

INSIDE THE WORLD OF TAYLOR

JUNE 10 / 2021 / ISSUE 3

# Wood & Steel

## The Art of the Inlay

Inside  
Taylor's  
aesthetic  
evolution

Small-Body  
Guitars

The Ebony  
Project Grows

# Letters

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## African-American Music Appreciation

Thank you for [last issue's] wonderful celebration of African-American music! Absolutely beautiful. It is not talked about enough, and I have sent links to it to all my students, friends and anyone who will listen. As a white musician and teacher, I have deep regard for African-American musicians and everything they have brought to us. Would there even be a genre we could call "American Music" without the profound contributions of our Black and Brown brothers and sisters?

**Tom McMail**

## Fire Escape

I wanted to thank you for the quality of your products. I recently bought the 214ce-K and fell in love with the guitar. Unfortunately, this week my family and I suffered a devastating house fire that destroyed all of my and my father's musical instruments and equipment. Once the fire was put out, a firefighter brought the guitar in the case outside the house. The cover was burnt, covered in soot, smelled like smoke, and was soaking wet from the fire hose.



I thought my new guitar was done for. However, thanks to the high-quality craftsmanship you put not only into your guitars but also your cases, the guitar was the only thing that survived. It just needed a little cleanup to get rid of the soot that seeped through and it was as good as new! I am beyond grateful

for this guitar surviving and even more grateful for your company putting so much work into your instruments and cases. I will always purchase acoustic guitars from your company.

**Marcelo Gazel Drummond Costa**

## Living Up to Our Reputation

I simply want to thank you for producing such fine products. I purchased a 414ce-R in February. I am in love with my guitar. It sounds so good. Its quality is superb. I took a chance by ordering the guitar without playing the specific one I bought. Your reputation inspired my trust. I was not let down at all. Seriously, I'm very grateful.

**Casey Hancuff**

## Another Happy Owner

Why is my Taylor 214ce so vastly superior in every way to every other guitar I own, especially much more expensive electric guitars? Taylor offers instruments going up to 10 times the cost of this guitar? How much better can it really get? How can I purchase an electric guitar that has the kind of precision and response that my little Taylor 214ce has? What does it feel like, knowing you are the best instrument company for guitars, bar none?

**Jared Thompson**

## Fortunate Find

On December 6 of last year, you built a 224ce-K DLX model with solid koa top. Sometime between then and now, the guitar went through an original sale at Music Villa in Bozeman, Montana. I am fortunate that the original purchaser apparently did not like the guitar. Who knows, it might have been a gift.

Last week, the first owner traded it in on a Telecaster. His loss. I bought this guitar the same day it was traded in and feel very fortunate. I am also very fortunate to own an all-solid 1975 Martin D-35, an all-solid early '80s Gibson Dove, and a 1974 Ramirez 1a, which has pear laminate sides. All three guitars have stellar sound and quirks like all great guitars do. But you have created a spectacular instrument using

a laminate, and at a price point that is pretty amazing.

Sound. To. DIE. For. Right out of the box. No waiting 10 years for the sound to open up. Alternate tunings sound breathtaking, especially double drop D; Neil Young's "Don't Let It Bring You Down" will make you cry. Stays in tune. Good reproduction of the acoustic sound when pickup used. On top of that, I've never had what I consider a "beautiful" guitar, but I do now. The surface work is immaculate (and apparently sweat-resistant!).

Also, the staff at Music Villa couldn't have been more helpful. Their selection of instruments was unparalleled. Gino, Paul, Abel and Josh were very thoughtful and pleasant and always available. They set me up with a sound room with any and all guitars I wanted to play. They let my friend and I drive them nuts over two visits for a grand total of six hours before I finally was able to make a decision. Awesome!

Please accept my thanks.

**Robert Roeper  
 Missoula, Montana**

## This Is the One

I've owned a few guitars, never anything high-end, and actually had to stop playing for a couple of years due to arthritis. Then, with the magic of meds and a great rheumatologist, I was able to start playing again. During my hiatus, I didn't notice that the neck on my guitar got badly warped, so time for a new one. I had read about guys picking up a guitar and thinking, this is it, this is the one, the guitar I have looked for all my life. I bought a GS Mini Rosewood, and this is it, the tone is as good as possible, and the ease of play is as good as possible. While I no longer have pain from arthritis, my bent fingers don't do my playing any favours, but the small neck makes playing at least possible, even if on some days, G7 or a barred F are close to impossible. Thank you for putting a smile back on my face.

**Gord Lefort**

## Great Guitar, Great Picks

Greetings from Belgium. I just bought another Taylor guitar in the unbeatable 300 Series. As I already own a 314ce, a 355ce, and an Academy 12e-N, this is my first V-Class guitar, a wonderful 327e. If I were a richer man, I would have opted for a 524ce,

but they are well above my budget, as I am a working (but non-professional) freelance musician. Nevertheless, the 327e simply blew me away, as it is a very warm-sounding instrument. I had seen some tests on the Internet where the V-Class instruments were described as having "marginally less bass response," but the bass response of my 327e contradicts that – it booms like my old [other brand], but in a more balanced way, without overpowering the trebles! Lovely in fingerstyle, and just as nice with a pick.

While I more or less stopped using picks about 10 years ago, as I found that the standard picks, no matter the thickness, material or brand, made me sound shrill and brittle, I happened to see that Taylor also has picks on offer. I ordered some six-packs of various materials and thicknesses and, lo and behold! The Thermex variety made my jazz boxes sound like a dream, and the acoustics came alive like never before, sounding warm without losing clarity and focus.

Of course, being a player for nearly 50 years, I was well aware that thickness and material of a pick have a huge influence on the sound of a guitar. But

## social circles

### Join the Taylor community

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these new ones exceeded all of my expectations and renewed my enthusiasm in playing fast articulated (acoustic) guitar solos, something I haven't done in more than ten years.

While Taylor is a leading manufacturer of the finest acoustic guitars in the world, I do appreciate that you devote time and energy to something as humble as a pick. This is where our tone, our voice as a musician, starts. Whatever expensive woods and pickups you attach the strings to, if what triggers the strings to vibrate in the first place does not sound OK, these technological wonders and woodworking skills can only amplify those horrors.

**Marc Steenhaut**

## Explore our Digital Edition

Beyond the print edition of *Wood&Steel*, you'll find related video content in our digital edition, accessible for free at [taylorguitars.com](http://taylorguitars.com) (look under Owners in the menu bar) or here: [woodandsteel.taylorguitars.com](http://woodandsteel.taylorguitars.com)

**In this issue's digital edition, look for artist interview and performance videos, guitar lesson videos, a gallery of inlay photos to accompany our cover story, a fresh Spotify playlist and more.**

Some of this video content is accessible from these pages if you have a smartphone. Simply scan the QR codes for instant access.



# Contents

WOOD&STEEL | VOLUME 101 | 2021 ISSUE 3



On the Cover **18**

## The Art of the Inlay

We delve into Taylor's history of inlay design and the ways our aesthetic approach has evolved over the years.

## Features



### 6 Supplier Spotlight: Madinter

Taylor has a special kinship with the Spanish supplier of tonewoods and guitar parts. A leader in responsible sourcing practices, they're also our ownership partner with the Crelicam ebony mill in Cameroon.



### 10 Pandemic Pivot

Forced to adapt to a new reality, artists continue to learn new skills and explore fresh ways to express themselves and connect with others.



### 14 In Praise of Small-Body Guitars

With their inviting proportions and responsive sound, our small-body guitar family has grown into a diverse range of player-friendly instruments.

## Columns

### 4 Kurt's Corner

Kurt recalls the factors that shaped the development of Taylor's Grand Concert.

### 5 BobSpeak

Bob talks about the importance of investing in the inevitable and embracing change.

### 29 The Craft

One of the best ways to strive for sustainability is by building quality guitars that will last for generations.

## Departments

### 9 Ask Bob

Employee ownership, advice for young Bob, learning from failure, ebony back and sides, and curved braces.

### 26 Sustainability

After five years of steady progress, The Ebony Project is expanding in Cameroon thanks to an outside grant; we're planting koa in Hawaii; and we continue to explore ways to reduce our plastic footprint.

### 30 Soundings

Guitars 4 Vets, a stolen guitar is found, international artist roundup, news from Nashville, guitar lessons and more.

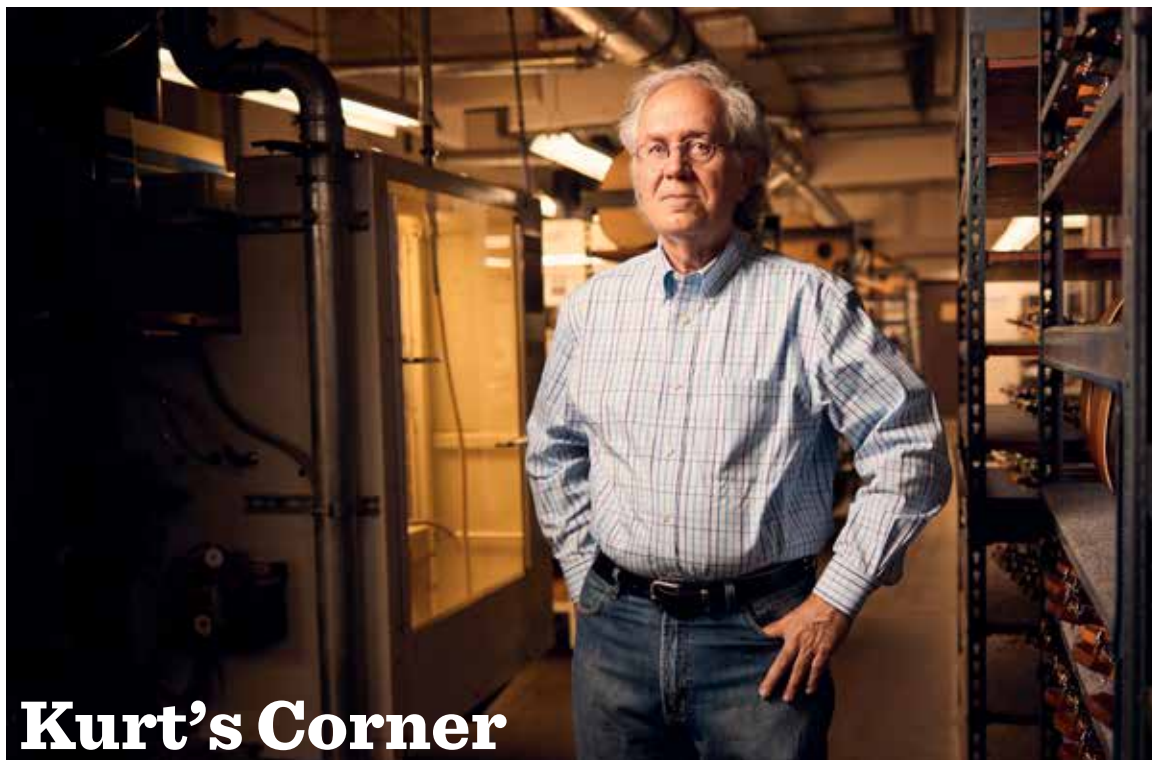
### 33 The Taylor Line by Series

A snapshot of our series framework, tonewood pairings, and current models.



### 34 TaylorWare

All the latest Taylor accessories, including straps, stands, picks, wall hangers, guitar care products, apparel and more.



# Kurt's Corner

## Concert Overture

Kurt reflects on developing the guitar shape that put Taylor on the map.

When Bob and I first started Taylor Guitars, we'd had very little exposure to the world of guitars. We just knew what we knew, which were the guitars that came through our shop for repair and the few guitars that we made. We'd inherited Sam Radding's designs from the American Dream shop where we met, which were basically his interpretations of Martin dreadnoughts and Gibson jumbos. Bob's first high school woodshop guitars were based on a Yamaha.

So the first guitars we started making after we bought Sam's shop were dreadnoughts and jumbos. It was many years later, after many trials and tribula-

dreadnought, established a few music stores as Taylor dealers, worked with a distributor for a few years to expand our dealer network, gone deeply into debt and mostly paid it off, and bought out our partner. Along the way, we got feedback and suggestions from dealers and musicians alike about how we could improve our guitars to better fit their needs and had made several improvements.

Probably the earliest suggestion came from Fred Walecki of Westwood Music, who asked for a little brighter and "less dark" sound from our dreadnought. Bob addressed this in short order, and tweaked the bracing to make

suggesting we start offering our guitars with pickups factory-installed, as their customers were requesting them. We quickly began offering a Barcus-Berry under-saddle pickup.

Not long after we introduced our Grand Concert body shape, the trends of cutaways, pickups and smaller-body guitars converged. Coupled with our easy playability, the demand for our Grand Concerts exploded. We'd developed the right guitar to meet the needs of the modern fingerstyle player. In fact, sales of our Grand Concert guitars were largely responsible for our growth over the next 10 years. We'd designed a guitar that was uniquely our own, aligned with trends in the marketplace, and filled a need that our guitars addressed really well. I've met many artists who began playing our guitars in the late 1980s or early 1990s and who gravitated toward our Grand Concerts because they did so many things well for so many players.

The Grand Concert is the guitar that put Taylor Guitars on the map. It took us from a small company that could barely pay its bills to a sizable, prosperous guitar company, well known in the industry. Although our next guitar, the Grand Auditorium, launched us into the realm of a famous guitar brand and major guitar manufacturer, the Grand Concert cemented our status as a popular guitar maker.

– Kurt Listug, CEO

“Not long after we introduced our Grand Concert, the trends of cutaways, pickups and smaller-body guitars converged.”

tions, that we designed and introduced our first unique Taylor body shape – the Grand Concert. This was in 1984, and Jim Kirlin's feature in this issue, "Small Guitars, Big Appeal," tells more of the story of its development.

By the time we introduced the Grand Concert, we had designed our first Taylor models starting with the 810

the guitar more balanced. The next suggestion came from Jack MacKenzie of McCabe's Guitar Shop, who mentioned that some of his customers were asking for guitars with a cutaway. In response, Bob designed our Florentine cutaway, which became popular particularly on our jumbo guitars. McCabe's was also responsible for

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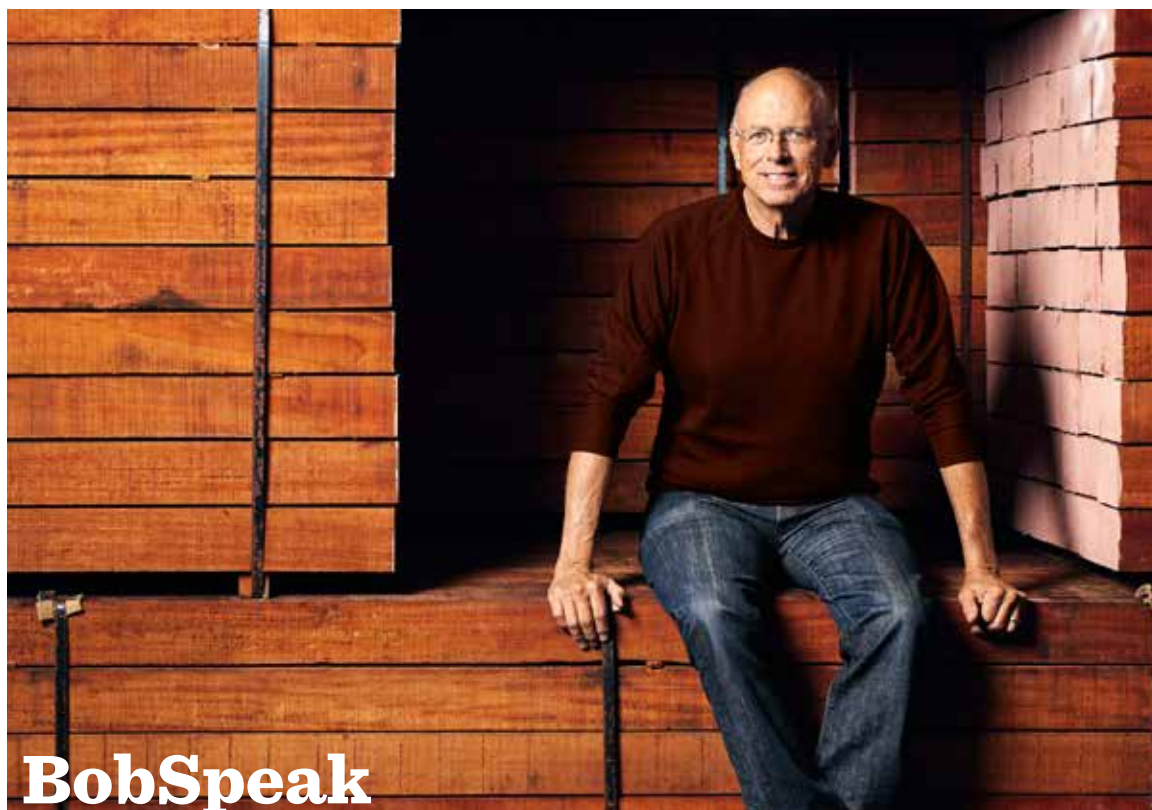
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## BobSpeak

### Investing in the Inevitable

Adapting to change is one of the most important skills we can master, both in business and in life.

As usual, there are a lot of projects happening at Taylor Guitars these days. First of all, we're months into our new ESOP with 100% employee ownership. What I love about this is all the conversations I've been having with people in the hallways and at workbenches. It's abundantly clear to me that when people feel like they can get ahead financially in their lives, they take a greater interest in the topic and begin to change their habits. There are so many questions coming my way about saving for retirement, saving in general, investing and thinking more purposefully about a personal contribution to the success of Taylor in the daily actions one takes. It's a powerful yet subtle shift in interest, because our employees had already acted as though Taylor Guitars was theirs. But now it is, and that's better. We started our ESOP with healthy equity in the company, so people saw a nice amount of money in their accounts with the first statement. What a way to spark more personal, individual interest in being a solid business that serves customers well, through operational excellence, for the benefit of all.

In this issue, our cover story talks about pearly inlays. You know, I've said over the years that my guitar-building career is being lived during a big transition period when it comes to natural materials. Things are now changing from what they were forever before to what they will be for a long time to come. Living through the change is more difficult than living before or after the change. But I always say, "Invest in the inevitable." There's no point denying what's inevitable.

There will certainly be less old-growth wood available to make guitars, perhaps less abalone too, and fewer chemicals that work well but are dangerous. One thing to note is that the future of mother-of-pearl is more promising than abalone since a lot of oysters are basically farmed and grow large as they're carefully tended in pearl-producing beds. On the other hand, the abalone traditionally used for shell is collected in the wild for its meat; the shell is a byproduct used for inlay. These are mature abalone with fully calcified outer shells. The meat from farmed abalone matures far sooner than the outer shell calcifies, so those shells

are not useful for inlay. The good news is that scientists are starting to take farm-raised abalone and outplant them, carefully placing juveniles into natural environments, where they can grow to maturity and hopefully help the species recover.

Fortunately, we have many ways to decorate guitars, and we love doing that, and you seem to love owning them. One day, you'll also love guitars with four-piece spruce tops, which you may not even notice because we'll do a good job with them, but they're coming our way. As I write this, changes are happening where spruce grows in Western Canada and the U.S. People are finally coming to terms with the fact that you can't cut all the available old-growth wood. Some, yes. All, no. This is actually a step forward from the days when mankind stopped cutting big trees only after the last one was cut. Now I see them hitting the brakes before it's too late, and I say "bravo" to that. We can adjust. We'll go with it. You'll go with it. Like my friend Eric Warner of Pacific Rim Tonewoods likes to say, "Adapt, migrate or die." He's right, and we'll adapt and continue to

make great guitars, even if our materials change slightly.

I'm very involved with Scott Paul in all our environmental programs. And I'm happy to say they keep growing. Here's a tip: If you want a guy to help you get more and more involved in developing projects like these, just hire a former Greenpeace hippie and then let them work. All I have to do is say, "You know, I've been thinking..." and Scott's off and running. He's on it! It's his nature and profession. I hope you enjoy his updates this issue.

Finally, I'd like to wish a sincere happy 20th Anniversary to my dear friends, suppliers, colleagues and partners at Madinter. As you may know, together we co-own the Crelicam sawmill in Cameroon. We've worked together very closely for the past ten years (our tenth anniversary is November, 2021). If you live in the U.S., you may not know about Madinter, but go to [Madinter.com](http://Madinter.com) and check them out. They serve guitar makers across all of Europe, and especially Spain. You can't believe how many guitar builders there are in Spain. It's the best! I mean, everyone there knows a guitar builder,

which isn't the case here in the States. You should visit sometime. Vidal, Luisa, Jorge, it's a pleasure for me to have had all these years working together with you. Happy Anniversary!

— Bob Taylor, President

**“**  
**We'll continue to make great guitars,**  
**even if our materials change slightly.**  
**”**

**SUPPLIER  
SPOT  
LIGHT**

# Spanish MISSION

**Our Spanish supply partner, Madinter, has grown into a respected name in the music industry and a passionate leader in ethical sourcing practices.**

By Jim Kirlin | Photos: Eduardo Díez



*Madinter's management team (L-R): Jorge Simons, Vidal de Teresa, Miguel Ángel Sánchez, Luisa Willsher*

**W**hat could a veterinarian, a bartender and a dancer know about supplying wood to musical instrument makers? Actually, quite a lot, but 20 years ago, when their company, Madinter, was launched, there was still much to learn as each pivoted to a new career path together. Co-founder, CEO and majority owner Vidal de Teresa (the veterinarian), Production Manager Jorge Simons (the bartender) and Sales Manager Luisa Willsher (the dancer), along with co-founder and silent partner Miguel Ángel Sánchez, form the core management team for the company, which supplies tonewoods and finished parts to makers of musical instruments, including Taylor.

Madinter and its 20 employees are based in the Spanish town of Cerceda, located in the province of Madrid, Spain – about 45 minutes from the city center. You might recognize the name Madinter (a contraction of Madera, the Spanish word for wood, and Internacional) from our reports on ebony in Cameroon, as Madinter is our ownership partner in the Crelicam ebony mill. That partnership, now in its tenth year, is a testament to the shared commitment both companies have made to ethical sourcing practices, and to creating more sustainable forest economies that support the livelihoods of the local communities involved in the sourcing supply chain.

Though a relatively small company, Madinter has grown in many ways over the past two decades, leading the way in raising the standards of sustainability, legality and responsibility among timber suppliers. To help celebrate the company's 20th anniversary, we wanted to connect the Taylor community with our valued partner and spotlight the important role they play in supporting a vibrant global music community and responsible forest stewardship.

We chatted with Luisa and Vidal via email. They shared the personal journey that brought each of them to Madinter and reflected on the company's ongoing evolution in pursuit of its vision.

## **Tell us a bit about the town of Cerceda, where you're located.**

Cerceda is a small village of about 2,500 people located in the mountains of Madrid, about 30 minutes from Madrid Barajas International Airport. We are next to Sierra de Guadarrama National Park, in the north of the province of Madrid, a unique location for its natural environment. The Sierra de Guadarrama is full of stunning places due to its beauty and its geological and biological richness. Here you will find immense coniferous forests, high mountain meadows, snowy landscapes, enormous rocky peaks, streams, waterfalls and glacial lakes, making up an environment of special natural value that is home to endemic species and some in danger of extinction in Spain.

**What might people find interesting about the design of your facility? For example, one of your buildings has an interesting façade – it looks like an artistic interpretation of tree trunks.**

Yes, it's a unique façade made of corten steel with a patina, which imitates the silhouette of a coniferous forest, very similar to those we have in our surroundings. The pieces simulate tree trunks of wild pine, the most representative tree in the national park. We wanted to make a small tribute to our forests and to wood.

Our buildings have solar panels on their roofs to make our business more sustainable and minimize our carbon footprint. We also burn our sawdust in furnaces and use the heat for our kilns where we dry our wood and also to warm the buildings in the winter.

## **How was the company established?**

Prior to the founding of Madinter, Miguel had a company that sold wood to guitar craftsmen and also sold guitars, helping craftsmen export their guitars to other markets. In 2001, Miguel and Vidal founded Madinter, and Jorge and I joined the team shortly afterwards. Now Madinter specializes

solely in producing and selling parts for musical instruments.

In 2003, Miguel left Madinter to become a silent partner and created another company dedicated to the manufacture of flamenco shoes, Calzado Senovilla. Due to his experience with guitar woods, he decided to use these same woods and incorporate them into the manufacture of the shoes. Today, these shoes have a great reputation and are worn by the best flamenco dancers all over the world.

## **Vidal, you were a veterinarian, so starting Madinter was quite a career change. What was your motivation?**

In 2001, after 11 years as a veterinary surgeon, I sold my company and found myself at a personal crossroads. I loved my profession, which had always been my vocation, but I had other passions outside veterinary medicine. These included traveling, getting to know the rainforests, and starting a new business venture. The world of



luthiery was not alien to me because when I was studying veterinary medicine in Paris, Miguel would send me wood, and when I had time between my studies and practice at the veterinary school, I would visit luthiers and offer them these woods. This brought me extra money and allowed me to discover the exciting world of wood, guitar makers and music.

The great master luthier Daniel Friederich was my first customer. I went into his workshop in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine district, near the Bastille in Paris. He was carrying a handful of sets of rosewood sides and backs. I was an inexperienced young man, but very curious. He took exquisite care of me and showed me the nooks and crannies of his workshop and instructed me on the wood I was carrying. It was a fairy-tale workshop, full of wood aromas and shavings, of guitars in the process of construction. That day I became interested in learning more about that trade, about those woods, where they came from, how they were cut, how they were dried. That was the seed that ignited a passion in me and made me change my career years later and start an exciting new story.

**Luisa, you're originally from the UK and studied dance. How did you get involved with Madinter?**

I was born and raised in England, and at 10 years old I went to a performing arts boarding school until I was 18. We were trained mainly as ballet



dancers but also studied other dance genres, and I immediately fell in love with flamenco. After visiting Spain a few times for short dance courses, at 18, I was offered my first job and moved to Spain knowing that I would never return to England for good. At 24 years old, while rehearsing, I broke my foot. By this time, Madinter was taking its first baby steps with Vidal, Miguel and Jorge, and to keep myself occupied, I helped them out, translating and writing to clients. Back then all correspondence was by letter or by fax. We bought our domain, www.madinter.com, started writing emails, set up our first web page, and began our continuous improvement. By the time my foot was healed and I could have gone back to dancing, I was so involved and enjoying the work I was developing at Madinter I never left. Now the only dancing I do is for fun.

**Your range of products and services has expanded a lot over the years after starting exclusively as a wood supplier. How has your business evolved?**

In the beginning, we only supplied wood to musical instrument manufacturers. We started with half a dozen species of wood. Today we offer more than 40 different species for making musical instruments, especially guitars, and we also supply components, accessories and tools. We have also become more specialized in manufacturing finished musical instrument parts using unique and precise machinery, enabling us to add more value to the raw material. As a result, our business model has changed a lot in recent years. We no longer only supply musical instrument manufacturers, but also the craftsman

and the hobbyist instrument maker. Our website has become a resource hub in the industry because we offer a large range of products and solutions. We cut the wood, dry it, process it, make finished parts ready to assemble instruments, and we also manufacture customized products for several clients. We work with factories, workshops and makers all over the world. And for three years now, we have been distributing StewMac products in Europe, and we are their sole distributor apart from themselves.

instrument, from materials and finished products to all kinds of components, accessories and luthier tools. There are also many luthiers all over Europe, and through Madinter.com we can reach all of them. Our customer base has diversified enormously and continues to grow month by month.

**Luisa, in a previous email you said that one of Madinter's keys to success has been the ability to adapt to change. Can you elaborate on this in any specific**



**Spain has such a rich guitar-making heritage, and as I understand it, there currently are many luthiers there. Can you provide some perspective on that and how it impacts your business?**

Spain is a country with a great tradition in classical and flamenco guitar making. We have a lot of guitar makers and very good ones. Over the last 10 years or so, we have seen many new young guitar makers or even amateurs who are attracted by the do-it-yourself culture and are starting to build instruments. Many of them are attracted because they are musicians and would like to know how to make the instrument they play, and others because they have a knowledge of cabinetmaking and would like to learn how to make guitars and diversify their activity. In any case, the determining factor in this explosion of new luthiers is Madinter and similar companies that have supplied a wide variety of products to the market, making it possible to find everything needed to build a musical

**ways? One thought that comes to mind is the way legal compliance requirements have changed over the past two decades with regulations like the amendment to the Lacey Act or changes in the status of certain wood species with CITES or EU timber legislation.**

We have adapted to change in many ways over the last 20 years, but one key factor was indeed our decision to focus on legality. When the Lacey Act was amended to include musical instruments, Madinter was already emphasizing the importance of our wood being legally and responsibly sourced. So when the industry realized that they too needed to make sure that they were purchasing legal wood, Madinter had a solid due diligence system in place and vast knowledge of compliance, CITES, etc.

Some other examples: In our early years we set up our first online store at Madinter.com, which no others had. We visited Asia and started offering solid wood to Chinese factories before any of them even made solid-wood guitars!





We also broadened our catalogue to meet our clients' needs and diversify our business. We added components, accessories and tools, and we are very proud that StewMac trusts Madinter to be their sole distributor other than themselves.

Also, new luthiers were no longer the sons of the older generations. They were newcomers learning the trade, so we started to offer guitar-making courses.

**In addition to your range of products and services, what do you think sets you apart from other companies?**

Our vision as a company is to lead the music industry in championing a sustainable forest economy by

**other sawyers and supply partners in Cameroon?**

We are very proud of this partnership and how much we have achieved together. In just 10 years, we have changed many things and always for the better. When we acquired Crelicam and designed the logo, we also added a slogan that we have stuck to: Responsible Trade. Looking back at what we have achieved together, we are very pleased. Together we have managed to get the industry to accept the ebony that it did not use before because it was too light in color; we have improved the living conditions of our workers, collaborators and the people who live around the factory; and we have improved the health, technological conditions and profes-

CFO Barbara Wight were meeting in the Netherlands with their European distribution team. We called Bob a few days in advance and told him we wanted to present him with a business proposal. We had spent weeks working on an elaborate business plan and had a long presentation to make with a lot of ideas and numbers. When we arrived at the hotel where Bob was staying and introduced the idea to him, he immediately cut the presentation short and said, "I like the idea, and we are going to do it together." Half an hour later, together with Bob, Kurt and Barbara, we were planning our first trip to Cameroon. And so began this wonderful adventure.

Working with Taylor Guitars has been the best thing that has happened



L-R: Ebony fingerboard blanks; Securing wood pieces on a fixture in a CNC mill; Wooden knob blanks for electric guitars and amps; Top Right: Bridges for classical guitars; Bottom: The Madinter team

maintaining the highest standards of sustainability, legality and responsibility in our timber sourcing. Right from the start, we decided that we did not want to be another company just cutting down trees. We wanted to do things correctly. To start with, we wanted to make sure every single piece of wood was sourced legally, complying with all national and international laws. This should be obvious and standard, but unfortunately it is not. And then go a step further and make sure that the environment, the people, are not being harmed, and if we can, to have a positive impact on the world.

**It's not only Madinter's 20th anniversary this year, but also the tenth year of Madinter and Taylor's Crelicam partnership. How would you reflect on what our two companies have managed to accomplish so far and what it means for Crelicam employees and**

sional qualifications of our employees. And as the cherry on top, we have launched the Ebony Project in order to plant and perpetuate the use of ebony for future generations.

During these years, we have also received recognition from the music industry and from the governments of the U.S., Spain and the EU, which have awarded and publicly acknowledged our work in Africa. But the most important thing is that this is not over. We still have many ideas, projects and improvements that we want to implement in the years to come.

**What do you value about your relationship with Taylor?**

Often, we recall the first time we proposed the Crelicam acquisition to Bob [Taylor] and how he welcomed the idea and his enthusiasm from the very beginning.

In 2010 we went to Amsterdam because we knew that Bob, Kurt and



to us over the last few years. We have found a group of fantastic professionals and wonderful people. A special mention must go to our great friend and mentor, Bob Taylor – a wonderful person with a big heart, with unique intelligence and brilliance, a tireless worker as well as a visionary in the music industry. We have learned together and made mistakes together, but we have always moved forward and will continue to move forward toward excellence. **W&S**



Scan the code for a video tour of Madinter's facility.





# Ask Bob

Employee ownership, advice for young Bob, learning from failure, and curved braces

**What differences have you noticed since the employees took ownership of the company?**

**Howard Forberg**

Good question, Howard. Just minutes ago, I had a conversation with one of our machinists in the building I work in about their personal finances. This is a continuing conversation that started the day after our announcement. He and his wife have taken control of their finances and keep making very positive changes that he wanted to share with me. This is almost a daily event now, because with ownership, most people here feel like they have an opportunity to do well for themselves, and that changes their own habits and viewpoints here and at home. These are some of the best conversations I've ever had in the nearly half-century I've worked here at Taylor Guitars. These conversations all naturally come around to the work we do here as it provides the family income to have the opportunity to build a solid financial life. This year has brought high demand for our guitars, and our employee-owners across the company gladly put forth their very best effort. It's amazing to watch how much is being accomplished. I'm pleased to see people be even more interested in the quality of products we produce and what value we can offer a customer. It's a good atmosphere here at Taylor. It's easy to engage in positive changes when people feel a sense of ownership and when they feel their name, their stamp, is not only on the guitar, but on how we conduct our business.

**What would Bob today tell 1974 Bob?**  
**Stephanie Dubick**

Stephanie, this is a question I am being asked more often lately. At first, it took me a little by surprise, and my mind would run ahead in an attempt to say something profound. I'd try to think of impulses or frailties that I suffered from at an early age when starting Taylor Guitars with Kurt that my older, wiser self would tell my younger self. I found I was struggling to give an answer that I truly believed after I was done saying it. It may come as a surprise to find that

my older self is pretty pleased with my younger self. Consequently, my answer today is that I'd say something like, "Bob, you didn't do too bad for a kid who was a total woodshop and metal shop nerd, and who knew nothing about guitars. Thank you for choosing that path and getting my older self to this point. I appreciate it."

try. It costs little to try." And their idea worked very well, a huge improvement. It cost nothing to try, and our company benefitted greatly from their idea.

**Are there plans to bring ebony back and sides to more models?**

**Josh Santiago**

**Have you guys ever experimented with curved braces in your acoustic guitars?**

**Ron Wilson**

Hi Ron, we've made a few curved braces on test guitars over the years. We never found any substantial improvement that would offset the cost of producing such a brace in a factory situation. In fact, we preferred the function of a straight brace. There are some clever luthiers now making good guitars with curved braces. I love looking at their work. But it's not very practical for us.

**What have you learned from trying something (wood/process/whatever) that, for whatever reason, just didn't work?**

**Jim Flanigan**

Jim, I think I've learned to not predict the outcome, thinking I already know. I've learned to just test it. Often, we can test things faster than we can pontificate about it. I've learned to say, "Well, there are reasons why it might work and reasons why it might not work, so let's try it and see." We recently had a major breakthrough on drying wood. Two men on our team, Randy Malaise and Gabriel Boquiren, suggested a change that I would have never suggested because I was pretty sure the method I'd chosen years ago was the right choice. This had to do with what type of fan to use. I know a little about fans, and I had my doubts. At the end of my argument against the change, I just said, "But let's

Josh, we don't have plans as of right now. There's very little ebony that qualifies as side and back material, and together with our Crelicam partner, Madinter, it makes more sense for them to supply this wood to the small shops and individual luthiers rather than use it in our factory. They're beautiful guitars, and I'm sure we'll see some limited amounts here and there, but currently we have no plans to release an ebony model.

**With being good stewards of the environment and caring for our natural resources, do you consider Taylor to be the leader in this area for other manufacturers of guitars to follow to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come?**

**Craig and Lisa Dockstader**



Craig and Lisa, it would be hard for me to recommend what other manufacturers should do. They all have their way of dealing with natural resource depletion, and I know it concerns them. For me and for us at Taylor, we believe in growing trees. It pleases us, and we see the sense in it. I think we're onto something, and I suppose we'll have to come back in 50 years to see if we were right. I know the British were right when they planted mahogany trees in Fiji as well as India about 75 or more

years ago. We get to make guitars with those trees thanks to them. I hope we'll have the same effect on future guitar building. In a slight change of topic, I'd say that I would love to influence consumers on their own personal daily habits. I'd start with how much plastic is used in each consumer's daily life.



**Scan the code** to watch Bob talk about Taylor's wood-drying techniques.

## Got a question for Bob Taylor?

Shoot him an email: [askbob@taylorguitars.com](mailto:askbob@taylorguitars.com)

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



*Jim Ward*  
*Photo: Ivan Pierre Aguirre*

# GROWING in Place

**How artists found inspiration  
in isolation by looking inward**

By Colin Griffith



even as tools like YouTube, SoundCloud and BandCamp grew in popularity with artists who had yet to break into the industry. In the pre-COVID world, artists who made their *bona fides* in the “real world” carried an air of authenticity and quality that “online” artists simply couldn’t match. In a way, the tools that were supposed to democratize music-making ended up pigeonholing young, creative and diverse musicians into an online arena populated by relatively small numbers of dedicated fans. The passion was there, but the exposure was not.

The pandemic changed all of that. With major artists and up-and-comers alike forced off physical stages and onto the Internet, the music of the digital world found itself on a level playing field for the first time. What resulted was an explosion of bands, songwriters and solo musicians into the public eye, many of them from backgrounds rarely showcased in the musical mainstream.

#### Meet Me in the Living Room

Of the many artists that managed to capitalize on the conditions of the pandemic months, pop-punk newcomers Meet Me @ The Altar have blazed a particularly exciting trail. The trio of Téa Campbell (guitar, bass, 224ce-K DLX),

Ada Juarez (drums) and Edith Johnson (lead vocals) have been making music together since 2017, but perhaps not in the sense you might expect. Until this year, the three musicians wrote and produced their songs over distances, sending ideas, lyrics and instrument parts back and forth over the Internet until they arrived at a finished product. Suddenly, their way of writing music

New Jersey, so we had never really written songs in the same room before.”

Though they moved into a house together during the pandemic, the members of Meet Me @ The Altar say their writing process barely changed as a result of their proximity.

“Even though we moved in together,” Ada says, “this way worked before, so why would we try to change some-

“  
**We were an Internet band for five years, so we had never written songs in the same room before.**

— Ada Juarez, Meet Me @ The Altar

”

became the norm, and as musicians everywhere adjusted to this siloed style of creation, Meet Me @ The Altar found themselves with an enormous head start.

“We were an Internet band for like five years,” Ada says. “I lived in Florida, Edith lived in Atlanta, and Téa lived in

thing that was working? So we still write in our separate rooms and then come together. We write lyrics in the same room now, but otherwise it’s the same as before.”

The “Internet band” effect made an impact beyond the songwriting process, too. With plenty of experience

**T**hough the COVID pandemic may have temporarily emptied music venues, it’s hardly kept musicians quiet. During the isolation, the digital world exploded with creativity as artists adopted an array of tools that allowed them to stay connected with fans, make new music across distances, and collaborate with other musicians they never would have met otherwise. Some focused on keeping live music available for fans, staging livestreamed performances that ranged from elaborate, professionally filmed productions to simple bedroom jam sessions. Others focused on craft, exploring new musical territory and writing songs that reflected the pressures of the moment. Still others found the pandemic a time for personal reflection, an opportunity to reexamine life and grow a stronger sense of personal and musical identity.

In places where public life is reopening and live music is returning, artists have begun to resume the pursuit of their musical calling. But to those preparing to hit the road again, it’s clear that things have changed — the world of music feels different, as do performing and writing. And as musicians find stages and begin filling seats with fans, many are doing so with new ideas about what makes a good show, a great song and a strong connection

with an audience, along with a new appreciation for what they do and a fresh gratitude for the spaces in our culture that foster music as a force of community.

#### Digital Natives Meet the Real World

Of all the consequences the music world experienced due to the pandemic, one of the most lasting is how it threw a spotlight on underexposed musical spaces as brick-and-mortar venues put business on hold. In our story on the livestreaming boom from the previous issue of *Wood&Steel*, artists told us about the newfound power of digital tools that connect musicians to audiences across physical distance and restrictions on public life. Livestreaming helped keep artists in the swing of performing, even if that meant sitting in front of an iPhone camera with just an acoustic guitar as fans tapped out their digital reactions in the form of smile emojis and hearts. That development has largely been a positive one for all sorts of musicians, and those with a strong foundation in social media had an even greater advantage as fans looked online for their live music fix.

It hasn’t always been this way. Major touring acts and established musicians have long held sway on the attention of the music-listening public,



L-R: Meet Me @ The Altar's Ada Juarez, Edith Johnson and Téa Campbell | Photo: Jimmy Fontaine





navigating the digital realm and engaging with fans over the web, COVID helped set the conditions for the band's dramatic spike in recognition. The trio had planned to start touring in 2020 and 2021 – instead, they wound up at home, where writing songs was essentially the only creative outlet. Stripping away the “traditional” elements of the music industry had a way of making artists refocus on the essence of their craft. For these three, the pandemic was a pressure cooker that helped them grow in both skill and confidence.

“Quarantine changed a lot for us,” Téa recalls. “If it weren’t for quarantine, we wouldn’t really have had time to sit and think about the direction we want to go and how we want to evolve as a band.”

Instead of touring, Meet Me @ The Altar doubled down on songwriting. Instead of livestreaming, as so many artists did during isolation, they wrote. Save for a streamed show in partnership with Wendy’s restaurants, Meet Me @ The Altar looked to each other, focusing on shaping their voice and developing an identity as musicians.

“The more you write, the more comfortable you feel,” Edith says. “Quarantine was a blessing in disguise. It helped us come together, and we

matured through our songwriting. Now, everything we write tops what we did before.”

The work paid off. The band says they blew up during the pandemic, going from 3,000 followers to over 50,000. Though it’s a bit strange not being able to actually see that growth in the form of bigger audiences at shows, their connections with fans online has helped them get a better sense of where they fit into pop culture in general. They credit some of their growth to a changing society and evolving attitudes that increasingly demand greater inclusion of women musicians and artists of color. As a trio of women of color, Meet Me @ The Altar found their moment.

“A lot of things were happening during quarantine – social issues, Black Lives Matter, George Floyd’s death,” Edith says. “But since people really couldn’t do much, they really had time to think about the world. People started thinking about Black life and Black art. We were right there, and since our music is actually good, people stayed.”

By zigging where others zagged during the pandemic, Meet Me @ The Altar found a perfect opportunity to build on their success and follow their explosion of popularity with

improved songwriting and a better sense of identity as a band. But not all of today’s musicians were born into the digital ecosystem. For those who have put decades into a more traditional approach, the pandemic represented a different challenge: How do you adapt to the times without losing yourself?



Scan the code for exclusive video content featuring Meet Me @ The Altar.

### Turning Music into Community

Closed venues and cancelled shows were the most obvious signs of trouble within the music industry during the pandemic, but another challenge had a quieter, but no less significant effect: mental health. Isolation, unprecedented economic pressure and ongoing social change put a strain on many over the past 18 months, including artists whose primary source of emotional, social and creative catharsis – not to mention financial stability – was dramatically cut off without warning. For former At the Drive-In co-founder, current Sparta guitarist and longtime solo songwriter Jim Ward, holding on to music through the pandemic was about more than main-

taining a public profile and keeping fans engaged online: It was about survival.

Ward (Builder’s Edition 517, GT Urban Ash) is a fixture in his home town of El Paso, Texas. He’s deeply connected to the city, its music scene and even its food culture – Ward owns a restaurant in El Paso that was forced to close during the pandemic. As a person naturally drawn to community, Ward says that the events of the early pandemic were devastating, both for him and the people around him.

“We immediately had to lay people off,” Ward explains, “which is hard emotionally and mentally. My band, Sparta, had a record that came out in April [of 2020], and I like to say it came out to crickets. We canceled tours and had to furlough crew like everyone else.”

Without the natural outlet that creative work provides, Ward says, he struggled through the early days of the pandemic.

“Lockdown is hard on you as a human being,” Ward says, “especially if

you’re a social human being. It was hard to stay good in the head.”

Despite the restrictions on public spaces, Ward knew that keeping his head right meant keeping up with music. Turning to songwriting, Ward distracted himself with a new set of songs that would become *Daggers*, his latest solo album. Writing and creating the album was a kind of therapy, he says, one that both helped him manage his mental state and expand his creative abilities.

“I’ve definitely grown as an engineer, because I was forced to engineer and produce the album myself, where normally I would have relied on other people,” he says. “When the tools that make your job easier disappear, you’re forced to learn new things. I came out of it with a renewed DIY ethos in my life.”

But self-reliance only goes so far. Learning new musical skills is one thing, but it’s not a substitute for human interaction and connection, especially for someone as involved in the com-



Photo: Christ Chavez



munity as Jim Ward. In the absence of chances to meet and greet fans at shows, Ward found himself forging relationships with fans online, often fans he would never have had a chance to meet otherwise. And it didn't stop with Instagram conversations with fans as scattered as Australia and Moscow. Soon, the drive to preserve some sense

In a world that has grown far too used to seeing its young artists spiral out of control, there's something special about creating spaces that encourage honesty and authenticity. On that subject, Ward speaks from personal experience.

"I honestly believe the early part of my career would have benefited from someone saying, 'It's OK to not feel

“  
**The truth is, a lot of us make music because we're trying to figure out how to feel better.**  
” — Jim Ward

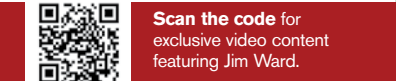
of togetherness led Ward to start a new tradition: Friday Beers, a series of live, unrehearsed, unedited conversations hosted on Instagram between Ward and another musical guest. So far, Friday Beers has included talks with Rhett Miller, Nina Diaz, the Black Keys' Patrick Carney and Josh Homme from Queens of the Stone Age.

These aren't your run-of-the-mill artist interviews focused on new albums, upcoming shows and songwriting inspiration – they're thoughtful, often profound discussions that see Ward and his guests opening up for audiences on a personal level in a way that isn't possible with the few minutes of face time artists are able to give fans at gigs. Ward says that these conversations have been revelatory, not just for how they helped him get through isolation, but for how they helped audiences as well.

"Josh Homme is like an older brother to me, and we had this really deep, personal conversation in front of all these people," Ward recalls, "and I got all these really beautiful messages from people saying things like, 'This is how male relationships should be.' The truth is, a lot of us make music because we're trying to figure out how to feel better. And when you start having those conversations, people can say, 'If that guy feels like this, it must be OK that I feel like that, too.'"

Ward sees this as a feature of the pandemic that should stick around as life returns to something like normalcy.

good right now," he says. "Instead of just handing you a bottle of vodka. We could do better at taking care of our young artists that way."



Scan the code for exclusive video content featuring Jim Ward.

No Right Way to Make Music

The landscape of today's music world is ever-evolving, fueled in equal parts by changing social attitudes, the growing accessibility of new music outside the traditional record label pipeline, and the tangible consequences of a global health crisis. Seasoned insiders and emerging artists alike are finding that in these times, building or maintaining a career in music means being willing to look inward – to focus on craft, to dig deep and explore uncharted creative territory. Though today's digital tools make it easy to connect with audiences and individual fans, they cannot replace the hard work of transforming ideas into actual music, of offering a message that is both authentic to oneself and universal enough to inspire listeners around the world. Fortunately, if the pandemic has revealed anything about contemporary music and the people who make it, it's that the drive to create persists regardless of circumstance. **W&S**

Q&A: Oritsé



Photo: Kazz Kumar

The British pop star tracks new ground as he learns to master the guitar from isolation.

The effects of ongoing social distancing and public health restrictions have been as global as the pandemic that caused them, and artists all over the world have had to adjust. In the United Kingdom, singer-songwriter and producer Oritsé (GTe Urban Ash, GS Mini) has kept himself busy with a host of projects, including spoken-word poetry and learning to play guitar. His video series, *Vibes 101*, follows Oritsé as he takes up the guitar for the first time, sharing his experiences with practicing, getting to know the instrument, and learning his first songs with fans online.

Recently, we caught up with Oritsé via email to find out how his experience of the pandemic affected his creative process. Be sure to check out the *Vibes 101* series at @oritsemusic on Instagram.

What was your experience of the pandemic like as a musical artist in the UK?

After having an incredible comeback launch with my band and selling out a 30-date arena tour in the UK, we unfortunately had to move our tour back. However, in this unexpected time when the world became still, being in isolation actually gave me time to explore a deeper level of my creativity without any distractions.

I've wanted to learn the guitar since forever, so I said to myself, there's no better time than now. I also wanted to encourage others to pick up an instrument, so I came up with an idea to start my own online docuseries called *Vibes 101*, where I would let viewers into the beginnings of my journey of learning the guitar and encourage them to join in or follow my progress. I reached out to Taylor Guitars with the idea and they loved it, so this kicks off our first collaboration together.

How has your approach to your craft or your career changed as a result of your forced isolation during the pandemic?

Until the pandemic, I didn't know it was possible to write songs with people over the Internet. I was able to collaborate and write songs with musicians all over the world,

which was a completely new experience for me. There's nothing like being in the studio with everyone in the same room, but it didn't stop me from being productive. Some of the songs that I wrote over the Internet with musicians around the world will feature on my band's new album.

Do you feel like you've grown as an artist in tangible ways during the pandemic?

I've definitely grown as an artist in so many different ways. I started writing spoken-word poetry, and I was amazed to see how well my fans reacted to it, which encouraged me to write even more. I put out a spoken-word piece called "This 2020" on YouTube, which was produced by the phenomenal Charles Jacques, a very good friend of mine.

I laid down the vocals in my friends' mini-bedroom studio setup and sent my vocal stems via email over to Charles in Inglewood, California. He sent the track back to me after mixing it, and then I found some young, talented visual creators to work with through social media to help me conceptualize the piece in a video.

Did you learn anything new about connecting with fans during this time?

I learned that my fans are more interested in my creative ideas than I may have initially realized, outside of knowing me just as the founding member of my band.

How have you changed your approach to performing live?

I haven't had the opportunity to perform live yet, but my band has been making adjustments to our live performance to ensure that we and our fans are as safe as possible when we go on tour end of this year.

Are there elements of livestreaming or other approaches to creating music you'll continue to use moving forward?

I definitely want to explore the livestreaming performance space a lot more in the future and see what I'm able to do with that. I also will work with other musicians and artists a lot more, no matter where they are in the world. Distance is no longer an obstacle. Online sessions actually work just fine.

What is your songwriting process like?

My songwriting process is a melting pot of crazy ideas where nothing is off limits and there is no filter. It's wild. My process is pretty much throwing everything at the wall and seeing what sticks. It's got to feel good to me. I don't like to get in my own way when writing songs – I like to keep everything open until I achieve that lightbulb moment.

# SMALL BODIES



# BIG APPEAL

**From the Grand Concert to the Grand Theater, Taylor's innovative small-body guitar designs have made the playing experience more accessible, more expressive and more fun.**

By Jim Kirlin





**B**ack in Taylor's early years, customers had two body style options: dreadnought and jumbo. Bob Taylor had adopted and refined both burly shapes from the American Dream shop where he began his career. Each had a well-established heritage that had become a basic blueprint for other guitar makers – the dread, originally a Martin shape named after a mighty British battleship, was boxier with a wider waist, while the jumbo, Gibson's response, had rounder shoulders and a more tapered waist. The unique curves of each translated into a distinctive voice, but both could generate serious acoustic horsepower.

Acoustic guitars didn't start out big like this. The early Stauffer and Martin guitars of the 1800s cut a svelte figure, serving as precursors to the compact parlor guitars that arrived later that century.

Body proportions started growing in the early 20th century, in the wake of important design innovations like X-bracing and steel strings, which worked in concert to pump up the volume in order to compete with banjos, mandolins and orchestras (think drums and horns) in larger venues.

Over time, with the evolution of acoustic amplification, pickups began to be added to acoustic flattop guitars. By the end of the 1960s, Glen Campbell was playing an acoustic-electric Ovation with a piezo pickup on his weekly TV show, and in the years that followed, Takamine was pushing the envelope with its own acoustic pickups while other pickup designers offered aftermarket options to acoustic guitar makers. For some traditionalists, putting a pickup in an acoustic guitar was heresy, but Bob Taylor heeded the calls of performing players and started putting Barcus-Berry pickups in some of his guitars. And even though the amplified acoustic sound produced by most pickups of the day wasn't great compared to today's pickup standards, it meant that, in this modern era, acoustic guitars no longer had to be big to be heard.

"People *like* smaller guitars," Bob Taylor says. "They're comfortable to play. And during that time, we felt like we could start to focus on the intimacy and the tonal qualities of a smaller guitar, because someone could always plug in if they wanted."

### The Grand Concert Is Born

Taylor's first small-body guitar, the Grand Concert, debuted in January of 1984, a decade into Taylor's existence and a decade before the Grand Auditorium. In addition to the arrival of pickups, there were other factors that informed the design of the smaller guitar. One was a desire among electric players for a more compact acoustic body.

"A lot of our earliest customers were primarily electric players," Bob recalls. "They loved our slim necks, but they didn't want a big old guitar. They were used to a small guitar against their body. So they'd say, 'How can we get a small guitar that plays like these guitars you make?'"

Meanwhile, Taylor co-founder Kurt Listug, who'd become the company's traveling salesman, had been returning from long road trips after visiting dealers and reporting that they were asking for a smaller-body guitar. (Kurt reflects on this period in his column this issue.)

### Fingerstyle Fever

Around that same time, a new breed of envelope-pushing instrumental fingerstyle acoustic players had emerged. Many were drawing from diverse musical influences – blues, folk, classical, jazz, pop, Celtic, ambient, you name it – and synthesizing them in exciting new ways. Many were exploring alternate tunings, percussive tapping techniques, and other forms of melodic and harmonic musical expression. Between their original compositions and inventive fingerstyle arrangements of popular songs, they were expanding the sonic palette of the acoustic guitar, and many were actively seeking new types of instruments capable of optimizing their expressive range.

One talented fingerstyle guitarist was Chris Proctor, the 1982 National Fingerpicking Champion at the annual Walnut Valley Festival, held in Winfield, Kansas. For years, Proctor had been on a quest to find a guitar builder to craft his dream fingerstyle instrument.

"I had been frustrated with the lack of appropriate choices in the marketplace for instrumental fingerstyle players," he wrote in an essay in *Wood&Steel* in 2006. "I had begun to imagine a smaller-bodied guitar that spoke with clarity and balance between bass and treble, that offered a cutaway and wider neck options, that stayed stable during multiple re-tunings, and that 'played like a Taylor.'"

At the time, Taylor's 6-string dreadnought and jumbo guitars featured a 1-11/16-inch nut width, which, back then, was common among acoustic guitars but was narrow for the types of fretwork an instrumental fingerstyle player was doing. And the bulky body size wasn't conducive to playing in a seated position, which fingerstyle players, like classical players, tended to do.

Proctor met with Bob and Kurt at the 1983 Summer NAMM Show, at which point Bob was already tinkering with ideas for a small-body guitar. More conversations ensued, and Bob built a custom guitar for Proctor, which would turn out to be the first Grand

Concert. It had koa back and sides, a Sitka spruce top, a sharp Florentine cutaway, and an extra-wide 1-7/8-inch neck to accommodate Proctor's spidery fingers and fretwork. Taylor officially launched the new shape at the Winter NAMM Show in 1984 with two models: a mahogany/spruce 512 and a rosewood/spruce 812, both with a 1-3/4-inch nut width.

More wood pairings followed, including the cutaway maple/spruce 612ce, which caught the attention of Nashville session players and recording engi-

ing ways. In 2006, the standard scale length was modified from 25-1/2 inches to 24-7/8 inches. In terms of hand-feel, the shorter scale length reduces the string tension, creating a slinkier feel, and results in slightly condensed fret spacing for easier fretting, especially with more sophisticated chord forms that span several frets.

Since his arrival in 2011, master builder Andy Powers has embraced the Grand Concert body as a framework for other unique designs and

**“Despite its compact size, the 12-fret Grand Concert can produce a surprisingly husky voice, with great dynamic range.**

**” — Andy Powers**

neers. As Proctor observed: "It was a great instrument for adding shimmering additional rhythm tracks to country and Americana recording sessions. The clarity of voice of the Grand Concert made it ideal for adding to the complexity and sparkle of these songs, without muddying up the vocals or getting in the way of the lead lines or other guitar parts. Soon, the 612ce became more or less standard Nashville session equipment."

Bob Taylor remembers getting similar feedback from engineers about the Grand Concert's sonic virtues for recording compared to bigger-bodied acoustics.

"Engineers told us they normally had to spend all their time trying to take sound *out* of a mix because there were too many overtones, too much boominess, too much woofiness," he says. "They'd tell us, 'But with this little guitar, we don't have to do that. We can put a mic in front of it and record. We get our job done and have a track that sounds good.'"

The smaller body was also more responsive to a lighter touch because the top could be set in motion more easily. And not having to put as much energy into the guitar made it easier to play for more extended stretches with less hand fatigue.

### 12-Fret Grand Concerts

Over the years, Taylor has continued to refine the Grand Concert in interest-

playing experiences, including an array of 12-fret and 12-string models. Our 12-fret models feature a slotted peg-head and a slightly shorter neck than our 14-fret editions. The neck-to-body orientation also shifts the position of the bridge farther from the soundhole and closer to the center of the lower bout. This placement changes the movement of the top in a way that generates more sonic power, more tonal warmth and sweetness, and a vibrant midrange.

"Despite its compact size, the 12-fret Grand Concert can produce a surprisingly husky voice with great dynamic range," Andy says.

And ever since our Grand Concerts were revoiced with Andy's V-Class bracing architecture in 2019, our 12-fret models have become even more versatile, producing a beautifully clear low end and articulating the tonal characteristics of each particular wood pairing more distinctly than ever. (For more on our V-Class Grand Concerts, see our story in the winter 2019 [Vol. 19] edition of *Wood&Steel*.)

### 12-Strings Too

Andy also leveraged the intimate dimensions and ultra-playability of our 12-fret Grand Concerts to design new 12-string models – traditionally built with larger body frames – making the 12-string playing experience much more physically accessible. As he explains, the smaller body tends to be a naturally stronger, more efficient design,

**“A lot of our earliest customers were primarily electric players. They loved our slim necks, but they didn't want a big old guitar.**

**” — Bob Taylor**



*The original  
Grand Concert  
built for  
Chris Proctor*

so as a 12-string, the guitar didn't have to be braced as heavily.

"The Grand concert body is optimal for the smaller individual strings of a 12-string set," he says. "A player can set it in motion easily. In addition, the smaller resonant cavity wants to accentuate the kinds of frequencies that the smaller strings and octave courses are making."

And sonically, especially for recording applications, the smaller body delivers just the right amount of 12-string shimmer and chime — tone that stays in its lane without overwhelming a mix.

Our latest Grand Concert 12-strings boast other unique features that enhance their performance: V-Class bracing for beautifully accurate intonation; our double-mounted string anchoring system, in which each string pairing shares a bridge pin, giving all the strings a consistent break angle over the saddle; and a dual-compensated saddle, which aligns the fundamental and octave strings in the same plane for a smoother strumming experience.

The ultimate player-friendly 12-string Grand Concert might be Andy's Builder's Edition 652ce, released in 2020. It features a maple body and torrefied spruce top; a beveled armrest and beveled cutaway to heighten the playing comfort; and a reverse-strung setup that emphasizes the fundamental note and produces a cleaner 12-string voice.

## More Small-Body Taylor Models

### The Baby Taylor

The guitar that helped establish the travel guitar as its own category, the Baby Taylor, was originally supposed to be a ukulele. It was the mid-'90s, and a respected Taylor dealer at a trade show had made a strong case to Bob that there was a growing revival in interest in ukes and that Taylor would benefit by adding them to its instrument line.

Bob went home and started working on a design, but he had an epiphany along the way.

"When I design something, at the exact same time, I'm thinking about how I can make it," he explains, "because if I can't make it, I'm not going to design it. And I thought, am I really going to make all these tools to be dedicated to a ukulele? If I put the same effort into tooling to make a little guitar, I think we'll sell more."

Bob also had been thinking about a new approach to making guitar necks, and the Baby project gave him a vehicle to test it — along with some other new production ideas.

"Any time we decide to make a new model based on a fresh idea that needs new tooling, we take advantage of that situation," he says. "It gives us an opportunity to try a new method of building that we can't easily introduce into our existing run rate of other guitars. This is one of the ways we can continue to innovate, to incorporate dynamic design in our factory. We use that new guitar and new tooling as a way to test these things out and see if they can be built into the way we do things in the future. For example, we might decide to make a contoured cut-away for a Builder's Edition guitar, and if it ends up being incredible and we can do it on other models, great. But if it only works on this, it's still worth it."

With the Baby, Bob decided to invest in his first laser to cut out the tops and backs and etch the rosette. We now cut all our guitar tops and backs with a laser. And the neck construction ideas Bob explored with the Baby? They directly led to the design of the patented Taylor neck joint we currently use on all our guitars.

As for the Baby Taylor itself? After its introduction in 1996, the three-quarter-size mini-dreadnought became the most popular travel/kids' guitar of all time (although one could argue that distinction now belongs to the GS Mini). And while the Baby's voice clearly isn't as big or deep as a full-size guitar, pro musicians have recognized its legitimacy as a musical instrument and embraced its unique voice in interesting ways, like high-stringing it for recording to add a splash of octave chime to a mix, or capo-ing it to get mandolin sounds. In the Latin music world, we've even seen people convert the Baby into a Cuban-style tres guitar.

### GS Mini

Another resounding testament to the appeal of small-body guitars is the GS Mini, hands-down the most popular guitar design Taylor has ever offered. Released in 2010, the Mini started as a redesign of the Baby. After nearly 15 years, Bob wanted to upgrade the Baby's sound, so he and Taylor design partner Larry Breedlove tried everything to supercharge it, but nothing moved the needle enough, at least working with its original proportions. (In 2000, Taylor had introduced the Big Baby, which had also become a popular offering, but it was nearly a full-size dreadnought — 15/16 scale — with a 25-1/2-inch scale length, although its shallower four-inch body depth did create a more intimate feel against a player's body.)

Bob and Larry realized they'd need to make the body bigger and deeper, and the scale length longer (the Baby's was 22-3/4 inches), but they wanted to

retain the inviting, accessible feel that a compact, portable guitar offered. So they borrowed and scaled down the curves of Taylor's Grand Symphony body, which had been introduced in 2006, chose a longer scale length of 23-1/2 inches, and incorporated Taylor's patented neck design, which would ensure precise neck angle geometry, including a full heel for extra stability.

"It was a guitar I felt I could be proud of," Bob says. "It felt better, it

was a little bigger, you could still get it in the overhead [compartment on a plane], and it came in a gig bag," he says. "Little did I know it would become 'the people's guitar.' It really has established its own unique identity and I think in some ways might be our best accomplishment — a guitar that's not so precious, that everybody loves, that's known around the world, and that a beginner, a grandmother and a pro all want to have."

The GS Mini has also been expanded as a series to offer a range of wood options and aesthetic treatments, including the gorgeous GS Mini-e Koa Plus, featuring a koa top and shaded edgeburst. And Andy Powers added his own design imprint on the series with the design of the GS Mini Bass, which managed to translate the normally longer scale length of a bass guitar into the GS Mini proportions, giving players an easy-playing, great-sounding acous-



**Baby Taylor**  
Body Length:  
15-3/4"



**GS Mini-e Koa Plus**  
Body Length:  
17-5/8"





**GTe Urban Ash**  
Body Length:  
18-1/2"

**Academy 12e**  
Body Length:  
19-1/2"

tic bass that has become an inspiring musical tool for all types of players, including kids.

#### **Academy 12 / Academy 12-N**

That same spirit of making guitars physically comfortable to play and not too precious also informed the design of our Academy Series. This time around, Andy Powers was at the design helm, and he wanted to distill a great guitar into its essential elements

to make it more affordable (a theme that we recently revisited with our American Dream guitars). Two of the three models feature Grand Concert bodies: the steel-string Academy 12 and the nylon-string Academy 12-N (both also available with electronics).

Both models feature a solid spruce top, a layered sapele body, and a simple armrest to enhance the playing comfort. The steel-string version has a nut width of 1-11/16 inches and a 24-7/8-inch

scale length, and also makes a great full-size starter or utility guitar; the nylon-string has a 12-fret neck, a nut width of 1-7/8 inches (to accommodate the slightly thicker diameter of the nylon strings), a 25-1/2-inch scale length and offers an incredible feel and sound. Given the popularity of nylon-string guitars in other cultures around the world, it's a great model for international markets, and for steel-string players looking to add some nylon flavor to their music,

it's arguably the best guitar you'll find at that price point. (We also produce nylon-string Grand Concert models within other series in our line.)

#### **The GT**

The most recent addition to the Taylor line, our new GT guitars continue our efforts to blend playing comfort and great tone into a compact form. In the same way that a desire to improve the sound of the Baby led to the GS Mini, a desire to improve the sound of the GS Mini led to the GT. The challenge, once again, was to preserve the compact proportions that make an acoustic guitar feel physically inviting and accessible, while pushing the dimensions enough to produce a pro-level, full-size acoustic voice. And to retain the fun, approachable vibe that makes smaller guitars great couch companions.

Andy's design dimensions add up to a guitar that lives in that sweet spot: a scaled-down Grand Orchestra body with a body length that sits between the GS Mini and the Grand Concert; a "mid-length" 24-1/8-inch scale length, which sits between that of the Mini (23-1/2) and the Grand Concert (24-7/8); and a nut width (1-23/32 inches) that provides comfortable string spacing, sitting between our narrowest nut width (1-11/16) and the 1-3/4-inch width that is standard on most 6-string, steel-string models. And with all-solid-wood construction.

The string feel – a combination of light-gauge strings and the mid-length string scale – has the slinkiness of a

guitar with a 25-1/2-inch scale length that's been tuned down a half step, yet still with a pleasantly focused, punchy response. Sonically, Andy designed our new C-Class™ bracing architecture (borrowing from his V-Class ideas) to tackle one of the biggest challenges of a smaller-bodied guitar: to give it enough lower-frequency response to produce ample fullness and depth.

To further underscore our desire to offer players another accessible small-body guitar option, the first GT model released, the GT Urban Ash, was priced at the entry threshold for our all-solid acoustics. That model was soon followed by the rosewood/spruce GT 811e and the all-koa GT K21e.

Though the GT has only been out in the world for a short time, it has quickly carved out its own place among Taylor's compact guitar offerings in both feel and sound. "Intimate," "nimble," "sweet," "focused" and "fun to play" are among the refrains we hear from players and reviewers after they have a chance to play it.

#### **Small for All**

More than 35 years after Bob Taylor built his first Grand Concert, our small-body guitars have evolved into a diverse and nuanced family of instruments and expanded the range of what a compact guitar can do. Whatever your physical makeup, skill level, playing style or musical applications may be, these guitars will invite you in, make you feel comfortable, and respond to your playing in a big way. **W&S**

### **Explore More in our Digital Edition**

Taylor artists share what they love about our small-body guitars with exclusive video content in the digital edition of this issue.



**Scan the code**  
for exclusive  
artist content.











# In the POCKET

**Taylor's adventures in inlay design reveal a colorful history, a commitment to craftsmanship, and an affinity for aesthetic balance.**

By Jim Kirlin

Bob Taylor is sitting in his office, mentally sifting through a half-century of Taylor inlay design history, stretching back to his earliest days as a teenage luthier. At one point the conversation turns to the company's most recognized inlay of all – the peghead logo that graces every Taylor made. The original version was inspired by the logo for a thermometer that hung in the shop in Lemon Grove, California, where the company started in 1974.

"I cut hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of those inlays with a saw and a file," he says, walking to a whiteboard on the wall. "I used to draw those, starting here at the bottom left," and proceeds to draw the entire outline of the logo from memory, even though he hasn't cut the inlay in decades. "It's so impressed in my mind, I can start in that corner and go all the way around. I could almost close my eyes."

Inlay design for guitars is a rich topic of conversation – an art form all its own, literally embedded within the art form of guitar making. Though the aesthetic approach can be beautifully minimalist, letting a guitar's refined contours and tone-woods speak for themselves, most stories built around an "art of the inlay" theme inherently skew toward images of highly pictorial, narrative or ultra-personalized artwork that showcases singular inlay craftsmanship. If you appreciate that type of artistry, you're probably familiar with the work of inlay maestros like Grit Laskin, Harvey Leach or Larry Robinson, or maybe the late Larry Sifel or Wendy Larrivée.

"I remember watching Wendy engrave one of her court jesters from her blocks of pearl many years ago," Bob says, marveling at her skills. "That kind of work has become something of a lost art."

In Taylor's case, trying to highlight 50 years of our inlay design in one article is, of course, a tall order, deserving of a hefty coffee table book. Beyond the sheer volume of inlays Taylor has created over the years, there are multiple storylines worth exploring. There is the evolution of our craftsmanship methods, which have progressed from Bob's early days of hand-cutting pearl with a jeweler's saw to the integration of CAD/CAM, CNC and laser technology into our current product development efforts. There are the aesthetic sensibilities that have taken form and been refined here at Taylor, along with styles that have changed with the times or by strategic choice. And there are the people who have brought their unique artistic points of view and skill sets to Taylor's design team over the years, from Bob in tandem with his longtime creative partner, Larry Breedlove, to talented designer Pete Davies Jr., who created some of Taylor's most visually striking inlays, to our current guitar architect, Andy Powers, whose thoughtful visual details create a harmonious marriage between a guitar's musical personality and its aesthetic features.

*A portion of the paua  
California Vine fretboard inlay  
featured on the Presentation Series*



*Running Horses inlay,  
featuring laser-cut koa and maple*

**“I didn’t want Andy to be known as an inlay king here at Taylor. I wanted him to be known as a person who’s continuing to advance what a guitar can do.**

**” — Bob Taylor**

### A Rich History of Inlay Art

To put Taylor’s approach to inlay design in perspective, it might help to provide a bit of context about the history of inlay art in the musical instrument world. The heritage of inlay art for steel-string acoustic guitars reflects a fascinating cross-pollination of different musical instrument traditions stretching back half a millennium. Through the centuries, the violin world experienced different ebbs and flows of ornamentation. During the Baroque period, for example, violins often featured extensive decorative details, but over time, that approach was heavily distilled so that inlays were typically not featured

on a fingerboard. Instead, luthiers would focus on specific appointments like inlaid purfling.

“Purfling and edge treatment became the place where a maker would show their abilities,” says Taylor master guitar designer Andy Powers. “It became an exercise in how perfectly executed the purfling was, and the artistic flair of how you cut and fit the parts — the size, the proportion, the look of the joints between the pieces.”

With guitars, if you trace their development back to the tradition of lutes or ouds, you’ll see examples of heavily ornamented instruments. But instru-

ments were also made with modest appointments for the folk musicians of each era.

Classical guitar makers took a page from the violin world and left the fingerboard unadorned, similarly focusing their inlay artistry on creating attractive purflings, while also crafting beautifully intricate rosette mosaics to demonstrate their refined skills.

In the U.S., banjo makers, especially those of the American Dixieland jazz era of the 1920s, adopted a more flamboyant approach to ornamentation, often with elaborate inlays, including in the fingerboard. That aesthetic would soon

be embraced by steel-string acoustic guitar makers as a way of attracting banjo players. Companies at the forefront of that tradition included Gibson and Epiphone, which were building both banjos and guitars.

“Look at an early Gibson banjo or mandolin that was elaborately inlaid, and it’s easy to see there wasn’t a big step to start putting those inlay treatments on a guitar,” Andy says. “These inlays were done on flattop guitars to a certain degree, but both Gibson and Epiphone were heavily invested in building archtop guitars, which were more widely used by musicians crossing over

from the banjo. Often, these guitars carried then-popular Art Deco visual themes, adopting the vibrant, flashy aesthetic of the Jazz Age. This desire for visual prominence was thought to further emphasize the guitar’s growing importance in a band.”

### Taylor’s Inlay History

Back in Taylor’s earliest days in the mid-’70s, Bob Taylor says, adding inlays to a guitar was rewarding on two levels: It was a way for him to hone his chops as a young woodworking craftsman and to get a little more money for a guitar so the company could pay the rent.



"I could add an ab [abalone-edged] top and some other inlays to fancy up a guitar and turn a \$600 guitar into a \$900 guitar," Bob says.

One of Bob's early artistic influences with inlay design was banjo maker Greg Deering, whom Bob had met at the American Dream guitar shop where he got his start and Deering was working as a repairman. Deering would later work as a repairman in the early days of Taylor Guitars for a short time before founding Deering Banjos.

"I think my lucky strike was that Greg worked in the shop and then had a shop behind me," Bob says, "because Greg is a fabulous inlay designer."

Many of Bob's early inlay ideas were inspired either by visual elements he saw in everyday life — such as a piece of Mexican tile, he says — or other traditional designs that tend to work well with guitars, like leaf, vine or other botanical themes.

"With this leaf sort of an idea, if you engrave it, it can look really good, and if you don't, you'd work on the cuts," he says. "In the early days when we would hand-saw, you could make deep cuts into the leaves. But when we first started doing CNC [cutting] work, initially we couldn't do that anymore because they didn't really have super good cutters for that sort of thing — they were pretty big in diameter, so you lost a lot

of detail. But then cutters started getting better, so you started getting back some of that detail."

### Larry Breedlove Makes His Mark

In 1983, a skilled craftsman and luthier named Larry Breedlove started working at Taylor. His design collaborations with Bob over the next three decades would define the elegant aesthetic that people now intrinsically associate with Taylor guitars — from the supple curves of Taylor's family of body styles to the shape of our iconic bridge to so many of Taylor's inlays. Breedlove brought a uniquely organic, architectural and sculptural sensibility to the guitar form. His love of wood and innovative furniture design informed his aesthetic approach to acoustic guitar design.

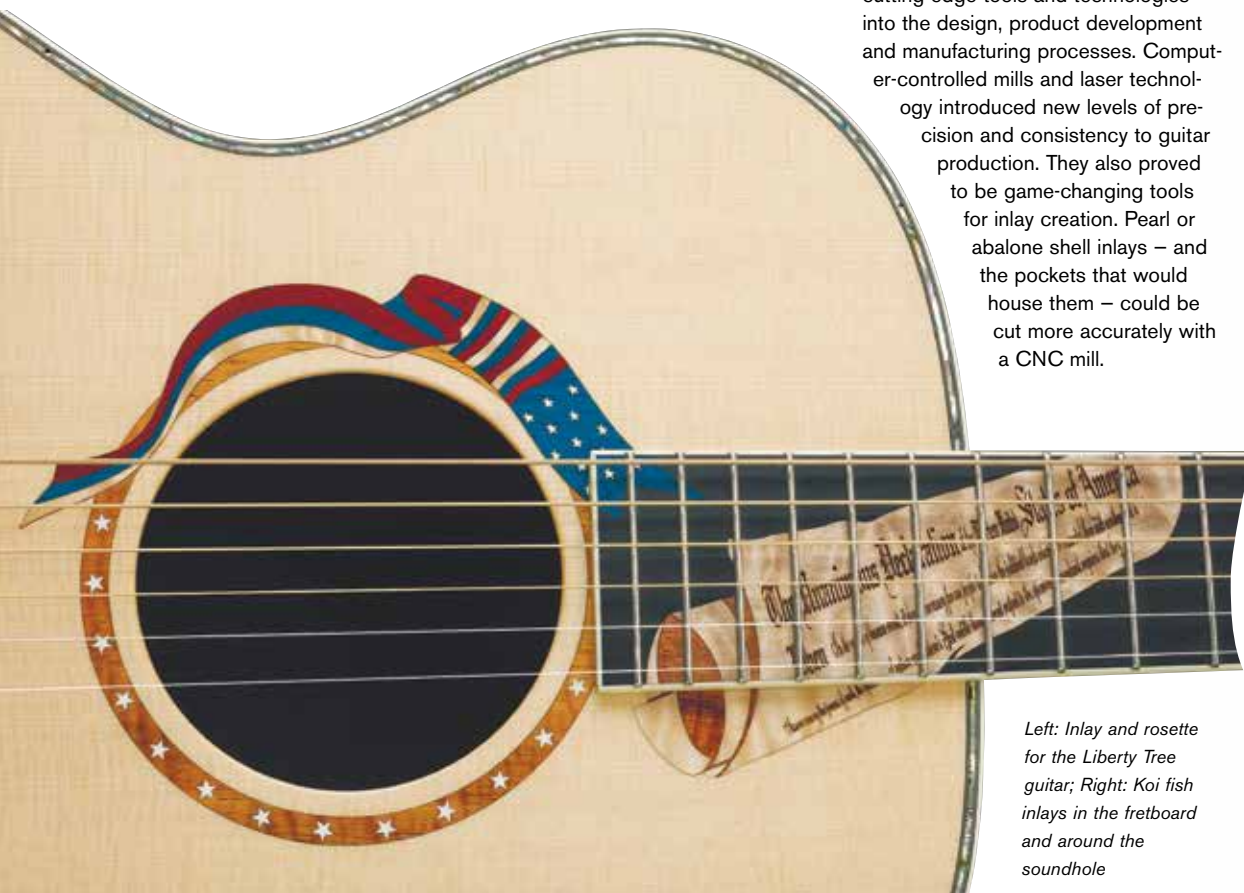
"Larry was like a modern furniture builder," Bob says. "He built furniture a little more angular but more in the vein of a Sam Maloof rocking chair. His stuff was kind of organic like Gaudi, but it didn't look like a branch. It was more sculpted and refined, somewhere between organic and mechanical. His shapes and ideas for form were really nice. And that aesthetic worked well for the types of inlays that we did. So we kind of modernized some of the old banjo inlays."

Breedlove also took on a lot of the custom inlay design work that had started with Taylor's Artist Series in the mid-1980s (including some envelope-pushing color finishes on guitars for the likes of Prince, Kenny Loggins and Jeff Cook from the band Alabama). Along the way, Breedlove started working with alternative inlay materials to expand his color palette.

### New Tools, New Inlay Designs

The 1990s would prove to be a transformative decade for Taylor Guitars in many ways. For starters, acoustic guitars experienced a resurgence in popularity after a decade of commercial dormancy, thanks in part to the cable television show *MTV Unplugged*. After a decade dominated by synthesizers, electronic drums and hair metal, acoustic guitars became cool again, as rock acts stripped some of their hits down to intimate acoustic performances. And many rockers were happy to discover that the slim neck profile and easy playability of a Taylor neck felt similar to electric guitars. Other emerging artists like the Dave Matthews Band also made the acoustic guitar a centerpiece of their music (and it didn't hurt that Taylor guitars became a mainstay of Matthews' live shows in the '90s and onward).

As our guitars were growing in popularity, Taylor was also bringing cutting-edge tools and technologies into the design, product development and manufacturing processes. Computer-controlled mills and laser technology introduced new levels of precision and consistency to guitar production. They also proved to be game-changing tools for inlay creation. Pearl or abalone shell inlays — and the pockets that would house them — could be cut more accurately with a CNC mill.



Left: Inlay and rosette for the Liberty Tree guitar; Right: Koi fish inlays in the fretboard and around the soundhole



“With the advent of CNC,” Bob says, “we could design inlays that were a little nicer, a little fancier, for our more expensive guitars. Even if another vendor ended up cutting the inlays for us in some other location, we knew it would fit in the pocket we carved for it on a CNC. It was like ordering a carburetor for your car – you expect it to fit when you open the box and install it. Whereas before that, every inlay was almost like starting over.”

Lasers also opened the door to new inlay materials beyond traditional shell, including different woods and synthetic materials like Formica® ColorCore®. And because of the small diameter of a laser beam (.008 inch) and the accurate registration, lasers could also be used to etch detail into certain inlay materials like wood or acrylic to enhance their look.

In the mid-'90s, with the company hitting its stride, and bolstered by the successful debut of the Grand Auditorium, Taylor decided to put more creative resources into doing custom design and inlay work. By the tail end of the decade, Taylor's ability to create visually compelling inlays for standard, limited-edition and custom models had grown significantly. And with Taylor actively cultivating relationships with

popular artists, the years that followed saw the company embrace these new design tools to create a series of more pictorial-themed inlays for artist signature guitars, along with other visually themed limited-edition models.

One of the most elaborate story-themed inlay designs of that time was for the Cujo Guitar (released in 1997), featuring figured walnut back and sides that came from a tree that had been removed from a farm in Northern California. The Cujo tie-in was that the tree appeared in scenes in the film adaptation of the Stephen King novel *Cujo* (1983), about a St. Bernard bitten by a rabid bat that ends up terrorizing a mother and her son. The inlay portrayed narrative elements of the story, including the dog, the bat, a barn and the walnut tree itself, incorporating a variety of wood, shell and other materials. The consistency of the technology used to create the inlays enabled us to create a run of 250 guitars.

Another key Taylor inlay artist from that period was a young talent named Pete Davies Jr., who arrived at Taylor fresh out of design school in 1999 and brought an inherent knack for creating art that could be translated into visually compelling pictorial inlays. Longtime Taylor fans will recognize his work. His

first inlay design was a koi fish inlay for our limited-edition “Living Jewels” Guitar, the first offering of what would become our Gallery Series. Colorful koi fish “swam” along the fretboard and around the soundhole of the figured maple/Sitka spruce guitar body, which had been stained blue to simulate water. For his inlay materials, Davies used synthetics: ColorCore, faux pearl, and a composite of ground turquoise, coral and stone mixed with resin. The guitar was visually stunning, as were the other Gallery Series models created. The Sea Turtle Guitar featured inlaid sea turtles in the fretboard and another turtle with a jellyfish inlaid into the blonde, figured maple back of the guitar body. A third limited edition from the collection, the Gray Whales Guitar, featured whale inlays and a striking rosette featuring a galleon ship that partly extended into the soundhole.

Another intricate inlay designed by Davies adorned the Liberty Tree Guitar, crafted with wood from a 400-year-old tulip poplar tree that served as a gathering place for patriots in Annapolis, Maryland, during the American Revolution in 1776. Davies' inlay scheme commemorates the tree's historical significance with a depiction of the first post-revolution version of the American

## The Protective Role of Inlays

In addition to the decorative appeal of inlay art, some inlays, such as a rosette, actually play a practical role in helping to protect an acoustic guitar from cracking. Having the soundhole cut into the top means that there is both exposed end grain (closest to the bridge and neck) and side or edge grain (closest to the sides of the guitar). The end grain surface will lose and gain moisture more rapidly than the edge grain surface. So inlaying a band of material around the hole prevents the different absorption rates from causing the top to crack in that area.

Inlaid purfling around the inside edge of the top of a guitar performs a similar role. It was the original purpose of purfling on violins. By contrast, a violin's f-holes typically don't have inlaid purfling because the shape is too complex. Consequently, most old violins display some degree of cracking, usually in the middle notches of the f-holes.

flag in the peghead, a scrolled, laser-etched depiction of the Declaration of Independence that extends from the fretboard onto the soundboard, and a rosette featuring 13 stars (representing each of the original colonies) and a Colonial-era banner that starts on the edge of the fretboard and unfurls across a portion of the rosette. Between the historical significance of the wood and the inlay art that honored it, the guitars were truly special.

Other custom designs originally created by Davies for limited-edition models include a flame inlay for our limited-edition Hot Rod Guitar (HR-LTD), inspired

## A Recommitment to Guitar Design

By the time Pete Davies Jr. left the company, Taylor had gone through a substantial period of growth. The company had also pushed the envelope artistically with a prolific outpouring of custom inlays for artists and a slew of other limited-edition guitar offerings. With Davies gone, Bob Taylor, Larry Breedlove and others on the product development team considered the path ahead and the pros and cons of continuing to invest in this aesthetic approach and operating a robust custom program.



*An elaborate inlay of a tiger and dragon for a custom ukulele Andy Powers made prior to coming to Taylor*

“Any inlay design should offer some indication of what the guitar will feel and sound like.

” — Andy Powers

by old hot-rod cars, featuring inlaid flames (in wood) along the fretboard and around the soundhole; a beautiful inlay of horses in maple and koa for our Running Horses Guitar (RH-LTD); and a pelican inlay crafted from koa, walnut, satin wood and myrtle. (To see photos of these and other interesting guitar inlays from Taylor over the years, see our gallery in our digital edition.)

After a five-year run, Davies decided to leave the company to continue his career in 2004. (Sadly, he passed away in 2014 at the age of 37.)

“We had swelled that up, done some business, and it was great for a while, but I started to feel like we were getting stuck in that place,” Bob says. “We tried to make a business of it. There were a couple of people who wanted some really fancy, money-doesn't-matter guitars. Even with what we charged, we didn't really end up making money or offering enough value. And the opportunity cost was really high because we'd lose Larry into a custom-design black hole for months at a time.”



Meanwhile, Taylor continued to innovate with its guitar designs. In 2005, the company introduced the hollowbody electric/acoustic T5. The Grand Symphony body style, designed by Bob and Larry Breedlove, came a year later, followed by other designs that included an 8-string baritone, and in 2010, the GS Mini, also designed by Bob and Larry.

By that time, Bob had been talking to a talented local guitar maker named Andy Powers about joining the company and the role he would play as Taylor's next-generation guitar designer. Andy signed on and officially started in January of 2011.

"With Andy's arrival, we made a conscious decision that we were not

going to concentrate on highly inlaid, bespoke guitars, where we try to develop a business of making custom guitars through inlay work," Bob says. "Andy's an incredible guitar builder, and I was ready for us to renew our focus on the quality of the guitar as a musical instrument rather than a piece of jewelry. So much energy can go toward maintaining the talent and management required to do inlaid works of art. We were in a time when we felt it was appropriate to make elegant inlays for our guitars and largely stay away from the thematic we've done in the past."

One of the ironies, Bob adds, is that in addition to being a superb luthier, Andy is also a gifted inlay artist capable of highly pictorial themes.



"He'd do amazing inlays like tigers walking across the guitar," he says. "But I didn't want Andy to be known as an inlay king here at Taylor. I wanted him to be known as a person who's making better guitars than we made at Taylor before he came, who is continuing to advance what a guitar can do, how long it can last. We both felt like that's the best value we can offer our customers."

### Andy's Inlay Epiphany

Andy is proud of the custom inlay work he did on the guitars he built before joining Taylor. And for good reason. Not only is his portfolio visually stunning, the work was entirely hand-drawn and hand-cut.

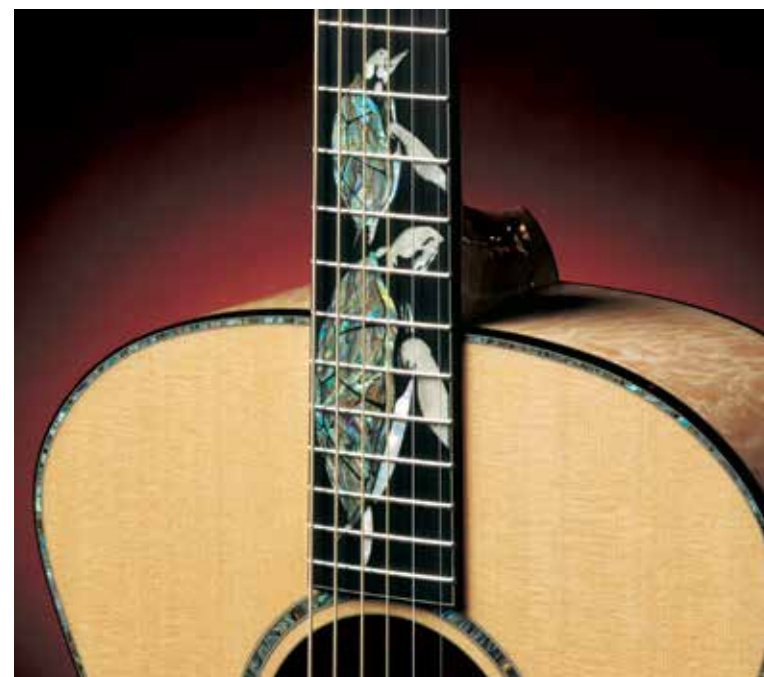
"The tradition of hand-cut inlay work was something I admired and enjoyed a great deal," he says. "I was working with a jeweler's saw and some tiny files. I may as well have been working in the 1700s."

Based on the type of inlay work his customers wanted for their guitars, Andy sees parallels with contemporary tattoo artistry.

"Think about the variety of tattoos a person might get," he says. "You see anything from the names of their children, depictions of their life stories, inspirations, mottos, beliefs. A lot of people approach inlay art in a similar vein – they want this one instrument to tell their story...some experience, some hardship, some success, some failure. I



*Inlays in the back of the Sea Turtle Guitar from the Gallery Series*



*Fretboard inlays for the Sea Turtle Guitar*



*Fretboard inlay for the Cujo Guitar*

## Anatomy of the Mission Inlay

At a glance, the Mission fretboard inlay suite featured in the Grand Orchestra 618e and 818e looks like a relatively straightforward design. Essentially its shape is a block-like form with a curved-edge top (featuring a pair of mirrored ogee edges found in certain classical architectural styles). But a closer inspection reveals other nuanced details.

For starters, the inlay incorporates two different materials: the interior portion is mother-of-pearl, which has a natural sheen, while the outer border is ivoroid.

“The ivoroid doesn’t have a reflective sheen,” Andy says. “It’s not the same silver-white color as the pearl, and it’s got a grain to it. The color differences are subtle, so you don’t see much distinction from afar, but the gradation of creamy off-white against an ebony fingerboard allows your eye to look deeper into the design and eases the contrast between the cool shine of that pearl and the warmth of an ebony background. It adds a level of visual complexity that you don’t even notice at first.”



Another noteworthy aspect of the design is the way Andy was able to overcome a limitation of CNC router bits using lasers.

“Using any sort of computer-guided cutting tool, you have to understand that there is no way to cut a sharp inside corner using a round cutter,” he explains. “If you’re cutting parts by hand in a traditional way, you can make a sharp inside corner because a saw blade that’s making a cut can leave a straight edge kerf. But with CNC, the closest you can get is a small radius in that corner that corresponds to a cutter.”

But a laser, he explains, *can* cut a sharp inside corner, as long as it can cut the through the material. (Lasers tend to have a harder time cutting through shell at certain thicknesses but can easily cut through materials like wood, acrylic or, in this case, ivoroid.)

“With the Mission inlay, if you look closely, you’ll see that the ivoroid, which has been laser-cut, has sharp corners,” Andy says. “The mother-of-pearl centerpiece has sharp outside corners that match and have one small-radius inside corner. In this case, the inside radius benefits the design. We’re leveraging the unique ability of tools and the materials to do something that would be almost impossible to do by hand with any level of consistency. The width of the ivoroid band is ultra-consistent, within tenths of thousandths of an inch. These inside corners are always exactly where you intended them to be, and the radius is always exactly the right size. You couldn’t achieve that level of consistency by hand. I think this is my favorite block inlay design so far. It has so much visual boldness without feeling primitive.”

was pretty into that because I enjoy the human-interest aspect of this work.”

He also enjoyed the artistic challenge of finding a way to graphically depict a person’s story, and working within the constraints of the medium and the materials when done by hand. But Andy started to think differently about his approach to inlays after a visit at his shop from none other than the late Bill Collings from Collings Guitars.

“He was looking at this guitar I was building for a customer,” Andy recalls. “I’d spent weeks working on this very elaborate inlay work, and I was proud of it. Bill turns to me after staring at this guitar and says, ‘This is exceptionally beautiful work. But if I were you, I would start thinking about who will own this guitar after this first player, because musicians are going to want to play this guitar for much longer than you think! We stood there in silence for a few minutes while I thought about it, before I responded. ‘So, in other words, you wouldn’t want to have somebody else’s mom’s name tattooed on your arm?’ And he said, ‘Exactly.’”

In the years that have followed, Andy says, that observation has proven to be true, as he watched guitars he built for clients go to their children.

“In one case, the player who ended up with the guitar told me, ‘I love the guitar, but it’s my dad’s story, not necessarily mine! That experience made me more interested in the traditional side of inlaid art and focusing on certain themes that are a little more universally appealing. Of course, the classic subjects – botanical motifs, some

shapes that are more impressionistic – usually work.”

It reminds Andy of a trip he took to Cremona, Italy, some years ago, where he had an opportunity to see a beautiful Stradivari violin up close.

“It had some heavily ornamented art, which was unusual,” he recalls. “Parts were hand-painted, elements were carved in and filled with contrasting mastic, so it wasn’t necessarily inlaid pieces but had a similar visual effect. It was a botanical kind of motif, and the lines felt as elegant today as they would have been back in the 1700s when it was done. I thought, now that’s a beautiful approach to ornamentation.”

### Andy’s Approach to Inlay Design at Taylor

Andy echoes the point made by Bob Taylor that his creative focus at Taylor should be on foundational-level improvements to guitars rather than extreme customization. That said, part of that focus has led to an array of thoughtful new inlay designs within the context of Taylor’s standard guitar line.

Since his arrival at Taylor a decade ago and in his role as master guitar designer, Andy has been on a steady path of transforming virtually the entire Taylor guitar lineup, refining the feel, sound and look of most existing models and introducing many new designs as well. Regardless of the type of guitar, the aesthetic approach, he says, is fundamentally the same: It has to be a holistic design process in which the musical personality and the aesthetic treatment share a cohesive identity.

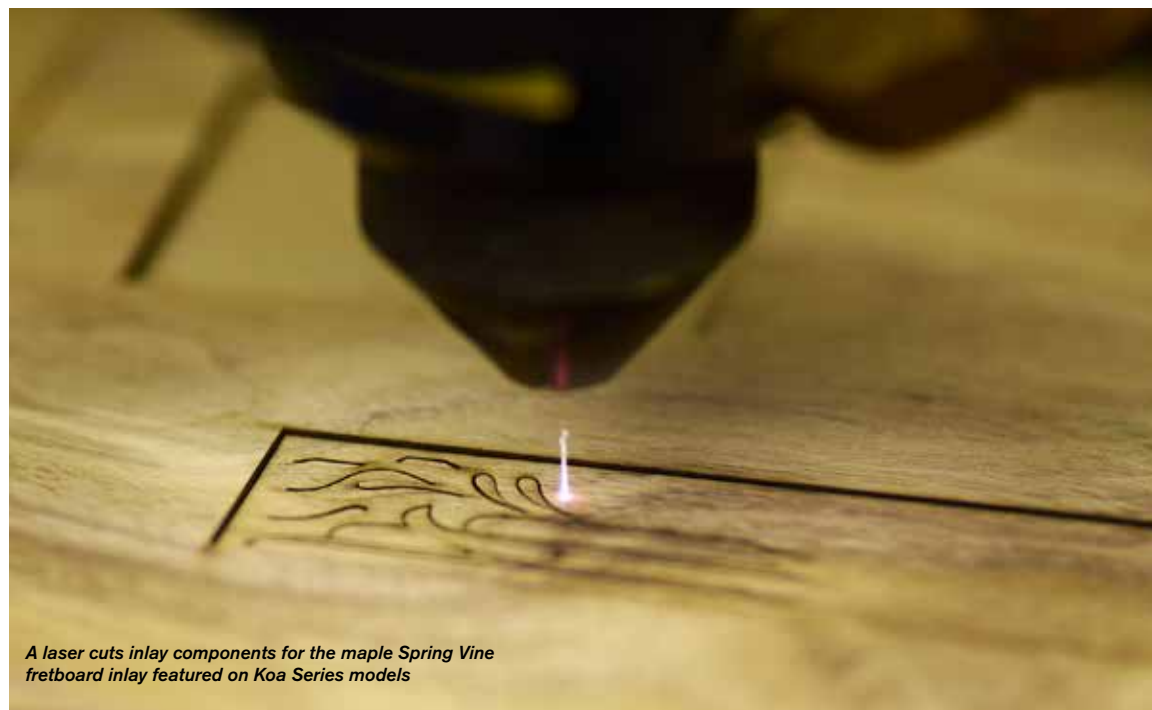
“If you look at any inlay design, it should offer some indication of what the guitar will feel and sound like,” he explains. “Shapes certainly matter. Materials matter. Visual weighting matters, like how bold or how subdued the visual strength of an inlay is.”

He uses the Grand Concert Builder’s Edition 912ce as an example.

“The smaller body tends to give it a more intimate, elegant feel,” he says. “Now imagine it with big, blocky mother-of-pearl inlays at every position. You’d have this massively shiny, reflective fingerboard, and it would be so visually heavy it would look like the guitar might fall right out of a stand. It wouldn’t be in balance with itself visually. But with the Belle Fleur inlay, there’s a balance of strength and delicacy with a little Art Nouveau, a little Art Deco, a little stylized impressionism in there. I see that and think, it looks like the rest of the guitar. It fits. It doesn’t have any one thing that overpowers something else. The types of curves used suggest the curves of the beveled cutaway and the armrest and the overall silhouette of the guitar. All of those elements go together.”

This inlay design philosophy can sometimes present challenges within the framework of the Taylor line. Each series in the line traditionally has shared a suite of appointments (and in most cases, the same back and side wood), yet different body styles within a series can have very different sonic personalities.

So, at times, Andy has exercised his creative license to design outside those constraints. His Builder’s Edition frame-



*A laser cuts inlay components for the maple Spring Vine fretboard inlay featured on Koa Series models*





*Pickguard inlay for the Presentation Series*



*Engraved Victorian inlay featured on limited-edition 400 Series models*

work gave him one particular avenue to deviate from a series to create another class of “director’s cut” models. With the debut of the Grand Pacific, for example, Andy chose to craft the Builder’s Edition 517 and 717 with an appointment scheme that reflected the traditional heritage of dreadnought-style guitars and a different musical voicing for Taylor, so the two models shared an aesthetic sensibility and an inlay design with each other rather than with the 500 Series or 700 Series.

Another example (though not a Builder’s Edition design) was the redesign of the Grand Orchestra in 2020 to feature V-Class bracing and a new appointment scheme. The two retooled models, the 618e and 818e, feature a shared inlay, the Mission, which is different from the other inlays used with the 600 and 800 Series. Andy chose to design a block-style inlay as a visual reference for the guitar’s big, bold and powerful voice, but upon closer inspection, there is an additional level of subtle detailing in the inlay – the mother-of-pearl block in the center is actually surrounded by an outer ring of laser-cut ivoroid that offers a subtle element of

gradation. (For more on the technical execution of that inlay design, see our sidebar.)

“It feels appropriate for a Grand Orchestra guitar,” Andy says. “It embodies how I’d describe the sound of a Grand Orchestra. It’s powerful, bold, domineering, but also with this level of complexity and refinement that belies its sheer size. You can use a piece of inlay – a position marker, a mere decoration – as a design opportunity for the guitar to affirm itself because all the elements tell a similar story. When you look at the completed instrument as a player, you intuitively understand that the parts blend harmoniously. To me, that’s a successful inlay. I’d like to think that a hundred years from now, a player could look at that guitar and somehow intuitively know it all works.”

It probably would sound pretty amazing, too. **W&S**

*In a future edition of Wood&Steel, Taylor’s Director of Natural Resource Sustainability, Scott Paul, will offer a closer look at our sourcing efforts relating to natural materials like mother-of-pearl and abalone.*

## Inside the Inlay Design Process

Like a lot of Andy’s other guitar design work, he typically starts sketching his inlay ideas in pencil. (For anyone wondering, he’s a fan of Blackwing pencils.) Here, he walks through some of the steps in the process of developing an inlay for production.

“I’ll start with a few criteria about the guitar itself, so if I know this is a modern guitar, I might know that this inlay needs some points because I don’t want it to look too heavy. So I’ll sketch some different ideas and then start drawing revisions over it using tracing paper or vellum until I arrive at what’s essentially the form – something that has the right genetic DNA for the design. Eventually I’ll do some conversions in the computer. Once I have the proportions, the sizing, the curves, I’ll start working with it in a CAD/CAM format to create some fixed geometry from that sketch.

“Once I have the geometry, I’ll often cut the inlays with machines myself. If I want it to be a shell part, sometimes I’ll work with [Taylor inlay programmer] Dave Jones and we’ll cut real shell. Often times I’ll use lasers because they’re pretty fast and easy. You can do mockups in materials that aren’t shell and aren’t so costly. You might do a mockup with a piece of plastic inlaid into a piece of wood, just to get the right curves and visual look. With machines, we want to see if the geometry runs well, whether the machine faults out, whether there are interruptions in your computer geometry, because creating guide curves for a CNC machine is an art form itself. Most people don’t know what a tool path like that is, but a machine can only create points and some form of geometric shape between them.

“By the time you’ve created a path that a machine can follow, you might have hundreds of individual segments of geometry, all linked together so the machine can make this part. It’s such a challenge, but I love it.”

Once the inlay design is finalized, Dave Jones from our product development team will do some additional work in CAD/CAM to stabilize the design, write any programs needed for the CNC mill or laser, and prepare it for production. Depending on the material and the design, some inlays are cut in-house while others – usually shell – are CNC-cut to precise specification by an outside company, either Precision Pearl or Pearl Works.

Programs also need to be written for a CNC mill to cut the pockets that will hold the inlays.

“We’ll build a separate set of geometry derived from the first set, Andy says. “There are some changes you have to make – it can’t be a perfect friction fit because a piece of wood needs enough clearance to swell or shrink. And remember that you can’t use a rotary tool to cut an inside corner. So if you have any sort of design work that comes to a point, you can’t cut that point. You have to cut outside of it. So you need to build in some separate geometry that gets you clearance there.”

If a new inlay is being introduced to production – especially one that’s more intricate or labor-intensive to install – Andy or Dave Jones will work with our production craftspeople to ensure that it’s a smooth, efficient execution.

“The most important thing with inlay installation work is really just staying present and being aware of what you’re doing at every moment in the process,” Jones says.

One inlay that requires extra care is the paua shell pickguard inlay on our Presentation Series.

“It’s challenging because it’s delicate,” Jones says. “That rosewood veneer for the pickguard is only 18 thousandths of an inch thick. The paua inlays are 20 thousandths – thin enough that they’re also cut on the laser. The pocketing has to be just right. And after inlay, it goes through more careful handling, and then finish and re-registration back at the laser to get a successfully completed product. The way it’s done is a testament to the level of commitment our craftspeople have to quality and to working together.”





[Sustainability]

## THE EBONY PROJECT: GROWING INTO PHASE 2

*An ebony tree being planted near the village of Somalomo in Cameroon. Photo: Vincent Deblauwe*

**A decade after buying an ebony mill in Cameroon, our efforts to ensure an ethical ebony supply chain have led to new scientific discoveries and a scalable community planting program that's on the verge of doubling in size.**

By Scott Paul

Bob Taylor has a saying that's become something of a mantra around the Taylor campus. It comes up in discussions about long-term strategic decisions, often about embarking on ambitious projects with many initial challenges that may not pay immediate dividends but show great promise down the road. "In 10 years, we'll be glad we did it," Bob will sometimes remind everyone in an effort to consider the long view, not just the immediate impact. It's a phrase that comes to mind in reflecting on what has grown into The Ebony Project in Cameroon.

As readers of *Wood&Steel* may recall, a decade ago, in 2011, Taylor Guitars and our Spanish tonewood supply partner, Madinter, purchased the Crelicam ebony mill in Yaoundé, Cameroon, with the goal of creating

a socially responsible value chain for ebony musical instrument components. After spending the first several years adapting to the realities of operating in Cameroon, rebuilding the mill, training employees to use new machines and tools, and changing our sourcing specifications to reduce waste and increase yield (e.g. using ebony with variegation and not just the pure black wood), we turned our attention to another facet of responsible supply management: developing a scalable ebony planting initiative.

In 2016, the initiative was officially launched as The Ebony Project. We partnered with the Congo Basin Institute (CBI) in Yaoundé with the initial goals of conducting basic ecological research on ebony propagation (surprisingly little research on ebony was available) and leveraging what we were

learning to develop nurseries and a community-based planting program that eventually could be scaled up. The first milestone target was to plant 15,000 ebony trees along with an undefined number of fruit trees as a food and income source for villages that participated in the program.

Over the past five years, The Ebony Project has made slow but steady progress, and we've been learning a lot. In 2020, we surpassed our goal of planting 15,000 ebony trees, and the project's lead researcher, Dr. Vincent Deblauwe, has published scientific papers that are quickly becoming the definitive syllabus for the species.

Each year, the project team produces a progress report to document the successes and challenges of the previous year and articulate goals and opportunities moving forward. The



reports are intended to be an honest assessment of the state of the project at each given moment in time and are publicly available, so if you'd like to read more, you'll find the latest report at [crelicam.com/resources](http://crelicam.com/resources).

As the project has evolved in recent years, we signed a public-private partnership with the government of Cameroon, and both the Franklinia Foundation and University of California have provided some funding. But by and large, thus far the entire endeavor has been personally funded by Bob Taylor.

Expanding with Outside Funding

After slowly establishing proof of concept with our community-planting paradigm, the work of the Ebony Project has attracted greater attention – and now additional funding. The Ebony Project will be included within a broader \$9.6 million forest conservation initiative in Cameroon funded by Global Environment Facility. (The GEF is a multilateral trust fund whose financial resources enable developing countries to invest in nature and support the implementation of major international environmental conventions on issues such as biodiversity, land degradation and climate change. The Government of Cameroon and the World Wildlife Fund will manage GEF funds in Cameroon).

The Ebony Project will receive roughly \$1.4 million dollars from the GEF grant that will allow us to build on our experience of the previous five years and expand from planting in six villages to planting in 12. The investment will also bolster the project's already groundbreaking scientific research into the ecology of West African ebony and the Congo Basin rainforest. It's an exciting moment for the project... but wait, there's more.

Increasing Fruit Tree Production

The U.K. government-funded Partnerships For Forests (P4F) program has partnered with CBI to better understand the possibilities of expanding The Ebony Project's fruit tree production and explore ways to access local and regional markets as an economic incentive to keep biodiversity intact, while further addressing food insecurity issues. Though we call the initiative "The Ebony Project," planting locally desirable fruit trees was always part of the equation, although, truthfully, the fruit tree aspect of the project has lagged behind the ebony planting and scientific research. But it's been getting better each year, and perhaps with P4F we can improve it further. Depending



A snapshot of research data for Ebony Project plantings, presented using Tableau's data visualization software. Image courtesy of Virginia Zaunbrecher, UCLA/Congo Basin Institute

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**By 2025, we aim to plant an additional 30,000 ebony trees and 25,000 fruit trees.**  
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on the results of the analysis, P4F is poised to invest further to help enhance fruit tree nursery production and stimulate trade.

Meanwhile, Dr. Deblauwe and his team continue to make crucially important scientific discoveries that expand our understanding of the Congo Basin's rainforest ecology. In fact, that project-based independent research was instrumental in the 2017 IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List re-evaluation of West African ebony, originally classified as "Endangered" 20 years earlier but subsequently moved to the more optimistic status of "Vulnerable." (To learn more about re-evaluation, please see my Sustainability column in W&S Vol. 94, Summer 2019). The project has improved our understanding of the multi-year fruiting cycle of ebony, and innovative night-vision trap cameras have identified, for the first time, the insects that pollinate the ebony flower and the mammals that eat the fruit, carry the seeds in their digestive tract, and disperse them through defecation, thus helping the tree reproduce.

Developing a Powerful Data Dashboard Tool

Meanwhile, Steve Theriault, our Business Intelligence Manager at Taylor, has been working with Dr. Deblauwe to convert project data that has

been collected by hand or on laptop into Tableau, an interactive data visualization software platform. Tableau was originally created to help companies better understand operations through data analysis, providing historical, current and predictive views, including graph-type data visualizations. It's cool. And Steve is the equivalent of a triple black belt in Tableau. What he and Vincent have created is incredible. With a few clicks, a highly intuitive dashboard allows us to share information in an easily understandable way. At any given moment, we know, for example, how many ebony and fruit trees are in any given nursery and what year we expect they will be ready for transplant. We can track annual seed collection, and we know who planted what and where. We run macro queries across the entire project or zoom in and analyze village-level data. It's really going to be helpful and I think somewhat unique within the global restoration movement.

Entering Phase 2

I've taken to calling the first five years of The Ebony Project "Phase One: The Start-up Years," which were largely paid for by Bob Taylor. We had our successes and failures, we grew our community planting partnerships to six villages, and we hit our goal of planting 15,000 trees. We learned a lot about the basic ecology of the species

and about the communities of people that live in the extended buffer zone of the Dja Forest Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where we work. Bob and CBI founder, Professor Tom Smith of UCLA, set up an endowment to ensure the project's survival into the future, regardless of outside funding.

Now, with funding from GEF and P4F, along with Franklinia and the University of California, we have entered Phase 2 and will double the number of villages that would have otherwise been supported. And we have a new five-year goal. By 2025, we aim to plant an additional 30,000 ebony trees. For the first time, we also have a fruit tree planting goal: 25,000 trees in the next five years. If successful, we will have enhanced the biological integrity of the area adjacent to the Dja Reserve,

helped local communities overcome food insecurity issues, and maybe, just maybe, someday long after we're all dead, someone can buy one of the ebony trees we've planted to make a guitar.

Phase 3?

Finally, allow us to dream. We can't help but look beyond the current project area, the Dja UNESCO World Heritage Site, and across all of Southern Cameroon, and further still into an area referred to as the Tridom, a vast area that includes portions of Southern Cameroon, Gabon and a bit of the Central African Republic. It's said to be the most intact forest block left in the Congo Basin. The so-called Tridom region is home to a dozen or so large protected areas. Of course, people



live here – traditional peoples since long before recorded history, and more recent settlers, too. There are roads and towns, logging and agriculture. But it makes us think. If over the next five years, The Ebony Project is successful in the Dja region of Cameroon, it would be interesting to replicate the model around similar protected areas within the Tridom. That, I hope, is a subject to explore in a future edition of *Wood&Steel*.

### Hawaii Reforestation Update: Planting Koa

We wanted to share an update on our latest stewardship work in Hawaii. As a recap, back in 2015, tonewood sawmill/supplier Pacific Rim Tonewoods and Taylor Guitars formed a company called Paniolo Tonewoods. Our joint mission was to work toward preserving a healthy future supply of koa for musical instruments by regenerating native forests that include koa trees.

Paniolo's initial projects in Hawaii borrowed from an arrangement first implemented by the U.S. Forest Service, exchanging value of wood for services provided. Instead of paying the landowner directly for koa logs or harvesting rights, Paniolo was allowed to cut a select number of designated koa trees, and in exchange, agreed to pay

for a host of forest improvement projects on the land. These improvements, whose value equaled that of the wood harvested, included installing new fencing to keep feral sheep and cattle out, removing invasive plants, improving fire breaks, and planting and maintaining koa seedlings grown in nurseries.

As we previously reported, another initiative was set in motion in 2018, when Paniolo acquired 564 acres of rolling pastureland on the north end of Hawaii Island. This land will continue to be managed by Paniolo, which was tasked with returning much of the land to a native Hawaiian forest after having been cleared for pasture about 150 years ago. The plan was for Paniolo to plant a mixed-species native koa forest for future timber production when the forest is mature beginning roughly 30 years after planting and continuing in perpetuity. The planting is projected to yield more than twice the volume of koa wood that Taylor Guitars uses today via selective cutting and replanting of trees.

This past June, Paniolo Tonewoods began to turn back time by planting over 3,000 koa and a little over 800 mixed native tree and shrub species on 10 acres of the property. Afterward, Paniolo project manager Nick Koch shared more details about the land, the planting and the plans ahead.

"The picturesque land of Kapoaula sits between the two historic ranching communities of Waimea and Honoka'a, with a rich history of Paniolo culture. Cattle grazing has been a way of life here since the 1850s, a tradition that continues to this day but has also resulted in the demise of native forests. Not only here but throughout Hawai'i.

"The views from the property to the surrounding valleys and mountains are spectacular. On a good day you can even see the distant island of Maui in the haze. These views will be lost to the growing trees in the next 10 to 15 years, but we believe it is a price well worth paying for a property that will ensure the future availability of koa for Taylor guitar making. Sweeping views will be replaced by lush native forest with an abundance of healthy, maintained koa trees and plentiful habitat for native birds. Wood is, after all, the ultimate renewable resource, and through projects like this, we are indeed doing our part to renew the forests and ensure their future health.

"In the next decade, our plan is to plant 150,000 trees on this property. In the last year, Paniolo has planted 3000 trees. We're starting small to minimize our mistakes as we continue to learn how to cultivate healthy trees."



*Bottom left: Planting koa on the former pastureland that Paniolo acquired; Above: The root balls of koa seedlings are dipped into a solution of hydrating gel (to prevent drying) with a small amount of booster nutrients prior to being planted; Below: Another plant in the ground. Photos: Franz Schmutzer*



### Please Use Fewer Plastics. We're Trying, Too.

Last issue, Jim Kirlin wrote about our recent efforts to better understand the use of plastics in our manufacturing process. The article ("Bad Wrap: Inside a Growing Plastic Problem") discussed issues related to our use of plastic stretch wrap to secure pallets stored or moved from one place to another.

As we began to better understand the issue, we learned that we no longer had what we once thought was a responsible way to dispose of our used shrink wrap. So, Bob Taylor and I decided to stack it up in the center of the main parking lot where employees could see it. Bob told me, "Until we figure something out, we'll just keep it there, and we'll all watch it grow." So we did. And the pile grew. Meanwhile, a group of us has been working on the issue. We did more research. We talked about it in our employee newsletter, and soon, stories of small innovations and reductions started coming in from across the campus. We posted the

story on social media and received (mostly) encouragement and a few helpful suggestions, too. Thanks for that!

Soon we hope to tell you about what we believe will be a major step forward in reducing our plastic footprint. We've connected with a company that may offer a viable solution, and right now we're cautiously optimistic. It will only be a first step, but the first step is always the most important. Plastics are a huge problem across the planet. The statistics are sobering. It's going to be a long and difficult road, but we all need to get on it. Stay tuned for an update in our next edition. **W&S**

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





## The Craft

### Lasting Value

One way to embrace sustainability is to make guitars that will inspire and endure for generations.

**T**here's something magical about the way twilight falls in a late summer sky. Being with my family and watching a wisp of smoke from a campfire float into the cooling night air, where it blends with notes drifting from the guitar I'm strumming, I can't help but feel a deep sense of gratitude for this most beautiful of remote forests and the stillness of the oncoming night. The kids are drowsy from a long day of high-elevation swimming, hiking and fishing, barely holding their eyes open in the fading light. It's easy to picture a stage, lights and a large crowd when thinking of a concert setting, but stars appearing in a quiet night sky are every bit as appropriate a place to play. I suppose some music was written to unite a crowd of strangers. And some was written to unite the dreams of a small few. In both cases, a moment without music seems incomplete.

In recent months, few days have passed without my either experiencing or hearing of a challenge that leaves me shaking my head. Music tours canceled, a failed and lost crop, a material that didn't arrive and the ensuing difficulty, the tragedy of a loved one

lost. Yet despite these challenges and heartbreaks, I feel a profound sense of gratitude to be building guitars. Despite all that can and does go wrong, there is so much good that can be done. When we take a moment to think of all that can go right, our difficulties seem to float up and disperse against the backdrop of a night sky.

When I first began building instruments, my focus was solely on the instrument and the musician. This was as big a picture as I could focus on; workshop life was a daily pursuit to find the outermost limit of an ever-expanding question of how good an instrument could be made. For those who want to know, it seems the practical answer remains: a little better each day. In the time since, that focus began growing ever wider here at Taylor to include creating a wonderful environment for employees of all backgrounds to contribute their efforts and enjoy the rewards of their work. And to the expansion and stewardship of forest operations. All while keeping the guitar and the musician positioned as the center of our attention.

We talk a lot about sustainability here at Taylor – about the responsible

use of resources, of leaving forests in better condition than the way we found them, and of ways to improve our work while making improvements on our impact. There's a feeling here that the word "sustainable" has been used so much it's been worn down, diminished, so we try to be careful about our use of that word. Another way to say this is that we're committed to finding better ways to keep up the work we do, and at ever higher levels of achievement. As a guitar maker, it occurs to me that one of most fundamental actions we can take is to make something that has intrinsic and enduring value, so that a player will want to use it for a great long while. I think of it this way: The lifespan of a great guitar is long – far longer than most things we could invest in. It can outlive a car, a computer and most other things we might possess. It can and should be crafted in a way that offers great utility to a musician for decades before being passed on to the next musician to accompany their songs. The lifespan of a guitar doesn't necessarily end with the first owner. The best way to preserve the precious resources and efforts that go into a guitar is to turn them into an instrument

that musicians will want to continue to use across several generations.

Many players ask how modern technologies might be integrated into an acoustic instrument. While there certainly are interesting possibilities, the reality is an acoustic guitar doesn't necessarily occupy the same timeline as a product built with digital technology. We all know the digital wonders of a modern world arrive and are replaced at a pace that is hard to keep up with. An acoustic guitar, on the other hand, offers the musician a voice for songs that remains viable today, tomorrow and a century from now. In fact, we celebrate the virtues of an older instrument that, like many of us, has had time to become seasoned by its experiences and offer a deeper and fuller perspective. Knowing that, it seems our modern technologies are best working to serve the longevity of a great instrument and the musician, rather than using materials of decades or centuries of growth to accommodate the latest passing technology.

This scenario reminds me of a few old tools I use in the shop. When first purchased, they represented a significant investment for my great-great-

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The lifespan of a guitar doesn't  
necessarily end with the first owner.  
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granddad. Over the past century, they were kept in perfect working order as they were made well, were found useful and valuable, and therefore were carefully kept up. All this time later, they're as accurate and useful as ever. I often wonder about the unknown craftsmen who worked at the Starrett company all that time ago, and if they knew the tools they made would endure and offer such lasting enjoyment.

A great guitar is lasting, and offers a musician lasting enjoyment. That seems like a solid place to start when laying out a plan to create the most good with what we've been entrusted with. It's a privilege to work alongside other employee owners to make Taylor Guitars a more sustainable company – sustaining our culture, our forests, our guitars and the music of all the musicians we serve. Whether you are playing a few songs for many, or many songs for a few, I hope you enjoy every note of them as they drift to the ears of those listeners before disappearing into the night sky.

– Andy Powers  
Master Guitar Designer

# Soundings

## Grain for Good

Last issue, we shared news about our partnership with the watchmakers at San Diego-based Original Grain. With our shared passion for beautiful woods as a launchpad, we worked with Original Grain to supply materials for a range of wristwatches showcasing Urban Ash and West African ebony, responsibly sourced tonewoods that we use for backs, sides and fretboards in our guitars. The results were outstanding – not only did Original Grain produce a stunning collection of watches, but they sold out fast, and a second run was met with equal enthusiasm by customers. Even better, the project has raised over \$58,000 to date for Guitars 4 Vets, a nonprofit dedicated to helping veterans use music to cope with PTSD, and Tree San Diego, which works to restore and protect San Diego's urban canopy. Thanks to the popularity of the watches, Original Grain expects to sell enough to cross the \$100,000-mark in money raised for charity before the end of this year.

Over the summer, our partnership with Original Grain culminated in a televised event hosted on the USS Midway, a decommissioned aircraft carrier and museum located at the San Diego Embarcadero. The event



featured a graduation ceremony for eight veterans who recently completed the Guitars 4 Vets music program. The veterans were each awarded a Taylor acoustic guitar in honor of their achievements, and Bob Taylor himself was on hand to deliver a speech and share his appreciation for America's military veterans. The event even

received local media attention, with TV station CBS8 and the *San Diego Union-Tribune* both covering the event.

We're proud to continue our relationship with Original Grain, and you can still find watches from the Original Grain + Taylor Guitars Collection at the Original Grain online store.

## Lost and Found

Hopefully you haven't experienced the unique heartbreak of a gigging musician whose guitar disappears. Whether stolen, broken or just plain misplaced, it's a special type of agony, especially if the lost guitar is a personal favorite or a long-time traveling companion. Chloe Smith, a Taylor player and guitarist for the band **Rising Appalachia**, knows this particular pain all too well.

Roughly two years ago, Chloe's **Academy 12e-N** was stolen. Efforts to locate it were fruitless, and she replaced the guitar, believing that she would never see the original again. Anyone who has toured with a musical instrument understands the bond a player can forge with their guitar, and though Rising Appalachia was able to continue its tour, the loss stung.

Fast-forward to June of 2021, when alt-folk band A Brother's Fountain posted a video on Instagram sharing an incredible story: They'd found the guitar at a general store in Cisco, Utah, an Old-West railroad burg that Wikipedia labels a ghost town with a total of four residents.

The boys from A Brother's Fountain had stopped in town to restock on essentials while camping in the area, and after chatting with the store's owners, decided to play a couple of their songs for a small group of people inside the shop. After the impromptu gig, the store owner showed the guys a mysterious guitar for which she had been trying to find the original owner for nearly two years. A Brother's Fountain agreed to try to help the guitar find its way home. After digging through the case, they found stickers featuring the Rising Appalachia name and logo. A quick search on Spotify revealed a perfect match between the lost guitar and the one in the band's official photo – the lost guitar had been found at last.

Seeing the video with the story, Rising Appalachia commented, "OK, you guys win the Internet today. How is this possible?"

## Growing the Family

This year has proved to be a big one for our artist relations team here at Taylor – we've been forging relationships with new artists from all corners of the musical world in an effort to broaden our musical horizons. In recent months, we've expanded our outreach to include more BIPOC artists (Black, Indigenous & people of color) from the United States and beyond. In nine months alone, we've brought more than 30 BIPOC artists into the Taylor fold. It's a thrilling time that's introduced a wealth of new sounds, styles and perspectives to everything we do here, inspiring us to share new stories.

If you perused the previous digital-only edition of *Wood&Steel*, you saw our feature on African-American Music Appreciation Month, which is celebrated in June in the United States

to commemorate the formative influence Black artists have had on what we know as American music. That project, led by Taylor Artist Relations and Community Manager Lindsay Love-Bivens, included a visit to the National Museum of African American Music in Nashville, Tennessee, where songwriter Judith Hill joined us to add her insight to the story of Black music in America. You can watch the video report and explore our timeline of musical genres shaped by African American artists at [woodandsteel.taylorguitars.com](http://woodandsteel.taylorguitars.com) (click "See Past Issues" to select the previous edition). Meanwhile, in this issue's story on how artists have adapted to pandemic life, Lindsay spent time with the rising pop-punk band Meet Me @ The Altar, an exciting all-female outfit featuring women of color.



## Remembering Nanci

As we were wrapping up this issue of *Wood&Steel*, we learned of the passing of singer-songwriter **Nanci Griffith**. The Texas-raised troubadour was truly an artist's artist, widely admired by tunesmiths from Bob Dylan to Jason Isbell to Darius Rucker for her songwriting chops, especially her knack for using lyrical detail to pack an emotional punch. Griffith's story-songs often drew from her Texas roots and chronicled the struggles of small-town characters ("Drive-in Movies and Dashboard Lights," "Love at the Five and Dime"), fusing folk and country genres into a signature style she dubbed "folkabilly," delivered with lilting vocals over her hybrid acoustic fingerpicking/flatpicking.

Griffith bought a Taylor **512c** in a music store in New York in 1986, choosing it for its comfortably compact frame and its reliability on tour and in the studio, and later ordered a custom 512c with a Florentine cutaway and a sunburst top, which became a performance staple for many years.

In the mid-1980s, Griffith moved to Nashville but wondered if she'd be accepted by the "old-Nashville" music establishment. She needn't have worried.

"I got two phone calls when I first came to Nashville," she said in an interview in *Wood&Steel* in 1996. "The first was from Chet Atkins, welcoming me and telling me he had my earlier records. The second was from Harlan Howard [writer of Patsy Cline's "I Fall to Pieces" and other country classics] asking if we could get together because he had my albums and



Nanci Griffith performing in Finsbury Park, London, in 2011. Photo: Rosie Allt/Rex/Shutterstock

admired my writing. He said it had been a long time since Nashville had an honest female songwriter who wasn't afraid to write songs about controversial subjects. I felt very welcome."

Griffith deserves credit for turning other Nashville artists on to our guitars before Taylor was a widely known brand, from Suzy Bogguss and Kathy Mattea to the session guitarists she recorded with.

"Whenever we'd be in the studio, they'd be vying to borrow my guitar!" she shared.

Her sunburst 512c inspired a limited-edition signature model we released in 1996.

Though Bob Taylor didn't know Griffith, he has a special connection with her music.

"I often say that Nanci taught me how to use MasterCam and Fadal back in the day," he shares. "That's because I listened to her album *Storms* on a loop several hours a night for weeks on end while I learned to draw, program and machine guitar parts. The mention of her name, or the sound of her voice, always takes me back. She kept me focused on absorbing this CAD/CAM world that eventually helped me make her signature guitar. To make guitars that she played was unplanned but meant a lot to me. I'll miss her even though I never personally knew her."

## Have Taylor, Will Travel

Every day, our guitars find their way into hands all around the globe. Our international Taylor artist roster has grown substantially this year to include new musicians from a wide swath of genres and styles, supplying more proof that there's a Taylor for every job.

Among the newcomers is innovative fingerstyle guitarist **Natee Chaiwut**, who's been making waves in his home town of Bangkok, Thailand. Chaiwut's dynamic style blends fretboard slaps, two-hand tapping and intricate arpeggios into a propulsive acoustic sound. He recently filmed a solo performance on his new **GT 811e**. You can scan the QR code and watch him flex his chops.

Originally hailing from Argentina, singer-songwriter **Noel Schajris** has long been a fan of travel-sized Taylor models, using a **Baby Taylor** for years when touring as part of the duo **Sin Bandera** in the early and mid-2000s. Now based in Los Angeles, the Latin GRAMMY-winning guitarist released a new album in 2020 titled *Mi Presente*, which showcases his rich voice and lyrical talent with a series of timeless ballads. He also recently recorded a single, "Tan Perfecto," alongside singer Katie Angle. You can hear both on Spotify and Apple Music.

Elsewhere, Santo Domingo-born artist **Techy Fatule** took the limelight in Spotify's Equal campaign for the month of June, which covered women artists from the Caribbean and Central America. We first met Techy at the Latin American Music Conference, and she recorded an episode of our *Acoustic Sessions* performance video series that was released in April of this year.

**Siam**, based in Cali, Colombia, is one of the most powerful duets in the Latin industry. The act started their career in one of the most famous reality show franchises (*The X Factor Colombia*) and won first place. Since then, they've earned three Latin Grammy nominations and amassed a huge following in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. They were preparing a media tour in Mexico City for September to promote their latest single.

In the UK, Taylor artist relations liaison Dan Boreham has been hard at work bringing more European artists into the Taylor fold. As part of a project with six other artists, we recently shot British alt-rockers **Yonaka** performing their song, "Raise Your Glass."

Meanwhile, British artist **James Arthur** released two new videos featuring his custom black **614ce**: "Train Wreck" and "September." When we last checked, "Train Wreck" had over 343 million streams on Spotify.

Back on American soil, other members of our artist relations team recently spent time on the east coast with the folks from Rudy's Music Soho in New York City and the Music Den in New Jersey. While there, we had the pleasure of seeing some of our favorite guitarists perform with their Taylors, including **Gil Parris** and **Alex Skolnick**. You can watch Skolnick's performance at Rudy's in the digital edition of *Wood&Steel*.

Scranton, Pennsylvania punk-rockers **Tigers Jaw** have also joined the Taylor fold, just in time for their latest album, *I Won't Care How You Remember Me*. The album carries on the band's signature alt-punk sound, blending acoustic

elements with driving rhythms and over-driven guitars to great effect. Founding member and lead guitarist **Ben Walsh** recently stopped by the new Russo's Music location in Philadelphia to share acoustic versions of a couple tracks from the new album, performing on his **814ce**.



Scan the code to watch a performance by Ben Walsh.

## Pop Goes Acoustic

Our artist team has also been hard at work supplying guitars to some of today's hottest artists. Topping the list (and the charts) is pop singer-songwriter **Olivia Rodrigo**, whose debut album *SOUR* has garnered huge acclaim from both fans and critics alike. Olivia's guitarist, **Liv Slingerland**, loves her Taylor **GTe Urban Ash**, playing it in a special live acoustic performance of "favorite crime" by Rodrigo for Vevo LIFT.

It seems the GT love was contagious in Rodrigo's camp, as the singer herself also played one for a live acoustic performance of her song "enough for you." If that wasn't enough, she also played her GT Urban Ash in "SOUR Prom," a stylized concert film that includes several songs from the chart-topping album.

These Taylor-in-the-wild sightings are in part the result of our relationship with multi-talented producer, guitarist and songwriter **Aron Forbes**. Aron is in high demand in the world of pop music, and his credits as a guitar player include projects with Justin Timberlake, Lady Gaga, BANKS and many others. He has also written and produced with pop heavyweights like Halsey, Billie Eilish and her brother, **FINNEAS**, and he was recently nominated for two Emmy awards for his sound and music work on the documentary film *Billie Eilish: The World's a Little Blurry*. Aron is a longtime Taylor player, and owns an older mahogany GS5 model that he considers his main guitar. Having played our new mahogany guitars from the 500 Series as well as the travel-friendly GT, Aron knew our guitars would be a perfect fit for an artist like Olivia Rodrigo. Who knows where they'll end up next?

## Gear Up for the Holidays

We're fast approaching the holiday season, and you know what that means: the Taylor Guitars Holiday Gift Guide is here. Packed with recommendations for guitars and accessories that will make for truly memorable gifts this season, the guide features our favorite guitars from the Taylor line arranged by budget so that you know exactly what to look for at your price level when you head to the music shop.



Scan the code to browse the Taylor Holiday Gift Guide, or visit [taylorguitars.com](http://taylorguitars.com).



Scan the code with your smartphone

# Soundings



Tiera | Photo: Hunter Berry

## The Wood&Steel Guitar Lesson

Ready to work out those fingers? Pull out your guitar, grab a pick and head to the digital edition of *Wood&Steel* or scan the QR code for this season's guitar lesson.

Taught by pro guitarist, instructor and producer **Kerry "2 Smooth" Marshall**, this trio of video lessons covers popular R&B chord progressions, double stops and diminished 7th chords.



Scan the code  
with your  
smartphone



## The Wood&Steel Playlist

We love to share new work and older hits from our genre-spanning artist family. For this issue, the *Wood&Steel* playlist features an acoustic track from Olivia Rodrigo's chart-topping album *SOUR*, a new FINNEAS single, songs from our international artists and much more. Follow Taylor Guitars on Spotify to add the playlist to your account.



Scan the code to  
access the *Wood&Steel*  
playlist on Spotify.

## News From Nashville

The Bluebird Café recently reopened for in-person concerts. It's great to see this iconic venue back in action, and it's incredible for the new winners of our co-sponsored Bluebird Golden Pick contest to once again take the stage and perform. The latest winner is Bella Garland, who also dropped by Taylor's showroom in Nashville recently to perform her winning song.

Longtime Taylor player **Tiera (416ce)** also visited our showroom to try some new guitars. She fell in love with the **GS Mini Koa** and the **AD17e Blacktop**. Tiera started a radio tour in August, with her **GS Mini** in tow. She was named one of CMT's women of 2020 and just signed to Big Machine imprint The Valory Music Co.

Non-cutaway versions of our Grand Auditorium guitars are proving to be popular in Nashville. The guitar community tends to be consistent in their tastes, gravitating toward non-cutaway body shapes, classic tonewoods like mahogany and rosewood, simple appointments and darker tops, including sunburst, black or vintage amber-tinted spruce....Niko Moon's guitarist, **Jared Martin**, is one of several players who have recently taken to the **514**. He's currently playing it out on the road as an opener on Lady A's "What A Song Can Do" tour... Big Machine artist **Conner Smith** is busy on the road radio touring with his **AD17e Blacktop**.

The Summer NAMM Show, held in Nashville in July, certainly was different than previous years, but members of our artist relations team enjoyed lots of great visits with local musicians, including singer-songwriter **Brock Gonyea**, who fell in love with the new **818** and will be taking one on the road later this year when he's out as the opening act on Dolly Parton's stadium tour. Our team also met with some fantastic Taylor players like worship artist **Jon Reddick** and Florida-based YouTuber **Dovydas**.

## Want to Win a GS Mini?

We're happy to offer *Wood&Steel* readers the chance to win a new GS Mini. These solid-topped, ultra-portable guitars are among our most popular models and offer players of all levels a compact and fun-to-play option for practice, songwriting and performance.

All you need to do is complete a short survey and tell us what you think of *Wood&Steel*. Scan the QR code below with your smartphone or visit [tylrgt.rs/woodandsteel](https://tylrgt.rs/woodandsteel) to complete the survey, and you'll be entered for a chance to win. This entry period ends December 10, 2021.



Scan the code  
with your  
smartphone







# 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](https://taylorguitars.com).

## All-Solid-Wood Guitars

A guitar made with a top, back and sides of solid wood will produce the most complex sound and continue to improve with age.

### Presentation Series

**Back/Sides:** Honduran Rosewood  
**Top:** Sinker Redwood  
**Available Models:** PS14ce, PS12ce, PS12ce 12-Fret

### Koa Series

**Back/Sides:** Hawaiian Koa  
**Top:** Hawaiian Koa or Torrefied Sitka Spruce (Builder's Edition)  
**Available Models:** GT K21e, K22ce, K22ce 12-Fret, Builder's Edition K14ce, Builder's Edition K24ce, K24ce, K26ce

### 900 Series

**Back/Sides:** Indian Rosewood  
**Top:** Sitka Spruce or Lutz Spruce (Builder's Edition)  
**Available Models:** 912ce, 912ce 12-Fret, Builder's Edition 912ce, Builder's Edition 912ce WHB, 914ce

### 800 Series

**Back/Sides:** Indian Rosewood  
**Top:** Sitka Spruce or Lutz Spruce (Builder's Edition)  
**Available Models:** GT 811e, 812ce, 812ce 12-Fret, 812ce-N, 814ce, 814ce-N, Builder's Edition 816ce, 818e

### 700 Series

**Back/Sides:** Indian Rosewood  
**Top:** Lutz Spruce or Torrefied Sitka Spruce (Builder's Edition)  
**Available Models:** 712ce, 712e 12-Fret, 712ce 12-Fret, 714ce, 714ce-N, Builder's Edition 717e, Builder's Edition 717e WHB

### 600 Series

**Back/Sides:** Figured Big Leaf Maple  
**Top:** Torrefied Sitka Spruce or Sitka Spruce (618e)  
**Available Models:** 612ce, 612ce 12-Fret, Builder's Edition 652ce, Builder's Edition 652ce WHB, Builder's Edition 614ce, Builder's Edition 614ce WHB, 618e

### 500 Series

**Back/Sides:** Neo-Tropical Mahogany  
**Top:** Mahogany, Cedar (GC, GA) or Torrefied Sitka Spruce (Builder's Edition)  
**Available Models:** 512ce, 512ce 12-Fret, 522ce, 522e 12-Fret, 522ce 12-Fret, 562ce, 514ce, 524ce, Builder's Edition 517e, Builder's Edition 517e WHB

### 400 Series

**Back/Sides:** Indian Rosewood  
**Top:** Sitka Spruce  
**Available Models:** 412ce-R, 414ce-R

### 300 Series

**Back/Sides:** Sapele (Spruce Top), Blackwood (Mahogany Top) or Urban Ash™ (Builder's Edition, 326ce)  
**Top:** Sitka Spruce or Mahogany  
**Available Models:** 312ce, 312ce 12-Fret, 312ce-N, 322e, 322ce, 322e 12-Fret, 322ce 12-Fre, 352ce, 362ce, 314ce, Builder's Edition 324ce, 324e, 324ce, 326ce, 317e, 327e

### GT

**Back/Sides:** Indian Rosewood, Hawaiian Koa, Urban Ash  
**Top:** Hawaiian Koa or Sitka Spruce  
**Available Models:** GT Urban Ash, GTe Urban Ash, GT 811e, GT K21e

### American Dream Series

**Back/Sides:** Ovangkol (Spruce Top) or Sapele (Mahogany Top)  
**Top:** Spruce or Neo-Tropical Mahogany  
**Available Models:** AD17, AD17e, AD17 Blacktop, AD17e Blacktop, AD27, AD27e

## Layered-Wood Guitars

Guitars crafted with layered-wood back and sides, featuring three layers of wood, paired with a solid-wood top

### 200 Series (Standard, Plus, Deluxe)

**Back/Sides:** Layered Koa, Rosewood or Maple  
**Top:** Hawaiian Koa or Sitka Spruce  
**Available Models:** 210ce, 214ce, 214ce-N, 214ce-K, 214ce-K SB, 254ce, 210ce Plus, 214ce Plus, 250ce-BLK DLX, 214ce DLX, 214ce-K DLX, 214ce-BLK DLX, 214ce-RED DLX, 214ce-SB DLX, 224ce-K DLX

### 100 Series

**Back/Sides:** Layered Walnut  
**Top:** Sitka Spruce  
**Available Models:** 110e, 114e, 150e



### Academy Series

**Back/Sides:** Layered Sapele  
**Top:** Sitka Spruce or Lutz Spruce (Nylon)  
**Available Models:** Academy 12, Academy 12e, Academy 12-N, Academy 12e-N, Academy 10, Academy 10e

### GS Mini Series

**Back/Sides:** Layered Sapele, Koa, Rosewood or Maple  
**Top:** Sitka Spruce, Mahogany or Koa  
**Available Models:** GS Mini Mahogany, GS Mini-e Mahogany, GS Mini-e Koa, GS Mini-e Koa Plus, GS Mini Rosewood, GS Mini-e Rosewood, GS Mini-e Maple Bass, GS Mini-e Koa Bass

### Baby Series

**Back/Sides:** Layered Walnut, Sapele or Koa  
**Top:** Sitka Spruce, Mahogany or Koa  
**Available Models:** BT1, BT1e, BT2, BT2e, BTe-Koa, BBT, BBTe, TS-BT, TS-BTe

## Electric Guitars

Hollowbody or Semi-Hollowbody

### T5z Series

**Top:** Figured Koa, Figured Maple, Sassafras, Sitka Spruce or Mahogany  
**Available Models:** T5z Custom K, T5z-12 Custom K, T5z Pro, T5z Standard, T5z Classic, T5z Classic Sassafras, T5z Classic Koa, T5z-12 Classic, T5z Classic DLX, T5z-12 Classic DLX

### T3 Series

**Top:** Layered Figured Maple  
**Available Models:** T3, T3B

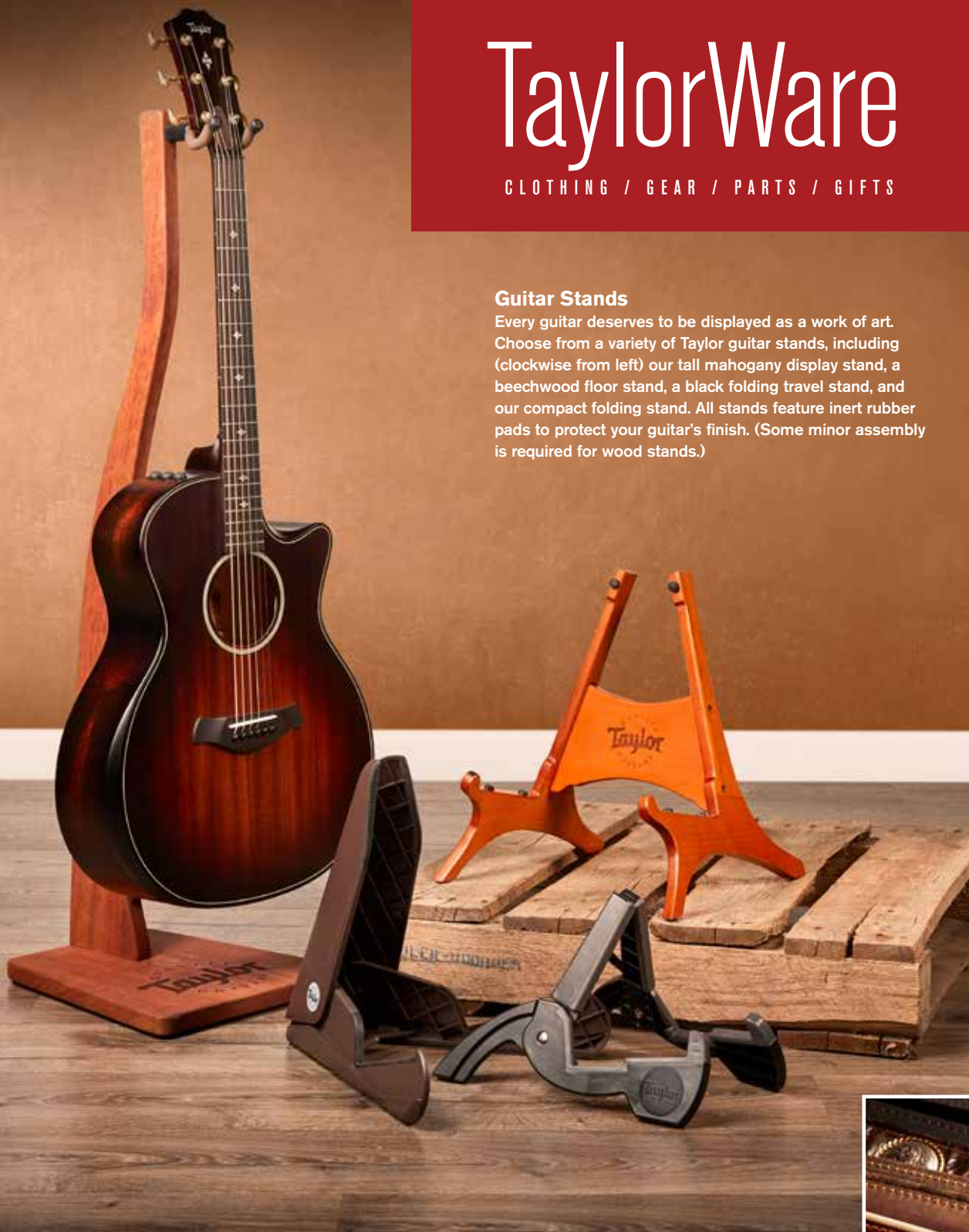


# TaylorWare


CLOTHING / GEAR / PARTS / GIFTS

## Guitar Stands

Every guitar deserves to be displayed as a work of art. Choose from a variety of Taylor guitar stands, including (clockwise from left) our tall mahogany display stand, a beechwood floor stand, a black folding travel stand, and our compact folding stand. All stands feature inert rubber pads to protect your guitar's finish. (Some minor assembly is required for wood stands.)



## Pick Tins

 Our DarkTone Series pick tins make the perfect carrying case for the sample pack of nine Taylor DarkTone picks that are included. Choose from two pick tin styles (shown below). Each sample pack features picks from each DarkTone family (Ivoroid, Thermex Ultra, Thermex Pro and Taylex), with varying sizes and materials so you can hear the sonic nuances of each pick.

### DarkTone Series Pick Tin


2.75" x 1.625"  
Black metal, sliding top  
#2600



### DarkTone Series Pick Tin – Collector's Edition

3.625" x 2.375"  
Black metal, hinged top with koa overlay, laser-etched  
Taylor logo and leather insert with embossed Taylor logo.  
#2601



 **Apparel**  
Check out our line of Taylor apparel, featuring T-shirts, hats and more.



## 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.





## Featured Products

# taylor**sense**

SMART BATTERY BOX + MOBILE APP

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

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

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

- **Humidity**
- **Battery Life**
- **Temperature**
- **Physical Impact**

The TaylorSense battery box pushes guitar health data to your phone via low-energy Bluetooth, pairing with the TaylorSense app to provide real-time data. The app is available to download for both iOS and Android devices.

Shaped by our extensive service expertise, TaylorSense is also calibrated to send

you timely alerts when your guitar needs care, along with simple "how-to-fix" videos from our service team.



**You can find TaylorSense at [taylorguitars.com/taylorware](https://taylorguitars.com/taylorware) and at authorized Taylor retailers in the US, Canada, UK, and EU.**



#### Ebony Guitar Slide

The Taylor ebony guitar slide, made from genuine Crelicam West African ebony, offers guitar players a unique alternative to traditional glass or metal slides. Available in four sizes, the ebony slide produces a warm, soft slide tone on both electric and acoustic guitars. By building slides with ebony that we're not able to use for guitars, we're able to generate more value for this precious resource and continue to work toward more sustainable practices and healthier ecosystems. Proceeds from the ebony slide support our replanting projects and other environmental endeavors. Available in sizes Small, 1 1/16", Medium, 3/4", Large, 1 3/16", and X-Large, 7/8".



#### Taylor Digital Tuner

Every guitarist needs a good tuner. The Taylor digital guitar tuner for acoustic and electric guitars conveniently clips to your guitar's headstock, while the easy-to-read display makes quick, precise tuning a breeze for any player. #1200



### Home and Gifts



#### Taylor Leather Wallet

Keep your cards, IDs and cash organized with this stylish genuine leather wallet, featuring a single pick holder and an embossed Taylor logo. #1514



#### Taylor 24" Brown Stool

Make sure you always have a comfortable spot to practice and play at home with our premium Taylor bar stool. 24" in matte brown. Includes a padded seat with a soft vinyl covering along with a ring to rest your feet and enhance your guitar-playing experience. #1510



#### 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



This model features a Bouquet inlay design in myrtlewood and boxwood. #70193

### U.S. Customers

Visit [taylorguitars.com/taylorware](https://taylorguitars.com/taylorware) to browse our complete line of Taylor apparel, guitar care products, parts and accessories, gift cards, and more. 1-800-579-1407 (U.S. only)

### Canadian Customers

Call 1-800-943-6782 to place your TaylorWare order.

*Not all items available in all markets.*



# Wood&Steel

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

## Making Waves

Part of an extremely limited production run, this gorgeous custom Grand Auditorium boasts figured walnut back and sides, a sinker redwood top, and a sleek beveled armrest (and binding) of figured Hawaiian koa. The wood-forward aesthetic features our Boxed Wave fretboard inlays in contrasting koa and boxwood, with those woods reprised in another wave-like design for the rosette. Elegant finishing details include figured koa soundhole binding, a light shaded edgeburst with gloss finish around the body, and Gotoh 510 tuners in antique gold. Tonally, this unique wood pairing, powered by V-Class® bracing, will fill a room with ear-pleasing warmth and dynamic range, producing remarkable clarity and balance across the frequency spectrum.

*(Custom GA, Figured Walnut/Redwood, Custom #11)*

