



Breedlove

MAGAZINE

ARTIST

**DAVID
STARR**



CARING FOR YOUR GUITAR

IN SPRING



THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY

**KING KOA, PHOENIX
& FOCUS SE**



UNBOXING WITH ARTIST

JON TORRENCE

THE 2021

SPRING MAGAZINE

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FROM TOM BEDELL

It is springtime! Not only are plants sprouting and songbirds singing, but there is a feeling of renewal this year. After the long winter of not knowing what to expect, the loss of hope and promise have given way to optimism and a sense of future.

To celebrate, we are redesigning our Breedlove Custom Design Center and filling this spring issue with stories of many custom guitars. From Ancient Sitka (almost 3,000 years old) and sunken cedar to Pacific Coast myrtlewood and highly figured Hawaiian Koa.

It has been a delight to introduce four 30th Anniversary Editions: the Northwest Classic (in the Winter Magazine), Focus Special Edition, King Koa, and Phoenix in this Spring Magazine.

Gratefully, more and more people are turning to guitar playing. Within the following pages, you will find an article on *Caring for Your Guitar in Spring* and *6 Ways to Get Out of a Playing Rut!*

We hope you enjoy the storytelling in this new issue – the Breedlove Spring Magazine.

Cheers,
Tom Bedell

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DAVID STARR RISES UP AGAIN

When David Starr was in the hospital and things were looking bad, he found inspiration from an unlikely source. “My father and grandfather were there in a dream to tell me it wasn’t my time yet, even though I was kind of at death’s door,” says the singer/songwriter and owner of Cedaredge, CO music store, Starr’s Guitars.

As he recovered from an emergency surgery, that dream inspired Starr to write the bones of his song “Rise Up Again.” He sent his notes along to his pal John Oates who co-wrote the track and the two musicians made it the centerpiece of Starr’s 2020 record *Beauty & Ruin*, which Oates produced.

After recovering, when Starr returned to the stage and began performing “Rise Up Again” live, he noticed that audiences were reacting to the song’s anthemic message, which became somewhat of a mission statement for the musician. “I sort of feel like none of us have any time to waste. Hopefully this last year has brought that home to some people who took things for granted,” he says.

The idea “Rise Up Again” seems to be indicative of Starr’s longtime work ethic. As he balances his music career — which had been keeping Starr busy with for about 150 nights every year as he toured through the US and UK — with running Starr’s Guitars, he’s become well aware that he has no time to waste. When asked how he does it, he says, “I’ve just always had this ethic that if you get up early, you can get ahead of things a little bit. So, when I’m not on the road, I come down here to the store about 6:30, 7:00 in the morning.” He’s quick to point out that he couldn’t do it on his own, adding, “I have to say, I’ve always had good help.”



RISE UP AGAIN

with David Starr



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Initially founded in Little Rock, AR, Starr moved the store to the small town of Cedaredge in 2001. "What I've found is in a small town we don't have a lot of professional players. It's mostly hobbyists and people just starting out. When they come in, they look to me to give them advice about what a good value and what a good guitar is," says Starr, who sees the Starr's Guitars as a reflection of himself as a player and artist. "It's a 'your vibe attracts your tribe' kind of thing. I've tried to make the store represent me as much as possible. So, it feels like it's me and my help they're coming to see as much as the guitars in the store."

Starr and his wife have used their role in the local music scene as a platform to give back to the community. They helped create the Grand Mesa Arts Center in Cedaredge and the town offered its thanks by naming an official David Starr Day in 2016. "I try to do a lot for this community because my goal is to leave it better than I found it," he says.

Last year, Starr saw an opportunity to reach people in a new way by designing his own custom guitar model that he could sell at Starr's Guitars. He called up Breedlove to discuss details and the limited edition Rise Up Again model started to come together.



In order to decide the specs of the guitar, Starr says, "I began thinking about which of my vintage guitars I would want to emulate and blend with Breedlove's contemporary take on guitar making." He chose to outfit the Rise Up Again guitar's concerto body style with a root beer burst finish on a sitka spruce top and a stunning flame maple back, adding touches like vintage-inspired aged binding and ebony tuning keys. But there was one final detail that needed to be put in place. Starr explains, "One day I'm talking to my wife and she said, 'Why not put Rise Up Again as sort of an inspirational message on the fretboard?' And I went, 'Boom. That's it.'"

Starr chose to produce a limited edition run of seven Rise Up Again guitars and they're now available through Starr's Guitars. Starr says his customers have taken notice: "There's been a couple of people that have really connected with that story. I think timing is so important in life. Some of it's just luck, and serendipity. I think to have that guitar happen at the end of the year when we all went through so much and we're all trying to just crawl back from it, I feel like we've all got to keep an eye to the future."

As for what the future holds for Starr, "I can't wait to get back out in front of people so I can play it, and tell the story." Keep an eye on David's social media accounts as he announces new performance dates so you can see the Rise Up Again guitar for yourself, or stop into Starr's Guitars if you're ever in Cedaredge and try one out for yourself.



CARING FOR YOUR GUITAR IN SPRING

After enduring a long winter with cold temperatures and low humidity, your acoustic guitar deserves some extra TLC. Even if you live in a more temperate climate and winter isn't as hard on your cherished instruments as it is in some places, a change of seasons marks a great time to catch up on some basic instrument care and get your guitar back in tip-top shape.

Here's a list of a few simple things our head repair guru, Evan Manthei, suggests to make your guitar sparkle:

Clean and hydrate your fingerboard
Your guitar's fingerboard receives a lot of wear when you play so it's important that it receives some special attention every now and then. It's a great idea to wipe your guitar down after each time you play, which will help keep your fingerboard clean and prolong the life of your strings, but sometimes your guitar needs a deeper clean. Manthei says, "For spring cleaning, you can rub the fingerboard lightly with 0000 steel wool. Then, clean off any leftover steel wool fragments and apply mineral or lemon oil with an old cotton shirt or designated guitar polish cloth. You can also use Q-tips to get into those hard to reach areas. Finally, wipe the fingerboard clean and be sure to wipe off any oil that may have gotten onto the finished body or neck."

Clean your guitar's finish

Sweat and dust work to corrode your instrument's finish so an occasional wipe with some specialized cleaner can go a long way in keeping your guitar looking great. Manthei says, "Breedlove gloss finishes are very hard and durable.

Using a soft cotton cloth and guitar polish to clean your instrument will ensure that it maintains its beautiful look. We recommend using products that are designed for the specific parts and materials of your guitar such as pre-formulated fingerboard oil (or mineral/lemon oil) on the fingerboard and cleaner or polish on the body and neck."

Owners of Breedloves with a satin finish can skip the polish and just give it an attentive wipe with a clean cloth. Manthei says, "Breedlove satin finishes are easy to take care of. Simply wipe the finish with a soft polishing cloth after playing to keep it looking clean."

If your satin finish is extra dirty and a dry cloth doesn't do the trick, it's important to avoid products containing polish or wax on satin or matte finishes because those products may buff the finish into an imperfect glossy sheen. Manthei says, "You can use a guitar cleaner. Guitar cleaners are made to remove oils and residues; polishes are made to buff and create shine. There are several types of small spray bottle cleaners on the market – the one I recommend the most is Music Nomad Guitar Detailer – it is a cleaner that is oil and polish free and can be used on either satin or gloss finish."



Change your strings

"Finally, it's not a bad time to change those strings if needed," says Manthei. A fresh set of strings goes a long way to reinvigorate the sound of your instrument. It'll be easier to clean your fingerboard if you remove the strings, so why not use this as an opportunity to put on a new set? If you're feeling a little extra adventurous, you might even want to try a new brand or style of string.

If you haven't experimented with the current string offerings in a while, this is a great time to see what's on the market. Have you been using a set of phosphor bronze strings? Maybe 80/20 bronze strings would open up some new tones, or vice versa. See what's out there!

Keep thinking about humidification!

When the seasons change, not only does the temperature fluctuate, but so does the relative humidity. It's important to always keep in mind that a guitar is made of wood and was once a living and breathing thing — a tree — so as humidity changes so does your instrument.

If you keep your guitar sitting out or hanging on a wall, it's important to maintain an ideal range of humidity in the room where your guitar is kept — whether that means using a room humidifier or dehumidifier — and monitoring it with a hygrometer.

If you keep your guitar in a case, a two-way humidifier such as those offered from Boveda takes all the work out of maintaining ideal conditions. Boveda's patented two-way humidity control adds or removes moisture as conditions require in order to maintain the ideal humidity level in your instrument case. Because Boveda requires zero maintenance, your instrument will always be protected. You can snag the Boveda packs here.

Once you've given your guitar a round of spring guitar care, your instrument should feel refreshed and ready to be played. Don't be surprised if you find yourself reaching for your Breedlove a little more than usual!

THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY KING KOA

THIRTY YEARS OF BREEDLOVE— STORY TOLD IN FOUR GUITARS!

(PART 2 OF 4)

When the King Koa was first introduced back in 2002, it was like a reflection of Kim Breedlove in the form of a guitar.

“When I think of the King Koa, it is kind of the essence of Kim to me,” says Breedlove Product Developer Angela Christensen. “Kim always seemed to bring with him an ocean breeze. He’s a Southern Cal guy, and he just always kind of had that aura about him, a little more laid back, and he just seemed like he should have been on the beach in Hawaii at all times.”

What better way to capture that vibe than with the tremendous Hawaiian tonewood, koa?

The original King Koa featured beautiful koa back and sides complemented by a warm, understated western red cedar top. A detailed and attention-grabbing mermaid and dolphin inlay — designed by Kim Breedlove — adorned the ebony fingerboard, serving as the guitar’s show-stopping centerpiece.



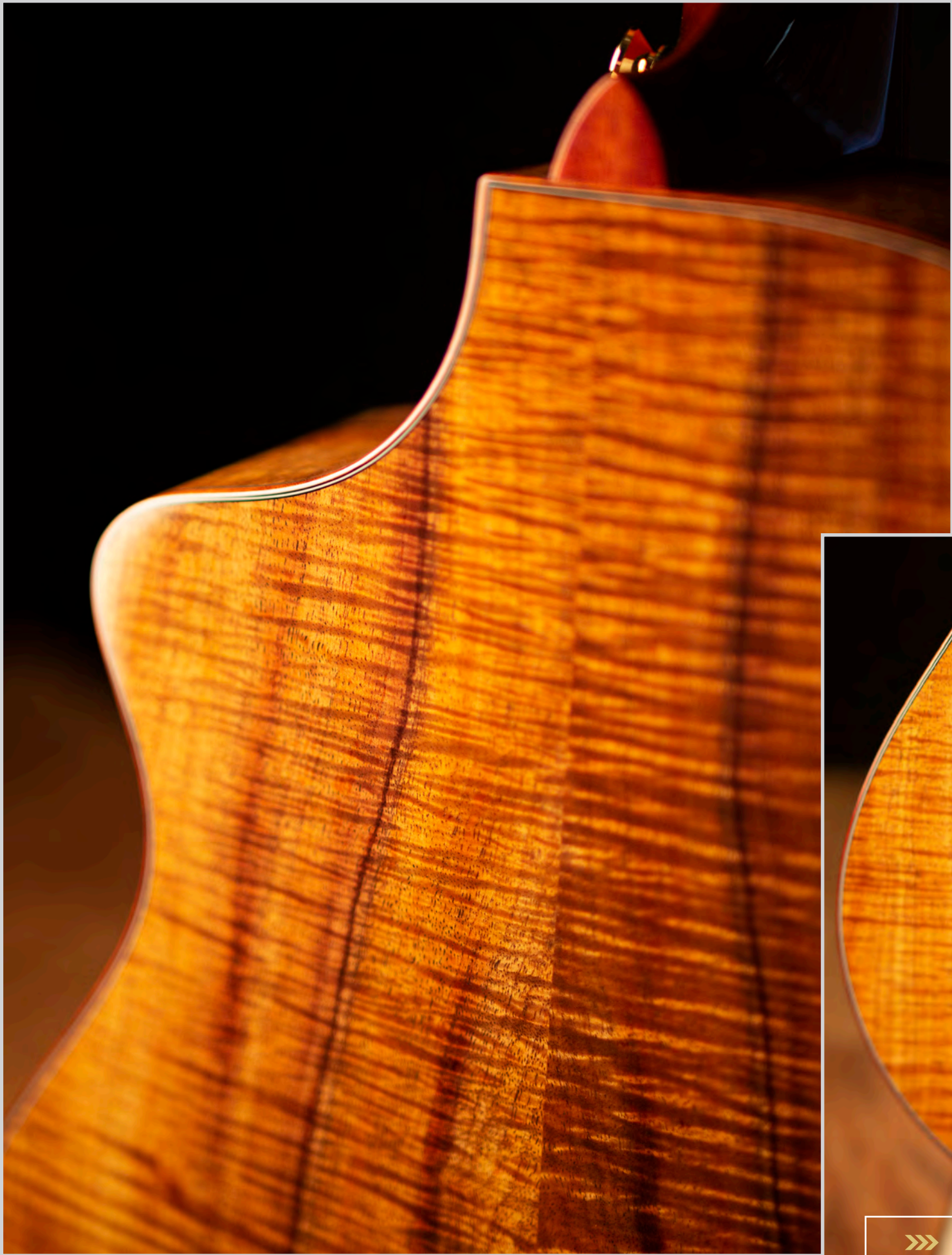
Just like the King Koa, Christensen first joined Breedlove back in 2002. Reflecting back on her early days, Christensen remembers how special these guitars felt at the time and says, “We all felt great pride in building every guitar, but those guitars in particular. It was a very special set of tonewood for the top and the back and sides. There’s just a little bit of everybody’s soul in those guitars. It just brings back lots of fond memories.”

This model wasn’t without its difficulties, though. “The King Koa was certainly a challenge as far as bending,” Christensen says. She explains, “It’s not easy to bend a soft cutaway. At that point, we didn’t have the same benders that we have today. I was bending over a hot pipe with a propane torch stuck in the end of it, using wet paper towels to create steam over the pipe and hand bend. It was pretty fun!”

Just shy of two full decades later and now in the position of Product Developer, Christensen revisited this iconic model to create her own modern interpretation, creating a guitar that reflects how Breedlove has grown since she joined the company.

The most instantly noticeable difference is the stunning, highly-figured koa top that steals the show on the 30th Anniversary, which Christensen says, “It’s just eye candy, right?”

Gorgeous aesthetics aside, there was more to Christensen’s decision to change the wood selection for the top of the King Koa. She explains, “We had not built one of those in all solid Koa using our sound optimization process.” The result is a loud and lively instrument with a well-balanced tone. “I knew that guitar was going to sound better than we’d ever built it before, but we were all blown away,” she says. “We’ve never had an all Koa guitar sound so good.”



With such an attention-grabbing top, Christensen decided to refine the inlay, while giving a nod to the history of the model. “I wanted to speak to something Kim played a strong role in designing, and that was the ‘hooks’ inlay. That was an inlay he designed for the 2015 Exotic King Koa model. With our asymmetrical headstock and winged bridge as well, it was just kind of a mix of inspiration from the past.”

Christensen may have drawn her inspiration for the 30th Anniversary King Koa from Breedlove’s past, but her refinements have given this model a modernized sensibility, creating a breathtaking and cutting edge instrument that is ready for the future.



[»»» VIEW GUITAR PROFILES ONLINE](#)



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THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY PHOENIX

(PART 3 OF 4)

DARK, MYSTERIOUS AND ENCHANTING

Each of our four 30th Anniversary models represents something unique about the history of Breedlove and where we're headed. The King Koa is the most quickly stunning and initially striking of the bunch with its eye-catching figured flame top, back, and sides. On the other hand, the Phoenix gives off a completely different vibe from its ostentatious sibling with a dark and almost mysterious look that is understated and subtle.

Take a close look at the 30th Anniversary Phoenix, and its sinker redwood top will draw you in. From afar, the dark tone of its top may appear to be a coffee color, but looking more closely will reveal the rich patchwork of colors that, much like a fine cup of espresso, contains subtle hints of a variety of warm shades that give it a unique character. Flip this guitar around, and dark, dimensional striations along its ziricote back and sides evoke a sublime feeling.

When you pick up the Phoenix, you'll find its shallow body easy to hold, and its warm tone will reward everything from strumming to even the lightest fingerstyle playing with clarity and sustain. It's just as much of a wonder to play and hear as it is to see.

While it's evident that this is a unique instrument, the Phoenix also serves as the most symbolic guitar in our 30th Anniversary series. The original Breedlove Phoenix, first introduced back in 2004, featured an extensive and detailed fretboard inlay of a Phoenix rising from the ashes designed by Kim Breedlove. Revisiting this instrument in 2021, the symbolism of the rising Phoenix has taken on a renewed meaning. The hope and optimism it represents can inspire in different ways, and to bring that inspiration to an instrument that will be used to create music is our way of looking toward the future.

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For this 30th Anniversary model, Product Developer Angela Christensen wanted to rethink the idea of the Phoenix and its imagery, choosing instead to create a more straightforward, more muted design. "I wanted to symbolize the Phoenix and what that means," she explains. "Last year was just so dark and dismal for so many people, I wanted to keep the visual aesthetic tone of the guitar a little more muted." While the inlay may be smaller, on a more nuanced instrument like this, its message can still be felt, loud and clear.

With the imagery of the Phoenix inlay leading our 30th Anniversary series in representing a bright future, other design elements of this guitar follow in its path. The 30th Anniversary Phoenix

maintains the tonewood selection and shallow Concert non-cutaway body style of the original model. At the same time, the Wave headstock design and Delta bridge are both updates that bring Breedlove's modern visual aesthetic to this instrument. Fittingly, we've chosen ziricote offcuts from the guitar's back to create a simple rosette that not only makes a strong visual statement, but represents our ongoing commitment to the environment and sustainability.

For all that the Phoenix represents, we hope that players find as much inspiration from this instrument as we do.



THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY FOCUS SE

(PART 4 OF 4)

SINKER REDWOOD PAIRED WITH EAST INDIAN ROSEWOOD

Back in 2008, we created the Focus Special Edition (SE) in order to bring new life to one of our most popular models. We gave the Focus a redwood top to pair with East Indian rosewood on the back and sides of its Concert soft cutaway body style, giving this guitar a new twist by creating an updated look and tonal profile.

For our 30th Anniversary, we knew that in order to bring the Focus SE out of retirement, we would have to make it extra special. Just like in 2008, it all came down to wood.

In this case, we're talking about one very specific log of sinker redwood that would not only help this guitar sing, but it would look unlike any other Focus SE we've produced before.

Our wood supplier, Cyril Jacob of C Jacob Woods, shares the origin of this log: "That came out of the lower Klamath River, and that it was harvested by a tribal member there who asked permission from the tribal elders to salvage some of the old growth redwoods that have washed down and onto the bank of the river."

»» [VIEW GUITAR PROFILES ONLINE](#)

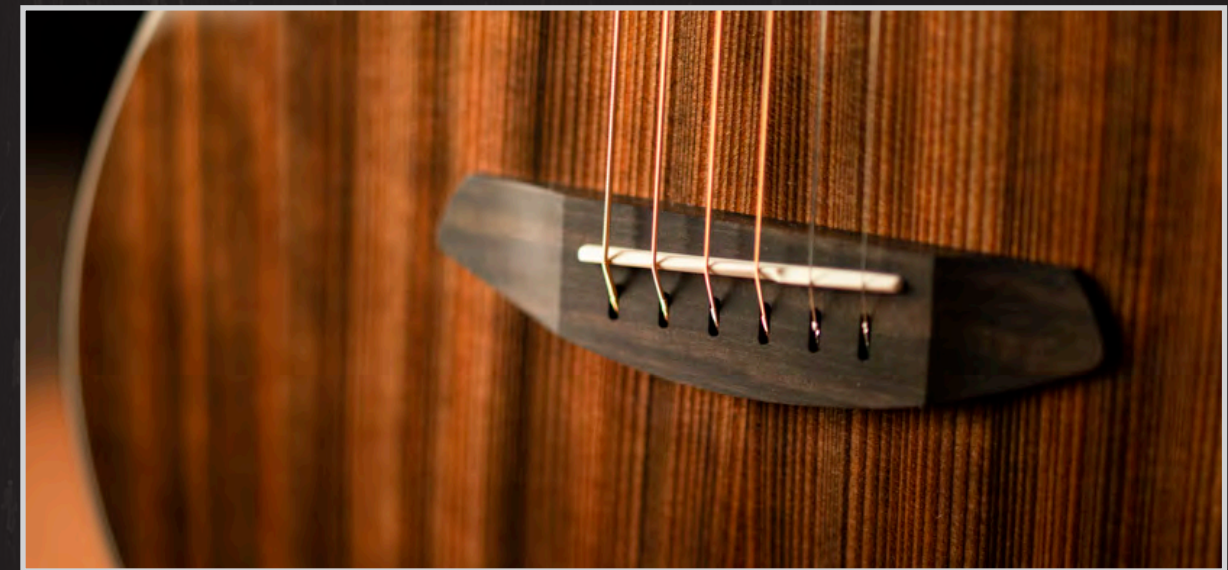


The log was found with its roots rotted away, which helped determine its age. Jacob says, "There were just little bits of nubs on the main base of the root, which means it's been down for centuries." He continues, "There's a couple of things that indicate that it's a pre-logging, ancient forest. The exterior parts of the natural edge, all of that was gone."

The dark color that gives this wood such a unique look doesn't just look great, it's also hard to come by in a piece of wood. Jacob explains, "That color is consistent throughout. If you leave old growth, full grown Redwood laying out in the sun, it will blacken in from the outside edges. But long before it gets black or dark colors all the way through, the wood will rot. To actually get this kind of coloration all the way through the wood means that it was buried and has been down for more than a couple of centuries."

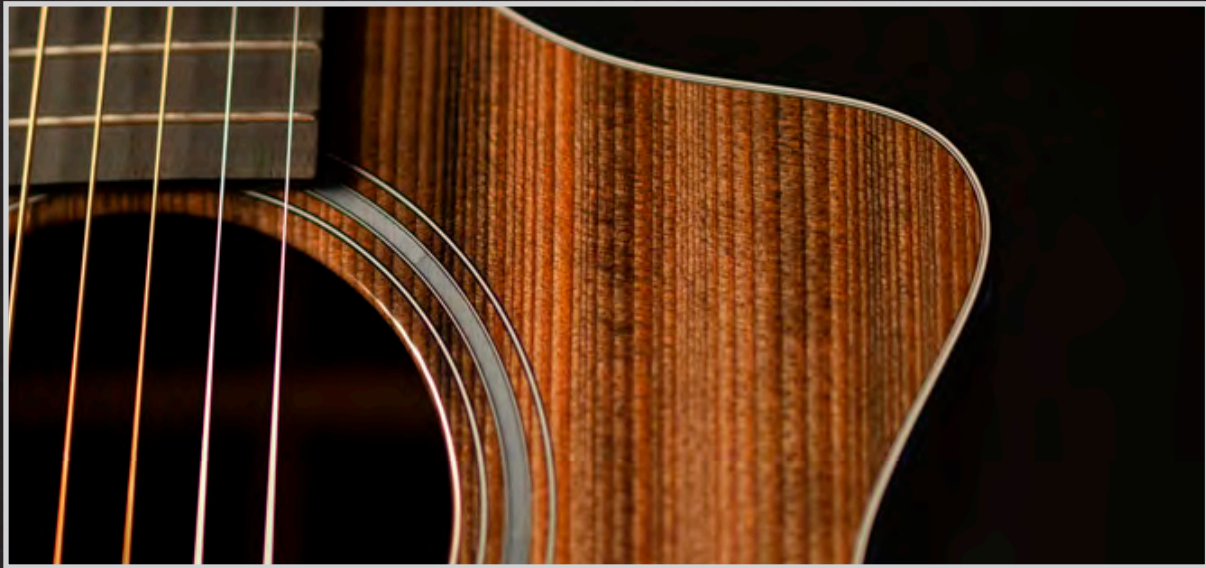
This sinker redwood top is the highlight of the 30th Anniversary Focus SE. Paired with carefully selected East Indian rosewood for the guitar's back and sides, it creates an alluring appearance as well as incredible volume and response. Its tone is mellow and bass-heavy, matching its dark appearance, which we've complemented by using gun metal acrylic to create a distinct rosette and inlays. Our Wave headstock and Delta bridge help set this version of the Focus SE apart from previous models by outfitting it with Breedlove's more modern aesthetic, which helps us bring this ancient wood to life by looking toward the future.

It's been a long journey for this tree that once lived along the Klamath River and we hope you'll be enjoying its tone for years to come.





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THE ACOUSTIC SHOPPE

“A lot of these roles that we fell into started with the band where we would each have some certain specialties,” says Jeremy Chapman. He’s explaining how he and his brothers, John and Jason, have used their hard-earned road chops to their advantage in order to run their store, The Acoustic Shoppe.

The Chapmans — a family band which consists of the three brothers and their dad, Bill — have spent a good part of their lives touring the bluegrass circuit and playing up to 200 dates a year. From booking shows and organizing tour schedules to creating the band’s video content — which includes a TV show on their local CBS affiliate — the Chapman brothers learned how to work together efficiently in order to keep their band working.

Running a store was never part of their plan and Jeremy says, “Just about every one of our business ventures is an accident. One thing leads to another...” But a decade or so into their lives as a touring band, they decided to move their operations from Colorado to Missouri.

Once they moved, they started to plant the seeds for what would become The Acoustic Shoppe. “In Springfield, there really weren’t any teachers. So, dad started teaching banjo, John started teaching guitar, and pretty soon we ended up with 30, 40 students that we would teach on the weekdays when we were back off the road,” explains Jeremy. “We were teaching pretty heavily. We taught Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and then hit the road again.”

They were operating out of a local music store when the owner announced that he was closing. Unable to find another place to teach in Springfield, the Chapmans decided to take over the lease on the building in late 2012. By the beginning of 2013, they opened as The Acoustic Shoppe.

Admittedly fatigued from years on the road, the brothers decided to pivot and focus their energy on the store, quickly realizing that they already knew how to function as a team with specialized roles. They also found that their expertise as veteran players was their store’s main asset. Jeremy explains, “Being a generalized music store gets harder and harder because you don’t have specialty. Our thought process was, ‘Make sure we can do something we totally feel comfortable with. When somebody comes to us with a question, we should be able to get them the answer really quick and be specialists in it.’ Then, people trust you on that because musical instruments are a personal thing.”

The Chapmans’ brand of specialization allows them to provide top-notch customer service informed by their own high-level musical experience, helping them grow into a leading acoustic instrument retailer. It’s also what has drawn them to working with Tom Bedell (owner & CEO) to carry the Breedlove brand. “I’ve got to say of all of the CEO types that I’ve dealt with in every music company that we’ve ever seen, I’ve never found somebody else who’s as passionate as I am. I just love his passion,” says Jeremy.



The brothers see Bedell’s commitment to sustainability and the environment as an extension of that passion and it’s a huge part of the Chapmans’ love for Breedlove. “For a lot of us that are artists, we all have this love of sustainability and the whole environmental side of things,” says John. “They’re taking on this whole lifestyle, and it’s part of my lifestyle. I’ve got a personal connection with that, and it spoke to me.”

Jason adds, “Tom was the first guy to say, ‘Alright, every [Made in Bend & Organic Collection guitar] that we have, we will know where the wood is sourced, and we’re going to make sure it’s all sustainable.’ How impressive is it that?”

The Chapmans not only share simpatico ethics with Breedlove, they also know all of the details and are quick to rave about the specs on all of the models they have in the store. It’s strong evidence that the Chapmans practice what they preach: They know the ins and outs of the instruments they sell because they’re just as passionate about reaching their customers as they are about their fans.

If you can’t make it to Springfield, MO to experience their brand of customer service firsthand, you can find The Chapmans posting regularly on their YouTube channel and, if you need help deciding which instrument is the right fit, you can always give them a call at The Acoustic Shoppe.



»» **VIEW THE ACOUSTIC SHOPPE ONLINE**



With *Acoustic Voices: A Guitar Podcast*, *Fretboard Journal* and Breedlove Guitars launch a new audio venture exploring the world of acoustic instruments from the vantage point of passionate builders and musicians in the Breedlove family.

‘This is a collaboration like no other,’ says *Fretboard Journal* publisher Jason Verlinde, who will produce and host the monthly podcast—“a deep dive into what makes one of the musical instrument world’s most innovative and sustainable brands tick.”

Initial guests will include Academy Award®-winning actor, musician and environmentalist Jeff Bridges; Breedlove owner Tom Bedell; designer Angela Christensen; and brand editor Michael Eck.

“It’s a fun and educational podcast for any acoustic music lover,” says Verlinde.

LEARN MORE



JON TORRENCE

➔ A MUSICAL LIFE

To say that an artist “lives and breathes” music is usually mere cliché, but when it comes to describing Breedlove’s April Featured Artist, Michigan-based guitarist Jon Torrence, one half of the husband-wife duo The Native Heart from Adrian, Michigan, it’s an uncommonly apt description.

Along with writing and performing with his wife Julie Torrence as The Native Heart, Torrence works his days writing and teaching music to kids, as a teacher in a school district just over the Michigan-Ohio border in Bowling Green, Ohio. And, when he’s not teaching or performing, he’s playing with musical ideas in his head, tinkering around with videography to accompany his original songs for The Native Heart(’s) YouTube channel, or just playing his instruments for enjoyment.

Recently, Jon sat down with Breedlove to discuss the makings of his very musical life, The Native Heart’s forthcoming EP, and the unparalleled connection he has with his go-to guitar, a Breedlove Legacy Concertina.

Interview has been edited for length.

Breedlove Guitars (BG): To start, I wanted to get more of an understanding of how you got into music and Native Heart. When did you start playing music? Was music a part of your upbringing?

Jon Torrence (JT): Yeah. Music was always around my house when I was a kid. My dad led music at a church and there was always guitars and drums and different things around the house and we would mess around on them as kids. There was a lot of just being around music as I was getting into who I am as a person. And it was really cool environment. A lot of gospel music, a lot of funk music, jazz, as I got older I was discovering more and more just from my dad's CD collection and then I was stealing CDs from my older brother so I was getting other kinds of influences as well.

BG: Ah, so cool! Do your siblings play as well?

JT: I have three brothers and one sister and all three of my brothers are also musicians. It just became a thing whenever we get together we have family jam sessions where every instrument is played and we're all just trading off and having a good time, so.

BG: That's so neat. So, your parents join in too?

JT: My dad does. My mom doesn't but is a great cheerleader.

BG: There you go! So, where exactly did you grow up?

JT: Well, my dad is in the military so we bounced around a lot throughout my childhood. We lived in Alaska for a few years, we lived in England, we lived in Buffalo, New York. Just a lot of different places. We ended up landing in Ohio - as random as that is - so that's where we ended up growing up from like fourth

grade on.

BG: Ah, wow, so I know your band is based in Michigan, but I also noticed that you work as a music teacher in Ohio, right?

JT: I went to college in Ohio and everything and I live in Michigan, but I teach in the closes Ohio school to the Michigan border. I am connected with the church up here in Michigan and that's where I lead music on Sundays and do things with them and our band and everything.

BG: That's awesome. What ages do you teach?

JT: I teach elementary school but I also work with older kids. I have a group of students currently that we come together to do like a jazz combo or a group band, kind of like that.

BG: I hear that jazz influence and experience in the music of The Native Heart! I also hear a lot of folk influence too. Did you listen to a lot of folk growing up?

JT: No, I did not listen to a lot of folk growing up. That came a little later. I started off by writing poetry when I was a teenager and then I thought it would be a good idea if I learned how to play guitar, because girls liked guys who played guitar. Typical 15-year-old boy mentality. So, I was starting to learn how to play guitar and fell in love with the song writing aspect and a lot of folk artists just have such rich stories within their songs so it was the story that really drew me in. Listening to Bob Dylan, listening to modern ones like Damien Rice and Glen Hansard, those are people that I really gravitated toward, so I went down a big rabbit hole going all the way back to Woody Guthrie and Johnny Cash later on. I have an equally strong love for the folk side of things as I do the jazz, R&B, and hip-hop style of things, so I kind of fuse everything together [in The Native Heart].



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BG: Well, the way you blend those sounds in your music sounds very authentic and natural. I definitely hear what you're saying. Where does your wife, Julie, come into the mix? When did The Native Heart officially form?

JT: Me and my wife Julie would always play music together when we were dating. I would write a lot of songs and we would share them together and we would play at different events and things like that - this really started when we were in college and we didn't necessarily have a name for about three or four years. Then, we ended up going in pretty seriously about this endeavor called the Native Heart. My wife is now a stay-at-home mom and we're both schoolteachers and when we had our first child, it was difficult leaving him. She wanted to find a way to do stay home with him. I was like, well, what about this music thing? I can play, we can do gigs together, or do different things and find ways to supplement income and all that. I'm already writing music, we love performing. And so it was a natural transition to look more into this.

BG: Ah, that lends a deeper meaning to Native Heart! Is that partly what contributed to your band name, this idea of the heart being at home?

JT: She had the idea for the name, the Native Heart, which just is about this idea of life and music and love and all these things that are brilliant and bold all being at the core of who we are as humans. It's this love of storytelling. This love of sharing something that comes naturally.

BG: Tell me a little about your guitars - what was your first guitar you started on?

JT: After I started getting an interest in the guitar, I would ask my dad to play one of his instruments. My dad

was very generous in letting me play on his guitars and he has a Gibson 135 and he had a Guild that was very similar, tobacco burst, single cutaway, gorgeous guitar.

BG: Oh, so you were spoiled! Only kidding, but those are nice guitars.

JT: Yeah, yeah, so I would play on those but as I started to needing to play more and more, he was like, you know, we're going to get you your guitar. I saved up money and I bought my first - it was just a Fender acoustic, just a cheap little guitar that played decently. By this point I had started to catch the bug for Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, John Mayer, just guitarists doing things, electric guitarists. So I quickly saved money and bought a made-in-Mexico Fender Stratocaster. Those were my main two guitars.

BG: And then you got your hands on a Breedlove? Is that your main guitar, now?

JT: 100%. My goodness. My oldest brother lived in Cleveland for a while and was looking for a guitar and he came across Breedlove and so he bought one. He was playing it at a church, and I just fell in love with that guitar. But, it was too far out of my price point at the time. When I was able to pick a guitar of my own, I always had Breedlove in my mind because of being younger and playing on my brother's acoustic. And about two years ago, I was in a guitar shop and they carried Breedlove guitars and that was when I played the Legacy Concertina. I did not go in the store to buy a guitar, but when I saw it there with a slotted headstock and the Celtic knot, and the twelve fret, and the shorter scale—I played a G chord and was like, dang it, I'm buying a guitar today!

CONTINUE READING

A PACIFIC NORTHWEST TONEWOOD HUNTER

MEET TONEWOOD SUPPLIER
CYRIL JACOB

Cyril Jacob of C Jacob Woods is always on the lookout for a piece of old-growth wood that has a story to tell. “Each piece is entirely unique. It’s unique to where it grew, how long it’s been down,” he says. The individuality and backstory of a piece of wood make it perfect for guitar making. “It’s an ideal use for this kind of a resource. I think it’s pretty cool to be able to salvage it and turn it into heritage quality instruments,” he says.

That kind of wood isn’t easy to come by. It’s much harder to find a log that comes from an ancient forest or has been buried in a riverbank since before the first logging than it is to acquire a piece of wood from a more recent supply. But Jacob has made it his mission to make sure that those quality tonewoods make their way into guitars since opening his mill in the mid-1990s. He explains, “There’s not a lot of it really available and it’s hard for untrained people to recognize for what it is, so I spend a lot of time educating.”

“I get excited about finding stuff that other people have overlooked and knowing what it really is, and being able to move it into the right markets for it to have utilization,” he says. The payoff is getting to see the final product, which, quite often, comes in the form of a Breedlove or Bedell guitar. “These guitars are being built with quality and a standard that they’re not just for one person. They’re generational instruments. They have longevity, they’re going to last, they can be passed on.”



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An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape. In the foreground, a small, forested island sits in a deep blue body of water. The island is covered in dense green trees. In the background, a large, forested mountain rises from the water's edge. The sky is a pale blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is serene and natural.

ANCIENT SOUNDS

THE STORY OF A 3000 YEAR OLD

➞ SITKA SPRUCE

Three thousand years ago, around 1000 B.C., the world's human population was roughly 50,000,000. In North America, hunter-gatherers still stalked mammoths and giant bison grazing in the lush and untouched nature across North America. In Southeast Alaska, the great coastal forests were largely untouched by the hand of man. It was here, on the steep slopes miles from what is today Craig, Alaska, that an iconic tree underwent an incredible chain of events that would link it to modern guitar centuries later.

While no one was around to know exactly what transpired, we can only dream that one night during this era, a violent storm hit the steep slopes and pummeled the forest towering within view of the coast. Heavy rains saturated the soil, loosening the roots of one towering old-growth Sitka spruce. As the winds raged through the treetops, a soon-to-be-famous tree fell, only to be buried in a landslide as the slope gave way. For millennia, this Sitka remained buried in the mud, rocks, and debris, until Brent and Annette Cole, the owners of Alaska Specialty Woods, began excavating their property to build a new workshop – at the exact final resting place of this soon to be famous tree.

While it's probably not uncommon for people excavating in this region to unearth buried and ancient parts of the forest while digging for construction purposes, what's particularly fascinating about this find is the Cole's trajectory in life and business are intricately tied to Sitka Spruce - along with other local species – which they have carved a niche selectively and sustainably harvesting in the region. It's ironic to think a family who've been devoted to seeking out rare and iconic old-growth trees happened to find The Holy Grail buried on their very property—buried for centuries, just waiting for them to unearth the magnificent tree and bring it to the world of high-end guitars.



[Having problems playing this video? Click here.](#)



As they were digging and flattening the area where they planned to build, the Coles at first found a Hemlock root wad. In an effort to move it, they cut the roots off—but were shocked at what happened next.

“I saw it turn blue and that it was sound as a nut. At that point, I took an 18-inch round off of it, took it to the saw, and sliced it into ukulele and mandolin tops. [I thought] ‘Wow, these are cool!’ They got snapped up on our website right away,” said Brent Cole. “Then we were [excavating] more, and we found the Sitka spruce.”

After the surprise the Hemlock gave them, Cole was intrigued to see what the Sitka had in store—but knew he would have to take an expensive gamble to find out.

“I had to make a determination on whether or not we wanted to mine that log out or not,” said Cole. “We’d spend a day digging that thing out—it’s about 20 feet below the surface. To move that much material—because you can’t jerk it out, you have to dig it out—[was a matter of] \$3000 in equipment time. So, it was a gamble, but I decided to take it.”

The tree was unearthed and cut, and it too possessed that amazing otherworldly ability to turn an incredibly unique blue-green right before their eyes. Cole says this color change is caused by oxidation, but the appearance of the green-blue color in the Sitka is something especially rare and unique to Prince Edward Island. Apparently, the mountainsides of Southeast Alaska are highly mineralized rainforest, and the whole mountain by the Coles’ property is covered in iron seeps. So, it’s the dominance of the iron in this area that lends this particular Sitka, which is historically a light blonde wood, such a strange, otherworldly hue.

So, the Coles’ gamble paid off, if you can call it that. The fact that the motherload of all Sitka tonewood just happened to be found beneath the property of a family-run company that has spent more than twenty years salvaging the finest Sitka tonewood, seems more like divine intervention than luck.

Even more serendipitously, Bedell has long-sourced many special tonewoods, including Sitka spruce, from Alaska Specialty Woods, and was one of the first to hear about the Coles’ discovery. Shortly after getting the call, Angela Christensen, Bedell’s Head of Product Design, took the long journey out to the Cole’s property, nestled on a waterfront inlet in remote Craig, Alaska, to have a look at it for herself.

“They had the log in their log yard, and Brent Cole’s son, Brent Jr., made a cut in the log around 24 inches,” said Christensen. “As they made the fresh cut, it looked like normal Sitka. And then he pulled another section off, and in front of my eyes, I could see it changing color. It was amazing to see the change from the creamy white to the really beautiful green-blue-grey colors. How cool is that!?”

Christensen and the Coles quickly realized that this striking wood was destined for a unique limited line of guitars that showcased its rare look and sound—although there was only enough wood for a few of them.

Not only would the ancient Sitka make for jaw-dropping pewter-patinaed tops, but when it comes to its use as a tonewood, this wood has quite literally aged to perfection. Sitka spruce, a magnificent tree with tight grow-rings and a dense composition, is already ideal for a beautiful, crisp acoustic sound. But this ancient Sitka, rich in minerals, pushes those optimal tonal properties even further.

“The difference is that it has absorbed the iron mineral content from being buried in the soil, which does tend to stiffen the top a little more, that it has more headroom,” Christensen said. “And it still has all of what you’d expect out of Sitka, delivering crisp, clear notes, but with a little extra punch in sound. This makes it ideal for players with a stronger attack.”

With its singular, winsome appearance, sound as strong and wise as its years, and captivating history, this Ancient Sitka is the embodiment of wonder. It permeates every note, every strum—with timeless magic.



ANCIENT SITKA CUSTOMS

TWO EXQUISITE CUSTOM ACOUSTIC GUITARS

What does a 3000-year-old wood set crafted
into a guitar sound like?

Perfection.

Breedlove Premier Dealer Music World is a family-owned musical instrument retail store located in SW Washington, a few hours from the Breedlove Custom Shop.

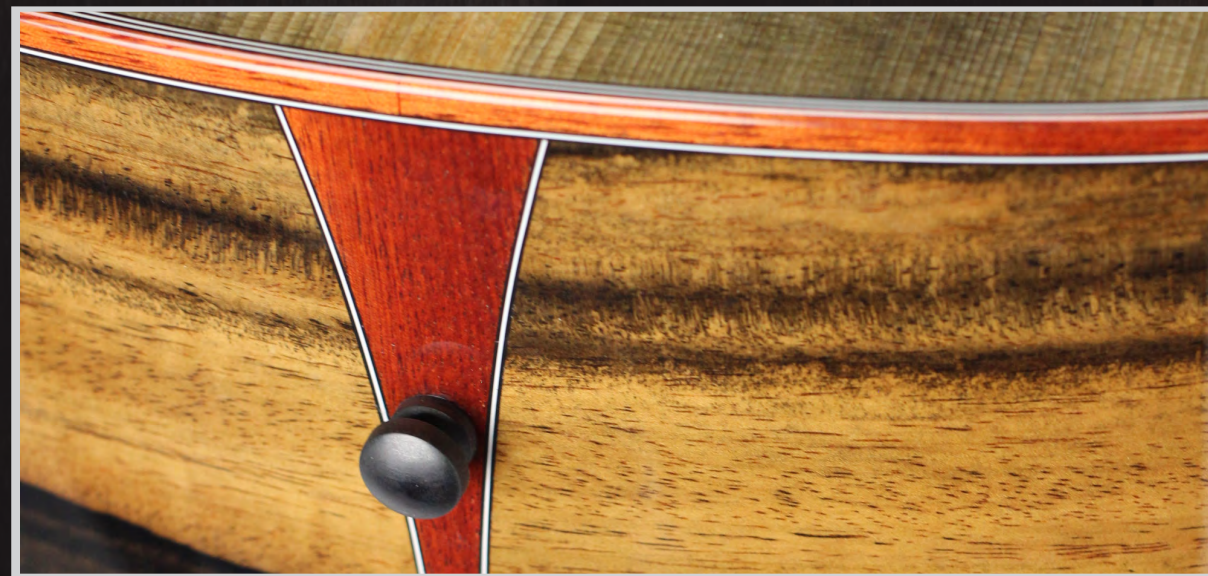
Over the years, Music Word's Matt Gohlke (photo left) has worked closely with the Breedlove Custom Shop to design many extraordinary custom guitars.

"We've designed three customs using the Ancient Sitka Spruce tonewood tops, and it's a thrill working with this historic tonewood. The sound and aesthetic make these high-end customs a true work of history and art combined," Gohlke explains. "The Ancient Sitka Tops produces a sound, fresh out of the box like a pre-war era guitar. My biggest impression was that they all sound like they've been played for a 100 years. The inlay designs were created by one of our employees who is a talented artist. On the Ebony Guitar, Bloodwood in one of the double triangles, and on the Brazilian, we used a small portion of the unused Ancient Sitka to fill the wings at the 12th fret."

CUSTOM CONCERT ANCIENT SITKA SPRUCE - BRAZILIAN ROSEWOOD

On this guitar, you'll find a truly "UNIQUE" set of Brazilian Rosewood not found elsewhere. It's known for it's rich bass, balanced response and piano like sustain throughout. When recording samples for this guitar, as chords rang out in sustain, you can hear the harmonics bloom, into a pure decay that is inspiring. It's almost like listening to a piano in a concert hall with the sustain pedal down as it rings out. No other wood does this as well as Brazilian. Even more so as it combines with the 3000 year old Spruce top. [Read more online.](#)

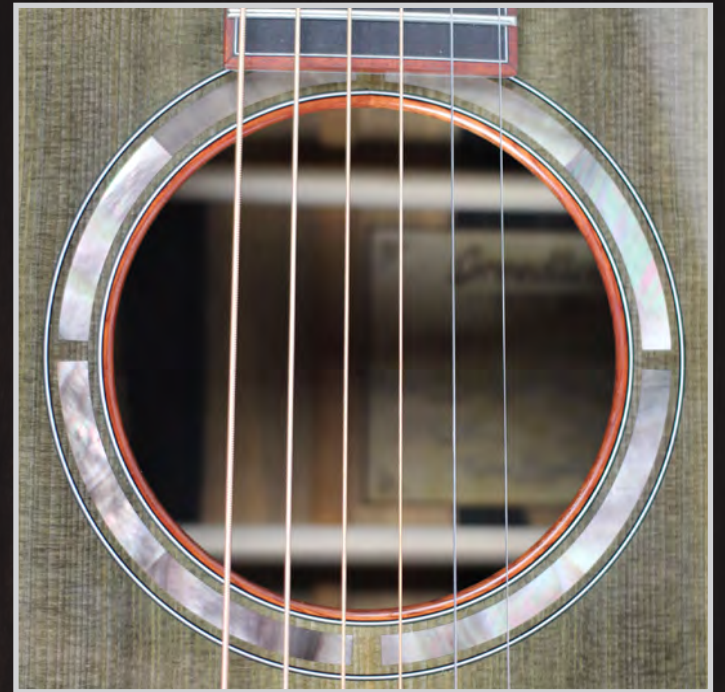




CUSTOM CONCERT ANCIENT SITKA SPRUCE - STRIPED EBONY

"This stunning custom," Gohlke explains, "is one of my personal favorites. It was the second we designed with the rare Ancient Sitka Spruce.

On this guitar, you'll find one of the most beautiful, stunning and eye popping Striped Ebony anywhere. It's known for it's power, sustain and rich bass response that just sings and strums like an engine with the paired Sitka Top. It just flat out GOES. No matter what you give it, it'll give back in headroom and volume. [View instrument profile online.](#)



A photograph of Isaac Turner, a man with a beard and a red beanie, sitting in a folding camp chair and playing an acoustic guitar. He is positioned in front of a white converted school bus. The bus has a 'CVT CASCADIA VEHICLE TENTS' logo on its roof and 'SKOOLIANA' with social media icons on its side. The scene is set in a wooded area with string lights hanging above the bus. The right side of the image is overlaid with a dark grey text box containing the artist's name and a bio.

ISAAC TURNER

MAY 2021 FEATURED ARTIST

On September 9, 2014, singer-songwriter and long-time Breedlove guitarist Isaac Turner burnt out on being a full-time musician. A native of the Portland, OR suburbs, he'd been performing around the City of Roses since he was 15, first with his high school punk band, Society's Victim, and then later under his own name with his punk-inspired indie folk.

At some point Turner says he stopped having fun. So, he quit the industry to work at Guitar Center and go back to the drawing board—quite literally—to redesign a life he wanted to live.

In 2019, Turner bought an old school bus and renovated it to live in full time. Today, he is still living in the art-adorned, solar-powered bus, which he affectionately calls "Skooliana." Turner's found such community in fellow van and bus dwellers and such inspiration from his new lifestyle, he found himself more inspired to make and perform music again.

When the pandemic hit, Turner lost his day job and, with his no-time-like-the-present mindset, swiftly set his sights on recording new music. For most of 2020, Turner holed up in his bus, writing and recording an entire EP—aptly titled, Skooliana Sessions EP—that resounds of the revitalization his new life has afforded him. Turner, Breedlove's Featured Artist for May, gave us the full story on his hiatus from music, his bus-inspired 2020 EP, and his new business, Dream Reality Studios.

Interview has been edited for clarity and length.

Breedlove Guitars (BG): You started your music career at 15. What prompted you to get started so young?

Isaac Turner (IT): I was just a little skateboard kid at the time and I was hanging out with one of my friends and he was like, “Hey man, I got these extra concert tickets to go see Less Than Jake,” and I was like, I’ve never been to a concert. I went and it changed my life.

BG: And from there you decided you wanted to start playing?

IT: Yep. In that moment I was like, I’m going to play music.

BG: Wow, so, when did your first band, Society’s Victim, come together?

IT: Basically I saved my lunch money for a year to buy my first guitar—it was like a mission. I got the guitar and before I even learned how to play it I was like, ok, now I got to find a band. I realized I wanted to be the front man so I started my own punk band. We actually had a little bit of success before it all fell apart. We were doing good back in the day when you had CDs and you’re slinging demos. We were seniors in high school and we were getting ready to go on a West coast tour as soon as we graduated. And then, all of a sudden, our bass player quit right before the tour because he wanted to go to college. Long story short we never recovered.

BG: How did you transition from punk music to the songwriting you do now? I definitely hear the punk influence but it’s much more folky now, I would say.

IT: Yeah, so, when that band dissolved and everything I ever wanted just died, I was in some kind of weird moment. And then Frank Turner happened. You know who he is? He was like the pioneer of folk punk. So, this one dude with an acoustic guitar went on tour with Bad Religion by himself and then when I saw that, I was like, wait a minute, I don’t need a band? I don’t have to depend on people? It was like the whole world just changed. I was like, ok, shifting gears, I’m a folk punk now.



BG: That is so cool. Do you still follow Frank Turner? Is he still around and touring?

IT: I quit following. Basically, I moved to the acoustic guitar from the electric, which brings me to Breedlove. I was looking for an acoustic guitar, and I'm born and raised in Oregon and I support every Oregon company I can, and they're from Oregon, so that's why I actually picked them years ago when I bought my first acoustic guitar. I decided on Breedlove because I wanted to support a local business, that's all, that's what it was.

BG: Do you still have that original Breedlove that you bought?

IT: I do, I do.

BG: And a little birdie told me you have a new one?

IT: Yeah, a Companion from the Organic Collection.

BG: Those are cool— more compact and good for travel.

IT: Yeah, which is what I do pretty much now.

BG: Right, so tell me, you're building school buses now, and living on your bus. How did all that begin?

IT: Well, I fell out of music, I just got burnt out. My only mission in life was to make a living making music. I did that, but it didn't look like what I thought it was going to be. And then I was playing shows I didn't want to play because I needed to eat. It was just a bad place to be. I fell out of love with it. I ended up getting into videography and I made way more money doing that.

BG: What kind?

IT: I did music videos for bands, mainly. And then now I do a lot of brand stuff. I'll make like vertical promo videos for bands, I do product photography, I do a few different things for income now, I guess. But, with the bus; I wanted to go back into music and I built the bus to go back on tour again, like I was going to do back when I was a teenager. And then COVID happened. I don't know, I guess I'm never meant to go on tour. Every time I set it up it doesn't happen, but I'm just going to follow the journey, I guess.

BG: Man! That's frustrating. What year did you set out to build the bus?

IT: I built the bus in '19 and then I was bopping around in it doing stuff. My idea was to build this bus, enjoy it for a bit, and then I was going to record a new record, because the music I make has evolved so much and I wanted to record something that represented who I was today. And then the idea was to travel full-time in the bus and tour that record to support myself came about—then COVID happened. But, I still made the record. Right when Oregon first went into lockdown, I went into my bus and recorded Skooliana Sessions. I wasn't going to tour it, but I needed to see it through, if that makes sense.



[Having problems playing this video? Click here.](#)

BG: Totally. Did you have all the equipment, or did you need to retrofit your bus?

IT: When I quit music I worked for Guitar Center for five years, so I had everything I needed to record. And when I decided I wanted to do the bus life thing, I started switching out all that big bulky gear for portable, battery-powered small compact units and that's what I recorded the EP with.

BG: Awesome. Were you traveling too when you recorded or have you been parked?

IT: No. Basically I was living at my buddy's house in Oregon to build the bus. I built the bus in his yard and lived there until he moved.

BG: What's the story behind the bus's name? "Skooliana."

IT: Yeah, it's a play on Skoolie, [a common nickname for a converted school bus.] And all my buses are like, my girls, so then making it feminine with the -ana.

BG: Ha, I love it. And when you say build buses, do you mean make other buses for people to live on?

When my buddy left and I lost that housing situation, which was kind of my crutch, I had to decide. I figured I just needed to make enough money to make it to the next town and feed myself so like the expenses are super low and that's why I could tour a record with the bus. But, I also thought, do I just bop around in a bus until I'm 50 and have no work history? Or, do I try and build something for the next couple years and have it where it can maintain itself and then bop around in a bus and have a business supporting me forever? So I started a Skoolie conversion company. I've done builds for people here, like, 'hey pay me this much, I'll build this type of a thing.' But, basically I needed to make it legit so I could show income on paper so I could build a business, so I could get bigger loans to do bigger business things and that's what this is.

BG: So what do these builds look like?

IT: What I do is I buy a bus, I build it, I sell it. I don't want to do work for clients. I want my artistic freedom. I don't want to put something - it comes back to the doing something I don't want to do thing. So I want to build it however the hell I want and then I'll offer it for sale and if they like it, they buy it, if they don't, they buy another one. Simple as that.

BG: How do people shop for them? Do you have a website?

Yeah. Well, I'm working on the first official bus now. So the business is brand new. And that was when I decided to bite the bullet, get a shop link, get an LLC, do everything official. And that's all pretty recent actually. The new website is dreamrealitystudios.com.

BG: Congratulations! I'm sure with the pandemic and remote work, there's definitely a market for Skoolies!

IT: Oh, yeah, which is why I jumped on it. The market tripled over night when COVID happened. And my buses don't rely on anything. They're solar.

BG: That's genius. Do the buses have basic amenities?

IT: Yes. As for a shower, I didn't put a shower because back then I had Planet Fitness. Now I don't. That's a whole thing in itself! So now, I'm building shower-bathrooms in everything I do.

BG: Ha, yeah, seems like you'd definitely want a shower! Moving back into Breedlove - tell me about your new Breedlove and how the bus has inspired new music for you?

The bus brought music back. It's been a love/hate relationship with music for me. But the bus life changed my entire outlook on everything. I don't depend on things, I don't need things. That's why I did the EP. I did it because I wanted to do it. I started to play again because I wanted to. That would probably never have happened if I was still clocking in 40 hours a week. And then, the new guitar. My other guitar is a Concert, but I only have so much room in this thing. Even sitting on the couch that thing is banging it's headstock up against the wall. Basically, I wanted something smaller, and that's why I went with the Companion.

BG: I'm glad to hear it fits your lifestyle better! Let's talk about your EP. What did you want to say with it?

IT: Basically, I really wanted to write music the bus life community. I wanted to make a record for me and them.



BG: How do you gather with this community?

We gather all the time! Basically there're van events like Van Fest, where people who live this lifestyle, whether it's full-time or on the weekends, drive out from all over the country for week-long events, to hang out and make friends. It's not uncommon to just meet somebody you would've never met because you have a common theme of a bus or a van, and then you have a friend forever after.

BG: So not only did you record on the bus, but the recording was sort of a tribute to bus life.

IT: Exactly. One of the songs I think got it right was, "On the Road is My Home."

BG: So, what's next for you? Sticking close to where you are now?

As soon as I signed my name on that lease for the year for the shop, like, you know, my days of sitting next to a lake for two weeks at a time ended, because I got to pay this lease. So, now the plan is to take two years to work on these buses. The money is so good on these buses, I only need to do two a year to make an annual income, right? So the faster I can get them done, the faster I'm done for the year and then I can go play in the woods. The bigger picture is I want to sell two buses, make my annual income, and the two-year plan is to basically use this money to build smaller businesses that will eventually support me forever and then I can go back to bus life with a regular paycheck.

BG: Do you document your work on social media? How can we follow your journey?

IT: I document all of it on my Instagram, @skooliana.

BG: Are you planning on touring once the pandemic fizzles?

IT: I'm scheduled to play a couple van festivals this year. And I think I really want I want to write more, I want to play more, but I don't think I want the traditional music career. For my music, if I could just play van festivals—that's all I want. I want to put out bus records and play bus festivals with my music, that's it.

Learn more about Isaac Turner

6 WAYS TO GET OUT OF A PLAYING RUT

As just about every musician has experienced, playing guitar comes with moments of creative highs and lows and at times you can get stuck in a rut. Feel like you're playing the same songs over and over and struggling for new musical ideas and inspiration? Have no fear. Here are a few simple ways to break out of a rut.

Play with friends

One of the best things that any musician can do to improve their skills, come up with new ideas, and — most importantly — have fun is to collaborate with other musicians! During Covid times, this has been hard to do, but as vaccines are more prevalent and the weather is warming up, you might feel more comfortable meeting up with friends and making live music. Whether you're a hobbyist or a pro, it's sure to liven up your playing and remind you why you love playing guitar.

Not ready to meet in person or you don't have any guitar playing friends in the neighborhood? Worry not! We've all seen the power of Skype, Zoom and other streaming video solutions to bring people together. While streaming video doesn't allow you to play at exactly the same time, having a guitar hang and trading licks back and forth is a great way to feed the creative process.

Try an alternate tuning

Alternate tunings are a great way to make some changes in your playing. Simply changing the tuning of one string — such as drop D tuning (D A D G B

D) — can help you find new inspiration, while open tunings such as open G (D G D G B D) or popular alternate tunings such as D A D G A D can help you explore your guitar in totally new ways. Whatever tunings you decide to check out, take your time and look for new sounds up and down the neck and you may find some inspiring rewards.

Check out online tutorial platforms

There are more online resources for guitar learning than ever! Guitar Tricks and Guitar Tips Pro are two lesson subscriptions that offer videos and other content to help you develop your playing while magazines such as Premier Guitar, Acoustic Guitar, and Guitar Player offer tons lessons for free on their web sites.

Many players publish a tremendous amount of guitar content on YouTube. From new takes on your favorite cover songs to breakdowns on how to achieve a favorite tone, going down the rabbit hole on YouTube with a guitar in your hands can feel more rewarding than watching an hour's worth of cat videos! Dig in and learn some new songs, licks, riffs, and more!

Take a lesson

Is there a guitar player whose music you love but whose playing you just can't figure out on your own? Many guitarists are using their downtime from touring to teach students these days, so it's never been easier to reach one of your favorite musicians and take a personalized lesson via Zoom or Skype. It's a great way to dig a bit deeper and get some specialized advice to develop your sound.

Effect pedals

We're living in the golden age of guitar pedals. It seems like there are more and more options for exciting sounds that are released every day and there is plenty of fun to be had for acoustic players. Whether you perform live and are used to plugging in, you record into a DAW at home, or you play out of an acoustic amp sometimes, a new pedal can be an inspiring thing.

If you feel like you need new sounds, check out the range of acoustic-friendly options available from one of the many companies making pedals today and try a pedal that you've never played before. A few favorites from players at the Breedlove Custom Shop include the LR Baggs Align Series Chorus, Fender Smolder Acoustic, and the Red Panda Tensor. Overall, trying a new pedal may give you a whole new perspective on what kind of sounds you can make with your guitar!

Change up your guitar

Nothing really beats the excitement of a new guitar, right? So, one surefire way to get yourself to play more guitar is to get a new one! You may want to consider a new body shape or tonewood combination to help you find new sounds. Or maybe you'll want to shake things up even more by trying a 12-string or another fretted instrument, like a ukulele or mandolin, to see if you can extend your playing ideas beyond six strings. Whatever the case, there are so many options that you may find something that helps you open up a whole new chapter in your musical life! You can learn more about Breedlove's variety of revolutionary body shapes or tonewood options on the Breedlove website.

A man with a mustache, wearing a red beanie and a red and black plaid shirt, is sitting and playing an acoustic guitar. He is looking down at the guitar. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a workshop or a garage with various tools and equipment.

Breedlove

M A G A Z I N E