



# Breedlove

M A G A Z I N E



## The **EXODUS**

Custom Feature

## It just takes **A SPARK**

Luthier Profile



Everything You Wanted to Know

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TOM BEDELL'S

## **TEDx TALK**

»» **SPRING 2020 | ISSUE #1**

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ACOUSTIC GUITAR STORIES AND PROFILES



## GREETINGS

FROM TOM BEDELL

With great pleasure, I welcome you to the inaugural edition of our Breedlove digital magazine. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Tom Bedell, and I've been owner of Breedlove since 2010.

I speak for our entire team of designers, builders and support staff when I say that we feel incredibly fortunate to devote our energies to creating the guitars you play, instruments that enrich your lives and the lives of others.

Our passion is helping you sound better, play better and play more than you ever imagined. With that in mind, we'll be releasing this digital magazine each season, filled with enriching stories focused on the

art of the acoustic guitar. We'll feature extremely rare and stunning custom models; dive into behind-the-scenes narratives of our luthiers; bring new and emerging artists to light; and empower you with guitar-centric knowledge of tonewoods, insight into build processes and other tools guaranteed to make you an acoustic guitar guru.

Our goal is to enrich your guitar playing life and give you greater perspective on the world of Breedlove. If there's a topic you'd like us to cover, by all means send us a note. We'd love to hear from you.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this first edition of our new e-magazine.

Peace,  
Tom Bedell

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# IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK



## ANGELA CHRISTENSEN & THE ACOUSTIC GUITAR

*After nearly 20 years, the chief designer is, in many ways, the walking philosophy of Breedlove.*

From a young age, Angela Christensen knew she wanted her life to revolve around music. She just wasn't sure how.

Galvanized by the vision of a guitar at a YMCA campfire, she felt the pull we are all familiar with, barely hearing the refrain of "It Only Takes a Spark" as she gazed at the magical musical box.

Christensen sang. The whole family sang. But she never took to playing. Not the guitar, the alto sax, or the piano, all of which she fiddled with (and the fiddle, too). She didn't feel the knack. Instead, she eventually realized, her calling was to make the guitars, to put them in the hands of those who did feel the knack and then to stand back and fall into awe again as the music flowed over her.

She is now a key part of the Breedlove team, in charge of product development and wood management for Two Old Hippies Stringed Instruments.

A Scottsdale native, following studies in fine arts at Arizona State University, Christensen found herself in Bend, Ore., in 2002, drawn by the open air and quality of life.



» CRAFTSPERSON  
SINCE 2002



On a whim, she headed over and applied at the Breedlove workshop.

“I just showed up unannounced with my portfolio and happened to get hired on the spot. There was an opening in the parts department, handling all the raw wood—basically starting the build process. That’s how I began.”

Breedlove’s first production instrument was barely a decade old when Christensen arrived, and the company, then under the direction of Kim Breedlove, was still growing.

Christensen was fairly swept into an old school guild system, learning by listening, learning by looking and learning by doing. Do she did, spending time at nearly every station.

In Kim Breedlove, she found a mentor, passing, over time, from plebe to peer. That apprenticeship provided the foundation for her long tenure.

“Kim trained me on pretty much everything. It was watch what I do, watch how I work, then ask questions. He was such an artist, and I connected with him in that sense. Anything he put his mind to, there was a passion there, a connection to his soul.”

The duo shared a particular fondness for the art of inlay—ironic in that both prefer the simple beauty of relatively unadorned instruments.

Breedlove, an artisan who began his career in the elaborate world of the banjo, with its long history of decoration, cut abalone by hand; trimmed exotic wood bindings under bright lights; and dreamed up impossible visual creations that echoed throughout entire instruments.



Christensen was similarly adroit. She’d already been smithing her own jewelry, and her facility and familiarity with many kinds of wood was impressive—when she first landed in Bend, she assumed she’d work at a high end cabinet shop, as she had in college.

Her personal favorite from her days running the inlay department was a custom build for a French father and son.

“It was a CM body shape and they wanted to have a Creeping myrtle inlay done all along the fretboard, going up the head stock and down into the rosette. It had meaning to them, so they commissioned us to design, really, an art piece. It was such a special project for me that I keep a photo of it framed in my office. I hand cut everything, and it was the longest hands-on inlay I’ve ever done, about 76 hours.”

“I love working with our customers in designing those special builds. You can see the spark in their eye when they find the wood set that speaks to them, and you can help guide them through putting all the pieces together.”

While Kim Breedlove’s favorite mode was sitting quietly focused at his workbench, he also ran the shop, tightening production, as he had for banjo maker Geoff Stelling.

Similarly, Christensen had an eye for blending business and art.

“I’m always seeking challenges,” she says. “It’s part of my personality. I’m curious about things, and there were so many aspects of guitar making I was fascinated by, and not just as an artist. I’m interested in the business side of things, too. I’ve been able to do so much with Breedlove—I’m grateful for that.”

While she rarely has the opportunity these days to do the decorative artwork so dear to her soul, she has taken on broader, more important roles.



Christensen is involved with every aspect of wood management for Two Old Hippies, and, in many ways, she has become the walking philosophy of Breedlove guitars.

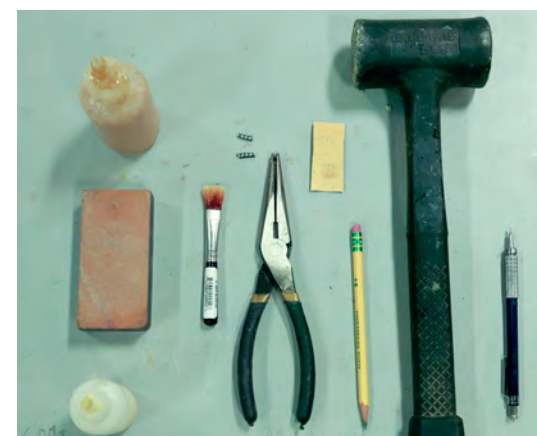
Christensen sources the sustainable natural materials used in Bend, and administers the Tonewood Certification Program, which can literally trace, transparently, the tree that birthed, for example, your *Made in Bend* Legacy Concert CE, telling you where it was grown, and how it was individually, sustainably harvested. Christensen, like owner Tom Bedell, has traveled to the forest to ensure best practices and to witness how the sustainable methods employed by Breedlove help preserve habitat, protect wildlife and foster community.

As chief designer, Christensen also determines which top, back and side combinations will yield the most beautiful, sonically enchanting instruments.

“What makes a Breedlove guitar so special?” she asks.

“I would say, number one, the wood. The care that goes into that part of our story is paramount. The Sound Optimization® process—the way we choose and understand each wood set and its characteristics, and how we hand tune it—is unique as well. All those little details are tended to. There’s not one step that gets looked over or left behind.”

“There’s so much love and care that goes into each instrument to produce the best sounding and playing guitar you can get. That’s why we call it the Breedlove Difference.”





# THE EXODUS

➞ EVERY HOUR WAS WORTH IT

*Kim Breedloves' stunning snake-laced masterpiece still inspires with its care, dedication and passion.*

»» CUSTOM PROFILE



“This is the one. I would call this Kim Breedlove’s masterpiece,” says Angela Christensen.

The “one” in question is *Exodus*, as stunning an instrument as you are ever likely to see, not least because of its shimmering, hypnotic, “retirement grade” all Hawaiian koa body.

Normally wood this naturally beautiful would be dubbed presentation grade, but as Christensen, who heads product development and wood management for Breedlove, notes with a laugh, it was called retirement grade because the purveyor of this heart-stopping find “could live a long time off that one log.”

“It’s pretty amazing stuff” she affirms. “There’s not been another tree like it.”

“The color variation is phenomenal. It goes through the entire range of koa shades, from very light, golden hues to rich browns with a little bit of red, all the way to really dark line contrasts. The figure is obviously just incredible. It’s got everything.”

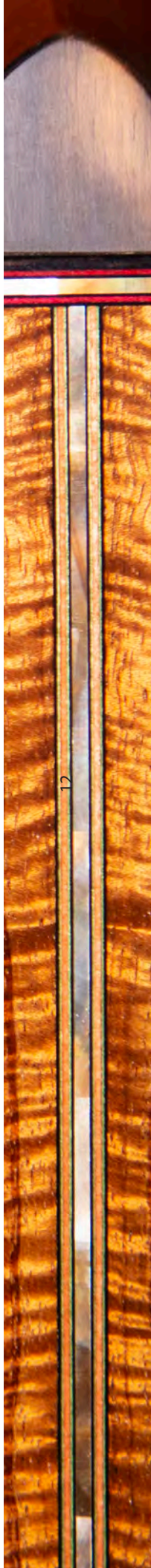
With a \$75,000 price tag, *Exodus*—housed along with a few other select treasures in a dedicated display case at Breedlove’s Bend, Oregon offices—is a retirement grade proposition on its own.

Breedlove owner Tom Bedell keeps the instrument close at hand to remind all of its legacy.

“It still inspires us every day,” he says. “The care, dedication and passion that went into this guitar leads us in the right direction.”

Spend some time peering at it, getting lost in the magical grain, imagining that exquisite, ringing, yet warm koa voice, and you’ll understand that masterpiece might even be an understatement.

Before he started building banjos with Greg Deering and Geoff Stelling in the 1970s, Kim Breedlove already had a serious background in art—with a degree embracing drawing, painting and graphic design—much less before he started building guitars in Oregon with his younger





brother Larry and partner Steve Henderson, who had formed the eponymous company in the early 90s.

By 2007, when *Exodus* was completed, Kim had pushed the boundaries of modern inlay to new heights.

*Exodus*, part of a loosely delineated Private Reserve program, is defined by its intricate motif, which features nine snakes slithering out of the instrument's sound hole, gliding up the neck to a new day.

Bedell says, "As a child in San Diego, Kim was walking along a sunny cliffside and witnessed a hatch of baby snakes making their way out of a hole in the rock—an exodus. That image stayed with him his entire life."

The snakes actually begin in shadow, inside the koa back, emerging from under Honduran mahogany braces, which were cut by Christensen, who also bent the sides and installed the Sitka spruce top braces and mahogany blocks.

"You have to do that inner body inlay at the beginning of the process," says Christensen, who studied under Breedlove, but brought her own education and experience in woodworking, metalsmithing and stonework to the shop, adding, with wonder, "Even before you put the braces on the back, it has to be right."

As the snakes loop out of the body, the true Zen artistry of Breedlove's work is revealed.

"Kim hand cut the irregular lines of the sound hole, and the way it is bound around the image is just magnificent. The craftsmanship and execution is so perfect."

As the reptiles travel up the neck, they twine beneath the frets, but also merge and veer with similarly appointed red and yellow fiber purfling, crossing over the ebony binding that ties the entire instrument together right down to a snakelike back strip. It's a dance of dramatic materials, genuine vision and precision crafting.



"It's such a beautiful layout of these different shapes intersecting all over the canvas of the fretboard, the headstock and the body," says the still awestruck Christensen. "As soon as you get close enough to observe detail, you can see that each individual piece of abalone is hand-cut. The way the fretboard extension aligns with the rosette; the way the lines curve so gracefully ... I know from experience that all of that took unbelievable skill and patience. The transitions are remarkable."

Christensen chuckles again at a specific memory of her mentor, who retired a few years ago.

"I remember tireless hours of Kim just sitting at his bench, jewelry saw in hand, wearing two pairs of glasses, like a Renaissance scholar. He was happiest in his studio, and you could tell *Exodus* was purely a labor of love for him. He was really enjoying the challenge he'd given himself, diving into it and losing all track of time."

Christensen didn't. She estimates *Exodus* required 100 plus hours of hand labor, over four times the work of other high end, finely appointed instruments.

And, she says, "Every hour was worth it."

*Exodus*, 15.6" across its belly, is a shallow body, soft cutaway auditorium size guitar, 4" deep at the tailblock. Like other Breedloves of its era, it retains the bridge truss, an apparatus left behind when Sound Optimization® superseded its purpose, resulting in even more responsive, tonally superior guitars. Unlike others, even the face of the truss, unseen deep within the body, is hidden behind a slip of the same curly koa that illuminates the rest of the instrument. The same goes for the back of the headstock, topping a 25.5" scale mahogany neck, and girded with ebony-buttoned gold Gotoh tuners.

Ever diligent, Breedlove saw to every detail of *Exodus*. A trapezoidal black pearl inlay in the winged ebony bridge, for example, ties in visually with the 1&3¼" abalone nut and the carefully laminated ebony and mother of pearl saddle.

He knew, it seems, that this was his masterpiece—a memory of a childhood summer come to life in musical form, forever.



# GEAR REVIEWS & AWARDS.

BY PREMIER GUITAR MAGAZINE

New Breedlove Organic Wildwood Concert Satin CE Whiskey Burst receives an Award from Premier Guitar Magazine.

“It has an even voice that balances high-end detail and low-end sustain with a strong presence in the midrange.”

## The Verdict

The Breedlove Organic Wildwood Concert is affordable, sleek, super-playable, and full of dynamic range. Even though the high end could be a touch more harmonically rich, it's a pleasant and responsive fingerpicking companion, as you can hear on the audio clip. It also rises to the challenge when you really need to dig in. That's not always the case with a compact, concert-sized guitar. But it's a challenge the Wildwood Concert eagerly and very stylishly meets.

Please read the full review, as well as the First Look review video on [PremierGuitar.com](https://www.premiarguitar.com)





# LEAH CAPELLE

**“I’m ready, whenever the world is ready for me!”**

*Stuck at home, Los Angeles’ Leah Capelle drops brilliant debut album “triptych”*

The buzzworthy release party for Leah Capelle’s hotly anticipated debut album, *triptych*, is this Friday in Los Angeles. Except it’s not. Like everything else, it has been preempted, postponed and pushed aside by the COVID-19 scare.

Capelle is sanguine. She understands. She still plans on releasing the album Friday, noting that the celebration may have to wait, but the music sure doesn’t.

“I’ve worked pretty much nonstop for a year and a half on this project, and I just want it to be out in the world,” she says. “I know it’s a strange time to be releasing music, but everyone’s home, and everyone, I feel, needs a little bit of art right now.”

Like so many other artists, Capelle has made the decision to self-isolate, but not be stifled. She has posted updates and missives online and is dropping some “lives” on Facebook, sitting at a desk in her home in L.A. playing songs while surrounded by the tools of her trade, including a spiffy white Fender Duo-Sonic, a vintage Telecaster and a gorgeous sunburst Ernie Ball St. Vincent model.





Part of the heartbreak of the cancelled gig is the fact that Capelle has literally been preparing for this show her entire life.

Classically trained, as a Chicago youth, in piano and voice, Capelle was already performing before her Midwest classmates had taken off their training wheels.

Teenage rebellion was funneled into songwriting and more gigging, and before long, Capelle was in Boston, studying for a year at Berklee, where, oddly enough, she took a break from the stage to focus on her craft.

“I probably wrote a million songs while I was there.”

More recently, she wrapped up a business major at USC Thornton School of Music, where she also dove deep into composition.

“Education has done so much for me as a business woman,” she says, and that wisdom has guided her through a series of very successful EPs leading up to *triptych*.

Capelle recently spoke with *American Songwriter* about “trying out different songwriting postures,” which contributed to the creation of the album.

“I wish I could take credit for that,” she says, “but that is something that was taught to me at USC by Professor Sean Holt.”

“Each week we had to put on a different songwriting posture, looking at a situation from a new perspective that maybe we didn’t hold, or trying to write a song, for example, without using any proper nouns. Those challenges make you a better writer, because it forces you outside of your comfort zone.”

Since moving to California in 2014, Capelle has, in addition to recording, gigging and finishing school, been working in the film industry as a coordinator—“I get paid the big bucks to do things that producers don’t want to do,” she chuckles.

That, too, prepared her for *triptych*, and she has released videos already for three of its songs, each a bracing, compelling and fully realized statement.



“If I had a lot of money, I would’ve created a video for every song on the record,” she says. “I do not have a lot of money. But, basically what I’ve been trying to do, is find ways to connect and collide different art forms. It’s a concept piece, all of it. Working in film has made me think really specifically about every choice that I’m making.”

With “i keep her,” the fourth and final single, Capelle completes a process of coming out that has been, in personal and public ways, essential to her art.

“I started coming out way before I ever wrote about it,” Capelle says. “I felt like it was becoming more and more important by the day, to be completely open and honest about my life. I am not trying to be someone I’m not, and I’m not trying to make my bisexuality a huge part of my platform, other than being supportive and partnering with organizations that are doing really good work. But it is a part of me, and I want to be able to share that.”

Capelle still writes occasionally on piano—“mostly sad songs”—but says her chops are not what they once were. Instead, she composes primarily on acoustic, splitting time between a trio of Breedloves, although she does rip the St. Vincent pretty hard when the spirit moves.

“A lot of my live show, especially when I’m solo, is pretty electric heavy, because I love distortion and heavy guitar tones. And some of the songs are just more powerful on electric guitar.”

Her first Breedlove—a 2012 Focus SE Redwood Concert—still inspires many of her best songs and remains a trusted friend.



"It's beautiful. I love it. It ruined me for all other acoustic guitars, to be honest."

Capelle also plays a Pursuit Exotic Concert CE, and recently acquired an Organic Collection Artista Concert Natural Shadow CE.

"The tone, man!" she beams, "The tone is so nice."

"I literally can't choose between my Breedloves now, because they all sound so different, but so good."

"The Focus is unbelievable. It's been aging for almost 10 years, so it's really warm. The Artista has a beautiful blend of being bright and warm. The high-end frequencies ring out, but not in a way that's piercing. You can hear the tone of the wood, I think, really clearly with that guitar."

"When I play a Breedlove it just feels really natural. It feels like my hand fits exactly the way it's supposed to."

You can be sure that once a triptych show is finally rescheduled and we're all feeling a little safer, Capelle will be out there taking on the world, Breedlove in hand.

"I'm hoping that these moments of pause are going to give people the opportunity to actually sit with the album, listen to it all the way through and connect with it," Capelle says. "It's a pretty cathartic record."

"I'm ready," she laughs, "whenever the world is ready for me!"

[Visit leahcapelle.com](http://leahcapelle.com)



## ALBUM REVIEW: LEAH CAPELLE'S DEBUT ALBUM *TRIPTYCH* IS DIRECT, THRILLING AND OF THE MOMENT

Leah Capelle is ready for her closeup. The Los Angeles-based songwriter has just released her debut album *triptych*. Hotly anticipated, it follows on the heels of a series of well received EPs and videos, and is poised to put the Chicago native on the national music map. Capelle—Breedlove's featured artist for April—has a raging gift for the hook. Each tune's chorus burrows in immediately and stays there, lingering for days. She shares a vocabulary of despair, as well as an uncommon command of melody, with Aimee Mann; and owns a voice as immediately recognizable, but with a more aggressive tone. *triptych* explores a harsh breakup but never gets mired. Instead, it surges. It touches on Capelle's own mental health issues, but is as bright as it is dark. And, particularly with "i keep her," it serves as a public coming out. Those three themes are the title's ersatz panels, but taken as a whole, *triptych* may actually be Capelle's coming out party as a star. The disc is just brimming with hits, from the auto-tuned electronica of "know me better" and the irresistible thrum of "alder lake" to the full court crunch of "on accident." While Capelle strums "changed" and picks "did we have a good day, baby?" *triptych* is not a guitar record per se, but you can always hear the instrument's role in framing the songs, and Capelle frequently performs her creations unadorned. But the sheen of *triptych*'s production is direct, thrilling and of the moment. Listen now.



[Listen on Spotify.](#)

Play album on Sporitfy



[Click to play video.](#)



## Seed to Song— Tom Bedell's TEDx Talk

*Two Old Hippies Stringed Instruments invites musicians to ask important questions and participate in saving the planet one guitar at a time*

Two Old Hippies Stringed Instruments—makers of Breedlove Guitars, Bedell Guitars and Weber Mandolins—is inviting players of all levels to participate in saving the planet one guitar at a time, by learning more about issues of sustainability, sourcing and global ecology.

On Nov. 22, 2019, Bedell delivered a TEDx Talk in Okoboji, Iowa, addressing the urgent need to examine existing operational methods and to educate and empower musicians to ask questions like “where did the wood in my guitar come from?”

Bedell Guitars, Weber Mandolins and *Made in Bend* Breedlove Guitars use no clear-cut woods, and have carefully tracked provenance, from respected suppliers, with a clear chain of custody. In many models, wood billets can be traced back to exactly where a tree was singly culled or salvaged.

In January, Breedlove introduced the Organic Collection, four series of all solid wood import instruments with transparent chains of custody, built from materials individually harvested in the Swiss Alps, the Republic of Congo and along the Oregon coast.

As noted in his TEDx Talk, Bedell personally visited locations in Europe and Africa to ensure compliance from mills and to observe relationships between the forest, the wildlife and the indigenous communities. In Madagascar, he discovered deep, sanctioned abuses affecting both the region's ecosphere—the most diverse on earth—and the population. As a result, he refused to use a rosewood supply that would have retailed for half a million dollars.

“I thought,” he said to the Okoboji audience, “if I could set an example that others would follow, I could make a difference.”

Breedlove is currently aiming for all of its Designed in Bend models to be renewable, compliant and traceable—a daunting project, but Bedell, who has traveled to 15 countries to learn and share the message of sustainable practices, is primed for the task.

“We're asking ourselves the same questions we want to hear from our friends,” Bedell says. “And this goes deeper than guitars. We should be concerned about everything we use. It will take time to fix what's broken, but we don't have any other choice. All of us need to ask questions about where the products we purchase come from, and whether, through our habits and desires, we are helping the planet or harming it.”

“We are rapidly consuming the resources here on planet Earth, and if we don't change our behavior we're not going to leave a livable world for our grandchildren.”





# GEAR REVIEWS & AWARDS.

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER | FROM  
THE SPRING 2020 ISSUE OF  
UKULELE MAGAZINE

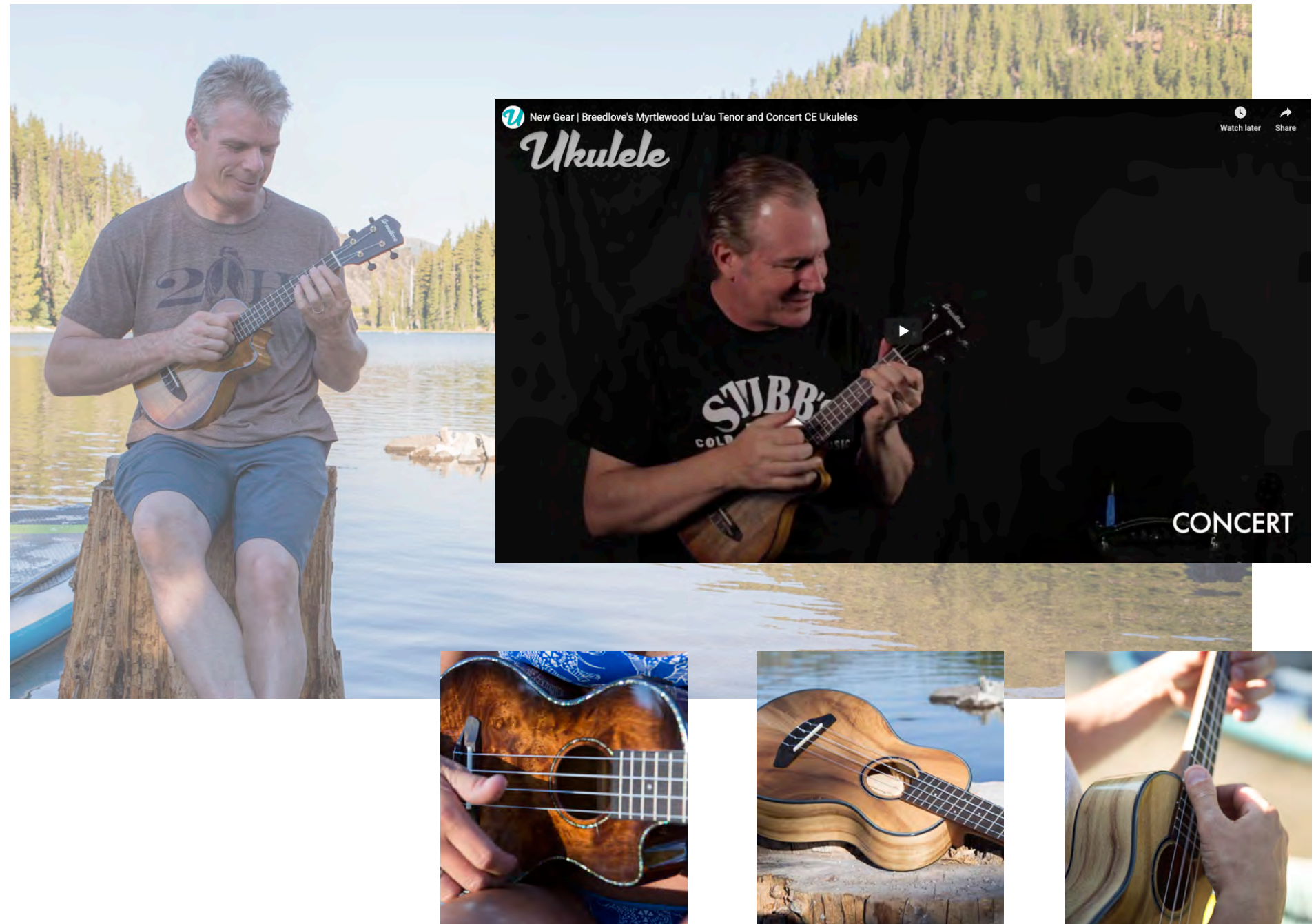
In guitar circles, the name Breedlove is synonymous with forward-thinking designs, such as graduated soundboards and bridge truss systems, as well as the use of sustainable tonewoods. The company was founded in 1990, when luthiers Larry Breedlove and Steve Henderson set up a small workshop in the desert town of Bend, Oregon. Since then, Breedlove has grown from a small custom shop into one of the leading mid-sized makers, with offerings at all price points, built both in Oregon and in China.

For many years, Larry Breedlove's brother, Kim, who joined the company in the mid-'90s as master luthier, made ukuleles in his home garage for fun, and the company has produced ukuleles now and then. Kim Breedlove is now retired, but Breedlove recently introduced a fresh range of his ukulele designs in concert and tenor sizes, with and without electronics, all of which sell for well under \$500. I checked out a pair of these instruments—the Lu'au concert and tenor CE models, each with a cutaway and electronics—and found them to be sweet-sounding and highly playable.

Please read the full review at

[Ukulelemag.com](https://ukulelemag.com)

## LU'AU TENOR AND CONCERT UKULELES



[Click to play video.](#)

### Beautiful Design and Build

The Lu'au duo's myrtlewood soundboards, backs, and sides make a smart first impression. Breedlove has made extensive use of this tonewood, which grows prolifically in the coastal regions of Southwestern Oregon. In terms of tonal properties, myrtlewood falls somewhere between rosewood and mahogany, and its coloring tends to be richly variegated. That's certainly the case with our review models, on which the myrtlewood's natural beauty is highlighted by Breedlove's subtle sunburst finish and contrasted by tortoise binding. *Continue reading at [Ukulelemag.com](https://ukulelemag.com).*



# MAHOGANY

*Everything You Ever  
Wanted to Know*





*Swietenia macrophylla*. Big leaf mahogany. Often called Honduran mahogany or genuine mahogany, by any name it is one of the world's most renowned tonewoods, a precious commodity grown naturally only in a thin band from southern Mexico to northern South America.

It is the great yin to rosewood's yang—warm, dry and midrangey, it counters the former's bloom of overtones with a beautiful directness, emphasizing the fundamental with an organ-like clarity and definition.

Introduced into luthiery on a large scale in 1907, by the 74-year-old C.F Martin & Co., the Nazareth, Pa.-based builder used it on its "lesser" models, which still cost more than some deluxe issues from its upstart competitor, Gibson, founded in Kalamazoo, Mich. in 1902.

Genuine mahogany is the voice of American folk music, with Bob Dylan kicking off his career with a Martin 00-17 before recording his debut album with a Gibson J-50. A songwriter's dream, mahogany lets the lyrics shine, lifting the message rather than competing with it.

Additionally, genuine mahogany is one of the great structural woods of fine instrument making. Its density, stiffness and strength-to-weight ratio have made it a prime neck choice for steel string guitars for over a century. It has also found a welcome home inside guitar and bodies, providing sturdy, resonant and durable blocks at neck and heel, along with select reinforcement braces.

Mahogany still costs dear, not just on the wallet, but to the earth as well. According to World Resources Institute, 70 percent of the planet's genuine mahogany was cut between 1950 and 2003, most of it landing in furniture and luxury items, leading to its protected status from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in November of the latter year.



[Click to watch video.](#)





WRI notes that “many guitar makers have taken a stand to support sustainable community forestry programs in Central America.” Breedlove Guitars, led by owner Tom Bedell, is at the forefront of these efforts.

As noted above, you will find all solid sustainably sourced genuine mahogany—fashioned from Forest Stewardship Council-certified billets—in the tone-and-sustain-enhancing blocks and slim, comfortable, fast necks of all Breedlove *Made in Bend* models.

A genuine mahogany neck, straight and true, instantly familiar to your hand and solid enough to not steal vibrational energy from the top, is your best friend.

In 2015, Bedell, as part of his relentless pursuit to personally guarantee the sustainability of Breedlove’s tonewoods, flew to Flores, Guatemala to begin a journey to convene with a community forestry collective of 85 families,

Custosel, which is carefully maintaining a forest concession in the country’s department of Peten, where Honduran mahogany grows over 150 feet tall, covered in cracked gray bark, occasionally dropping inedible “sky fruits” filled with dozens of winged seeds.

Custosel is one of nine such concessions within the Maya Biosphere Reserve, which was established in 1990 to insure the preservation and maintenance of the country’s natural resources.

As is his custom, Bedell, after grinding in a pickup truck through hours of bumpy, mud slick rainforest roads, met with government officials, members of the Rainforest Alliance and Custosel representatives to discuss the forestry methods used—with each tree plotted to specific GPS points and monitored for its health and importance to the continued life of the forest.

“There’s a whole set of rules that the NGOs helped the government put into place,” he explains. “Each concession has to be FSC certified; they have to have a five-year harvesting plan; they have to have gone into their area and completely mapped out all of the trees. They can only harvest a certain amount of each species per year and every five years there’s an audit. If there are not more of that species of tree growing five years later, then the government will pull the concession.”

As is also his custom, Bedell “met” the eight trees selected by the concession for Breedlove’s use, the culling of which would enable more stock to thrive.

“It was an emotional experience,” Bedell told the cultural creative magazine *Conscious Connection* at the time. “These are living things, they’ve been growing for 150 years, and we were cutting them down. But the sawyer explained to us that Honduran mahogany needs a great amount of light to grow and mature. Right near the trees that were felled were younger mahoganies that would now be able to grow. When the trees were felled, huge holes of skylight were opened up in the forest canopy. So, essentially, while we were taking the life of one tree, we were giving life to others.”

Following the cull, the giant logs, rather than being sent directly to Bend, were milled and processed through Custosel and its Flores partners Forescom, arriving in Oregon as the aforementioned roughed-out billets.

After additional in house processing, Breedlove Chief Product Designer Angela Christensen estimates the most recent shipment, from 2017, as providing enough material for over 1,000 Breedlove guitars.







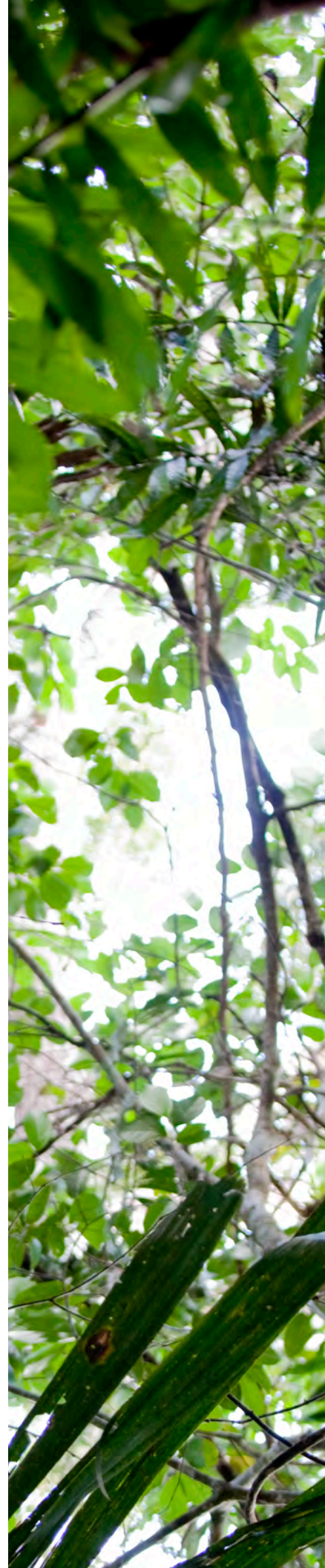
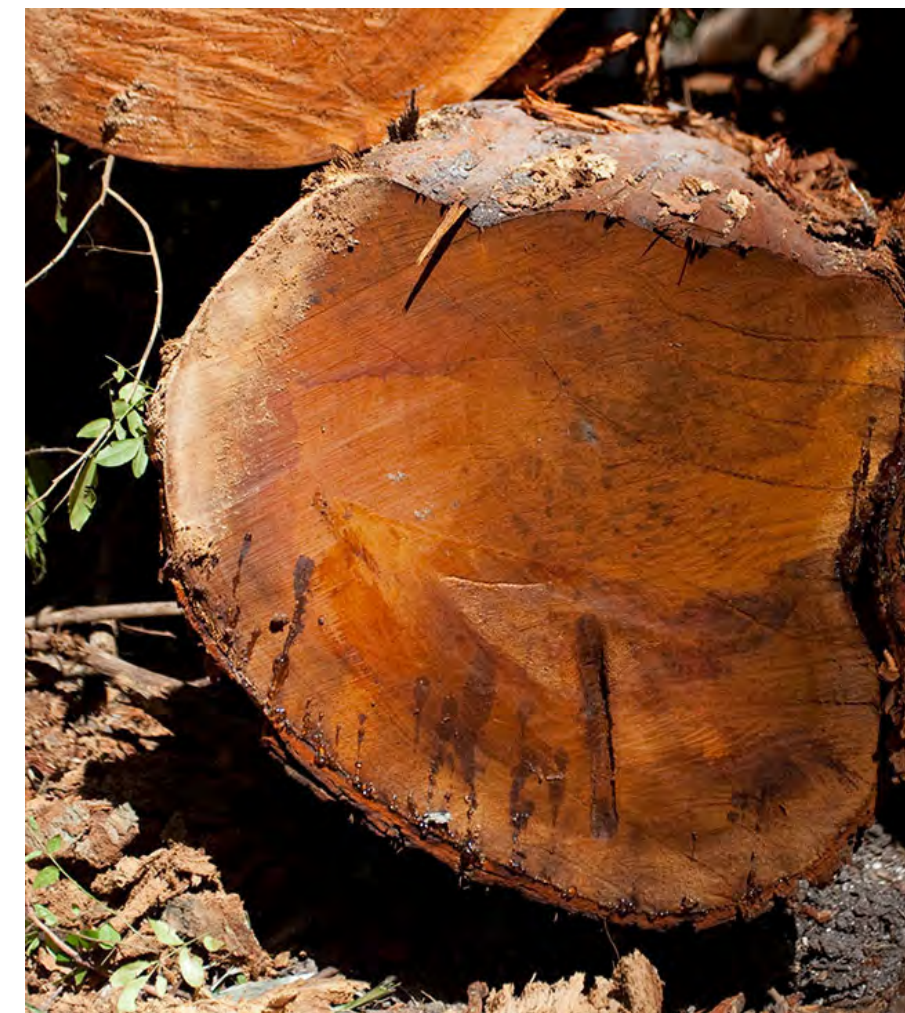
"We pay significantly more money than the furniture or the flooring companies that buy mahogany from Custosel," Bedell says—and every bit of that high-grade rare wood is put to good use in instruments that will last more than a lifetime.

Before returning to the capital city and the flight home, Bedell and his companions spent the night in the wild, resting on platforms built that evening for just such a purpose.

"We each packed a sleeping bag," he chuckles. "So, we're all just right out there in the open, in the jungle. The Howler monkeys were having a heyday up in the trees. There were macaws, and, of course, there were bugs, there were bugs, there were bugs! It was really a fascinating experience."

"It's just a beautiful sound," Bedell says. Meaning the mahogany, not the monkeys.

"But they sounded pretty cool, too!"







## SOCIAL DISTANCING, WITH GUITAR!

*There may be no better time than now—emotionally, financially, mindfully—to just stay at home and play*

There are no universal truths save this. Playing guitar, for those who do, constitutes therapy. Playing guitar is good medicine.

Playing guitar, in fact, is one of the few things that has reduced the great literary voices of the era to shades of awe and wonder.

“I Trust my guitar, and I don’t care about anything,” Patti Smith said of her 1964 Fender duo sonic in “High on Rebellion,” an ode to breaking through and spending “eternity riding the wave and realm of the E.”

The great midcentury poet Carl Sandburg, inspired by the simple beauty and power of his 1933 Martin OM-18, penned a series of vignettes in 1951 called “The Guitar: Some Definitions,” dubbing it, at one point, “A small friend weighing less than a newborn infant,

ever responsive to all sincere efforts aimed at mutual respect, depth of affection or love gone off the deep end.”

You are similarly inspired by your guitar, and in hard times it provides companionship, solace and clarity.

If, by chance, you’ve looked out the window this week, you’re aware that chaos reigns. The economy is imploding. Humanity is on the run. And the novel coronavirus is fundamentally changing, for the short term at the very least, the way we operate as a people, as a society and as a world.

In fact, the only other universal truth, today, seems to be that we should hunker down. Call it what you want—self quarantine, cocooning, sheltering in place, social distancing—the great wisdom suggests that we all scale down for a few minutes and remind ourselves of the power of solitude.

There has never been a better moment to just sit back and play your guitar.

We’re not talking about Nero fiddling while Rome Burns. We’re talking about what Sandburg called, “a device in the realm of harmonic creation whose six silent strings have the sound potential of profound contemplation or happy-go-lucky whim.”

Take the time as a gift. Use the time to improve.

Music helped steer the social change of the 1960s. Write a new song. Channel your anger and frustration into three chords and the truth. Use the technology to collaborate, not to separate. Skype with a friend as you thrash out the lyrics to a new anthem for the ages. Write a positive response to Barry McGuire’s apocalyptic 1965 hit “Eve of Destruction.” Call it “Day of Reconstruction.” Knock out a true-to-life twelve bar and call it, “My baby’s got the Virus Blues.”

With the shuttering of major music festivals, the widespread cancellation of highly anticipated tours and even small club attendance levels capped by municipalities, the lives of working musicians have been completely altered for the time being. If you’re used to gigging on the weekend and are feeling stymied, use this downtime as an opportunity to really get your gear together. Restring that thing! You know it’s been asking for some maintenance. Get your humidity on. There’s nothing better for you right now, or your axe. Pull out cables and mikes and accessories and make sure everything’s in top shape. Create a want list—replace that shaky capo, pick up a brass finger slide to try a few new licks— for the next time it’s safe enough to venture out to your local music retailer. And run down the set list a few times to gauge what’s really working and what’s not.

You can even scroll through the Breedlove blog to find a few articles on basic guitar care.

You don’t write? You don’t gig? Not to worry.

If you strum a ukulele simply to amuse yourself, amuse on! Pearl Jam’s “Rise” sounds great on four strings. So does “Something” from The Beatles—George Harrison loved the ukulele, even before Jake Shimabukuro transformed “While My Guitar Gently Weeps.”

Streaming is your friend now more than ever and YouTube is chock-a-block with tutorials that can take your playing to the next level, whether simply learning a new scale, figuring out a favorite song or sussing out how to make the change from G to D7 and back. It’s great to while some time by jamming with old favorites blasting out of the computer speakers.

If we might be so bold, this blip of economic insecurity and social distancing might make an opportunity to reinvest in the music that fired us in the first place. We are endlessly knocked out by the roster of Breedlove artists, and recently featured folks like Chris Arndt, Conner Cherland and this month’s Sydney Irving are all making wonderful new sounds that could really use some support and which, we are sure, would brighten your day. Look ‘em up!

In Bend, Oregon, spring is hammering on the windows. Outdoors folk all, we have a massive case of cabin fever. But we know that that is a more tenable physical state than coronavirus. We’re all minding our health and being mindful of others. Let’s all do our best to be good to each other by being good to ourselves.

Stay home if you can. Play your guitar.

We’ll be right here when this blows over. If you need anything, please let us know.

We’re family.





## A BROKEN THUMB LEADS THE POWERFUL PAULA BOGGS TO EMBRACE HER INNER UKULELE

*Seattle bandleader takes inspiration from Eddie Vedder to overcome tragedy*

Tragedy can, in unexpected ways, birth joy.

In 2005, Paula Boggs was on top of the world. A decorated former Army officer/paratrooper, high-powered lawyer and federal prosecutor, Boggs was in the midst of a decade's service as chief legal officer at Starbucks when she got a phone call informing her that her sister-in-law had been killed in a traffic accident.

Boggs stepped up, helping to raise her youngest brother's child.

She also stepped down, eventually taking the new situation both as a signal and an opportunity.

She decided it was time for a new career,

one she had dreamed of, but set aside. She became a full time musician.

"It was just the most jarring, sad thing," Boggs says of the crash and its aftermath.

"My spouse actually encouraged me to pick up my guitar as a way to grieve. And once I did that, it was the point of no return. That was the engine that got me back in the game."

The peripatetic Boggs had played guitar since her youth.

"After a couple of false starts with other instruments, I came to guitar and it was my jam," she says, chuckling at the memory. She even gave lessons around the neighborhood—a nickel a shot.

Finding an outlet in the folk mass of her Catholic church in Chesterfield County, Va., Boggs composed new songs for services, pursuing praise music as a creative sideline as she moved through college and law school.

Entering the corporate world required a more rigorous commitment and, despite the fact that the guitar always felt like home, Boggs fell away from the instrument.

"The upshot was that for probably a decade-and-a-half, I didn't even look at my guitar, let alone play it. I had persuaded myself it was a 'that was then, this is now' sort of thing."

Fast forward to late fall 2019. By this point Boggs, who lives outside of Seattle, is the leader of a successful eponymous touring band; singing her own song for large crowds; and garnering, you guessed it, praise for her 'Seattle Brewed Soulgrass'—"a stew of soul, folk, bluegrass, world and jazz."

As with her previous arcs, Boggs is flying high, in total command of her trajectory, when tragedy says hello again.

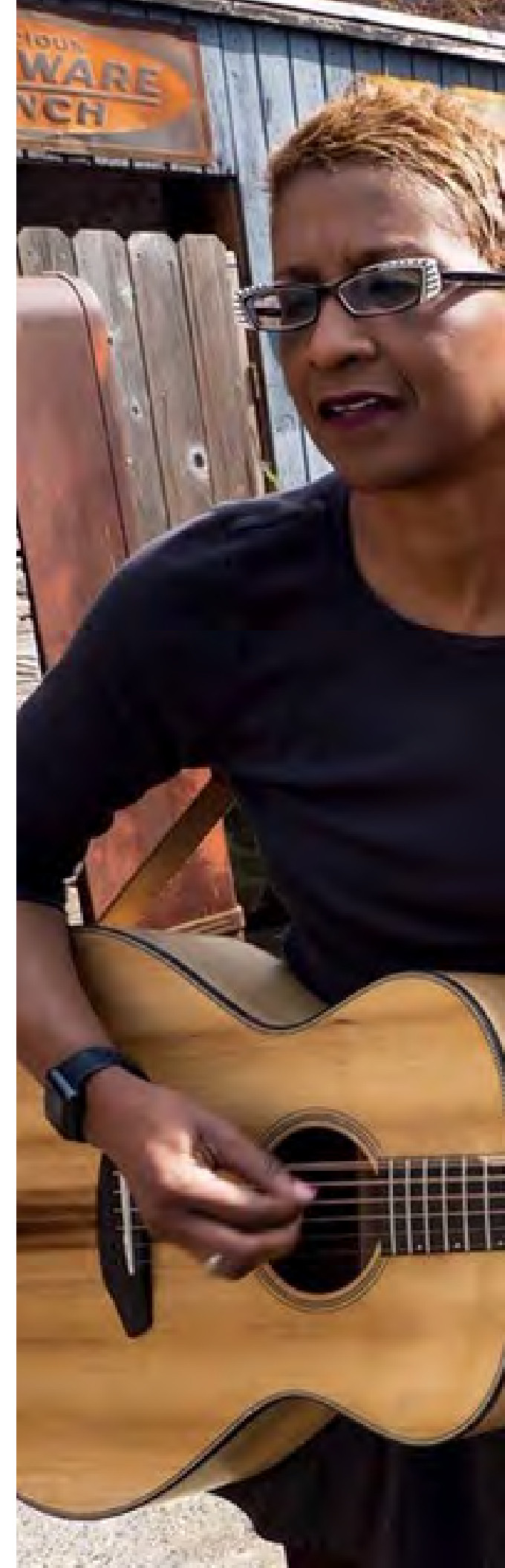
This time, it's in a lesser, but still potent form.

"It was one of those wet, cold Seattle days, with lots of slippery leaves,' Boggs recalls, the pain still evident in her voice. "I was running late for a rehearsal and carrying too much equipment. I just wiped out, dislocating and breaking my left thumb."

That's a setback custom-wrought to sideline a lifelong guitar player. But this, as you can see, is Paula Boggs—who, again, took the trial as a signal and an opportunity.

The signal was to rethink her music and its presentation. The opportunity was to tackle ukulele for real, as opposed to the occasional pastime it had previously been in her musical and onstage life.

Boggs came upon her first of four ukuleles while on vacation in Hawaii a decade ago.





But seeing Seattle neighbor Eddie Vedder on tour behind his 2011 album *Ukulele Songs* was the gateway drug to taking it seriously.

"I just fell in love with the instrument on a whole new level after seeing and hearing Eddie perform live," she says.

The easier fretting aspect of the diminutive box and its nylon strings meant that, post fall, Boggs could ease back into performing. But she found, in the instrument's distinctive tone, a new voice for writing as well.

"It's been my lifeline over these past months. Before my injury, it was sort of a second-class citizen, now it's the big kahuna."

A longtime Breedlove artist, Boggs first saw the updated Lu'au Series while visiting a music merchant's convention in Anaheim Calif., this January.

"I thought oh my god, I'm going to have to get one of those."

She settled on an all myrtlewood Breedlove tenor, and loves that it echoes the visual and sonic beauty of her favorite guitar—a similarly sustainably sourced all myrtlewood *Made in Bend* Oregon Concert E.

"It's beautiful. The wood is very special and, even without amplification there's a sweetness and depth to its tone that excites me. It literally looks like a shrunk version of my guitar. The two of them together, on any stage, look stunning."

Boggs, who remains active outside of music as a public speaker, philanthropist and fundraiser, is nothing if not productive—just watch her TEDx talk, “Who Am I?”

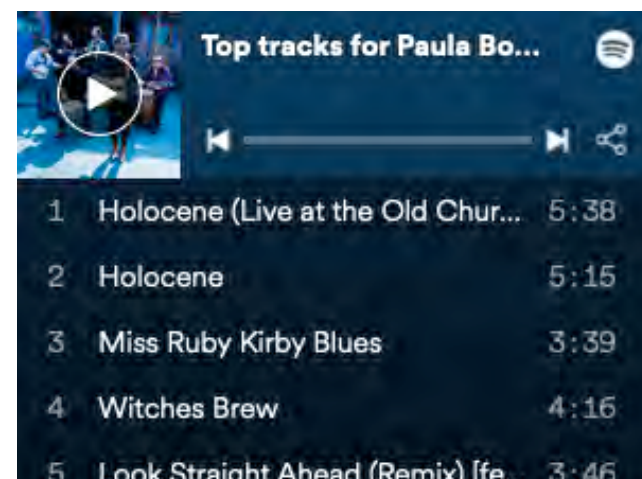
[Visit paulaboggs.com](http://paulaboggs.com)

She immediately, productively, took to the Lu'au as her main creative outlet. She's been writing a bevy of new tunes, exploring different rhythms and discovering what many dedicated players already know. It's a real instrument and a real inspiration.

"My thumb forced me to do things differently, and some of those differences we're not going to abandon just because I can play guitar again. We're a new band because of this injury and I don't want to lose that. I think the uke, and what the uke means to me now, is a big part of that."

Boggs, who often fronts the band solely as a vocalist of late, says that perhaps the biggest revelation to come in the wake of her mishap is that she doesn't need a guitar to express herself. She just needs music.

"The ability to communicate the meaning of the lyrics, through my voice and my body, has gone up a notch. I've talked to the band about playing guitar less as we go forward. And there's something about the appearance of a ukulele that puts people at ease. I internalize that and understand that better now. Because of its size, I find that I am more kinetic in my performance. Because it's so small, I can twist around and jump around and bend up and down. It's great."



[Listen on Spotify.](#)







## DEALER SPOTLIGHT

**“There is no Megan without a guitar around.”**

*Acoustic Music SLC Owner Megan Peters keeps her doors, and her arms, open.*

Salt Lake City's Megan Peters has a guitar bench in the back of her Subaru. She's been making deliveries, and the occasional repair on the fly.

“And if someone needs a re-string,” she laughs, “I'll just pull up to their house after work. They can leave the instrument out front, I'll do the job in my car and then put it back on the porch.”

Peters, a songwriter with four albums to her name, owns Acoustic Music SLC, serving a wide swath of “Crossroads of the West” musicians, ranging from stone beginners to serious working pros.

A player for over 40 years, personally she is a fan of “boutique guitars” and proudly runs her welcoming shop like, well, a boutique—“I still write paper receipts and have no computer system,” she says.

Despite the strange days of late, Acoustic Music is still open for business. She is running with a skeleton crew and is fanatically observing cleanliness and social distancing within the shop—even if the latter is a concept foreign to someone as open-armed as Peters, who gathers the homeless as well as the heeled under one understanding roof, with a simple philosophy that translates to ‘Let's respect each other and play guitars.’

A committed knitter as well as picker, Peters carries a heavyweight array of big guitar names, but admits she's mostly providing budget outfits to quarantiners at the moment.

“Oh my God, for sanity's sake, people need guitars right now! I have an entire room full of Breedlove and Bedell, plus Collings, Santa Cruz, Martin and Taylor. I've got all this really high-end stuff, and what I can't keep in stock are the \$200 models. Folks just want to learn because they're locked down!”

Owning Acoustic Music completes a circle for Peters. The store opened in 1973, and, as a youth, she actually purchased her own first six-string at the shop.

“The store was three blocks away from my junior high,” she says, “and I'd go there every single day. I had a \$300 guitar on layaway that took me probably a year-and-a-half to pay off, but it was a place where the dudes treated me like I was one of the tribe. I could sing Bonnie Raitt songs really loud as a little 12-year-old, and they'd listen for a while before they'd kick me out with a friendly ‘see you tomorrow, Meg!’”

With four athletic siblings, Peters, the self-professed “fat kid in a skinny family,” just wanted, “to read books, play guitar, wear black eyeliner and hang out in the drama room.”

At Acoustic Music, which retains a dedicated classical guitar section, she found a safe haven. As the store's fourth owner, she wants to keep it that way, and is adamant about being an outpost for “others” in a conservative town.

“It's really important to the community,” she says. “It's a hangout space.”





To keep *herself* sane while staying home, Peters, along with longtime associate and luthier Aaron Jones, has been hosting a weekly *Virtual Song Circle Challenge* on her FaceBook page, celebrating great writers such as Hank Williams, Gillian Welch and Dolly Parton, while giving outlet to creative souls from all around the country, not just around the block.

“Amidst all this, to be able to go on your phone and listen to a father and daughter sing a Neil Young song is magical,” she beams. “It makes me so happy.”

Peters, who says, “There is no Megan without a guitar around,” is an important Breedlove USA dealer and loves the instruments that come out of Bend.

“With each *Made in Bend* Breedlove, it feels like the builder is paying attention to that individual guitar and getting the most out of that specific wood that he or she can.”

Peters was raised in a “completely green family”—“I never had meat until I was 16.”

She says that Breedlove owner Tom Bedell's recent TEDx Talk about forging a path to sustainability in the guitar world has had a profound effect on her outlook, which she has been sharing with Acoustic Music SLC customers.

To have somebody ask, “Where did the wood in your guitar come from?” was challenging, she says.

“I’ve always considered the art of the instrument, but to actually consider the wood has definitely made me think differently.”

[Visit Acoustic Music SLC Online](#)

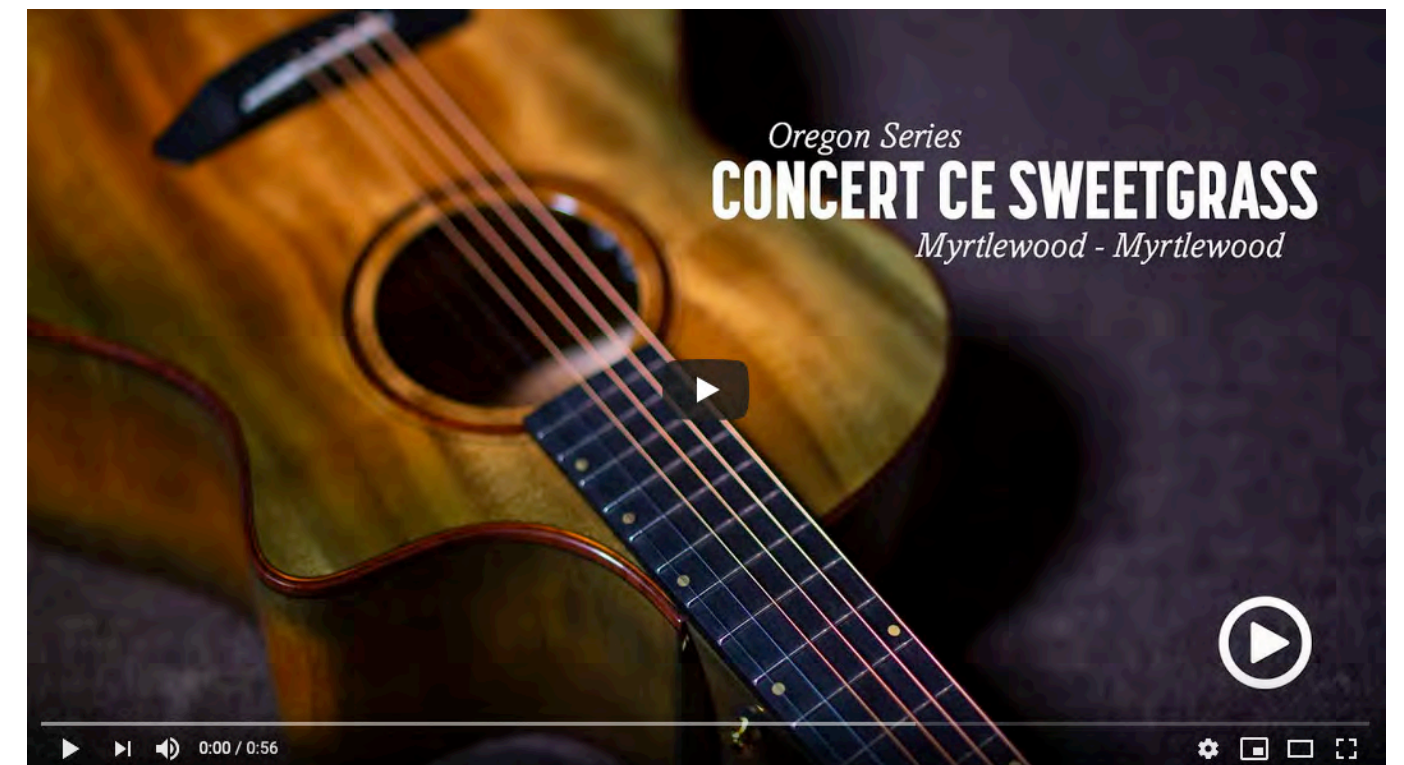
“My customers do care, and I think that we need to educate them about sustainability and we need to educate ourselves about whether other brands are making similar efforts—no clear cutting, selective salvage and harvest—or not.”

“What Tom said means a lot me—if we want guitars to be around in 100 years, we’re going to have to take care of the forests that make them.”



## LIMITED EDITION FEATURE

Introducing the Oregon Sweetgrass LTDs



[Click to watch video.](#)

The Oregon Concert Sweetgrass Burst CE Limited Edition is built for the musician seeking well-rounded balance with midrange fullness, depth, clarity, and liveliness. An alluring Breedlove crafted from locally sourced myrtlewood for the body, the Oregon Concert Sweetgrass Burst CE is wonderfully alive with tone. The hard rock maple neck, and myrtlewood top combine to deliver accentuated depth and clarity across the tonal spectrum. It comes appointed with its custom Sweetgrass color and will be available as a limited run of 25 guitars. Ideal for a versatile playing styles.

[View guitar profile online.](#)







# *Breedlove*

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