's gorgeous visual character reflects the craftsmanship and natural beauty of our responsibly sourced tonewoods. Each purchase supports our tree-planting projects and other sustainability initiatives.



This model features a Taylor logo inlay design in Italian acrylic.
(#70207, \$59.99)



This model features a Bouquet inlay design in myrtlewood and boxwood.
(#70193, \$59.99)

Guitar Stand

(Brown Danish Beechwood)
New and improved Taylor floor guitar stand in Danish beechwood with inert rubber pads to protect your guitar's finish. Some assembly required. Imported. (#1401, \$69.99)



Tall Display Stand

Mahogany guitar stand featuring a laser-etched Taylor logo, a rich oil finish, and inert rubber pads to protect your guitar's finish. Made in USA.
(#1402, \$199.99)



Apparel for
the Taylor
Player



Original Trucker Hat
One size fits all.
(Black/Khaki #00390, \$20.00)



Men's Basic Black Aged Logo T
Show off your Taylor pride with this simple, classic logo T-shirt in black. Made from 100% pre-shrunk cotton. Modern/slimmer fit. (Black #15856, S-XXXL, \$24.99)



Ladies Basic Black Aged Logo T
Made from 100% pre-shrunk cotton. (Black #45850, S-XL, \$24.99)



Two-Color Logo T
Heavyweight preshrunk 100% cotton. Traditional/standard fit. (Navy #16544, S-XXXL, \$24.99)



Men's Basic Black Logo T
Made from 100% pre-shrunk cotton. Traditional/standard fit. (Black #15850, S-XXXL, \$24.99)

DarkTone® Guitar Picks

A new assortment of Taylor guitar picks expands your acoustic palette with materials that produce greater warmth and sparkle. Available in several shape, color and thickness options. Made in USA.



Thermex Pro Tortoise Shell
Taylor Premium 351 Thermex Pro Picks offer the richest, warmest tone you can get from a guitar pick. Tortoise Shell, 6-Pack (1.5mm shown, #80759, \$11.99)



Taylex Smoke Grey
Taylor Premium 351 Taylex Picks produce a punchy midrange with a smooth low end. Smoke Grey, 6-Pack (1.25mm shown, #70714, \$11.99)



Thermex Ultra Ruby Swirl
Taylor Premium 351 Thermex Ultra Picks produce increased warmth and top-end shimmer. Ruby Swirl, 6-Pack (1.25mm shown, #70711, \$11.99)



Premium Ivoroid
Taylor Premium 351 Ivoroid Picks produce a rich midrange response and increased warmth. 6-Pack (.96mm shown, #70737-6, \$11.99)



Thermex Ultra Abalone
Taylor Premium 351 Thermex Ultra Picks boost your guitar's articulation and warmth. Abalone, 6-Pack (1.25mm shown, #80739, \$11.99)



Taylor Premium Bar Stool
30" high, made with premium foam-reinforced vinyl. Made in USA. (Black #1511, \$249.99)



Taylor Standard Bar Stool
24" high. Imported. (Brown #1510, \$99.99)

Guitar Care
Products



Premium Guitar Polish
Made in USA. (#1308-04, \$9.99)

Premium Suede Microfiber Cloth
Made in USA. (#1310, \$7.99)

Fretboard Conditioner
Made in USA. (#1307-02, \$9.99)

Premium Plush Microfiber Cloth
Made in USA. (#1309, \$7.99)

Satin Guitar Cleaner
Made in USA. (#1311-04, \$9.99)

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Design of the Times

Named after the guitar shop where Taylor Guitars started, our new American Dream® Series was born in response to the recent upheaval in the world. Like everyone else, we had to adapt to a new reality, so we tapped into the resourcefulness that has always propelled Taylor through challenging times. These models are thoughtfully distilled into the essence of a great guitar, featuring solid-wood construction and V-Class® bracing, and with modest appointments that allow us to deliver exceptional value. This blacktop Grand Pacific® is one of three models created to introduce the series. For more on how these guitars came to life, see our story on page 6.

