

# Breedlove

MAGAZINE

FEATURED ARTIST  
JONAH DAVIS

**LIVING  
ALOHA**

MUSIC VIDEOS

**NASHVILLE  
SESSIONS**

SUSTAINABLE

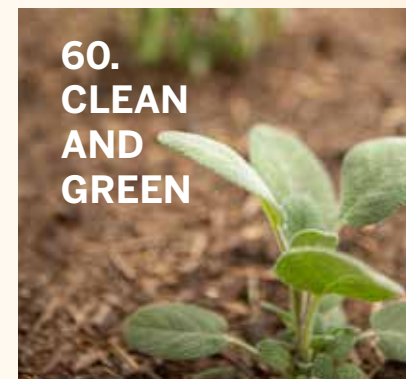
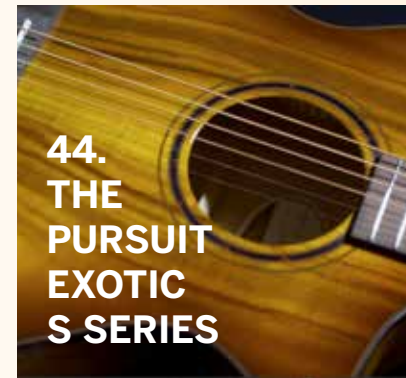
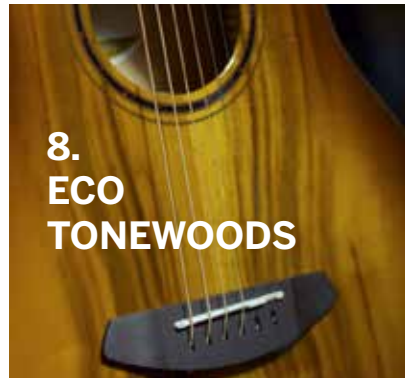
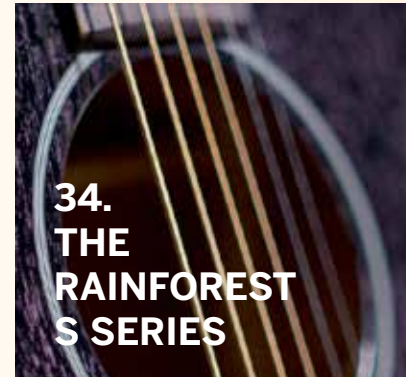
**EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW**

INTRODUCING

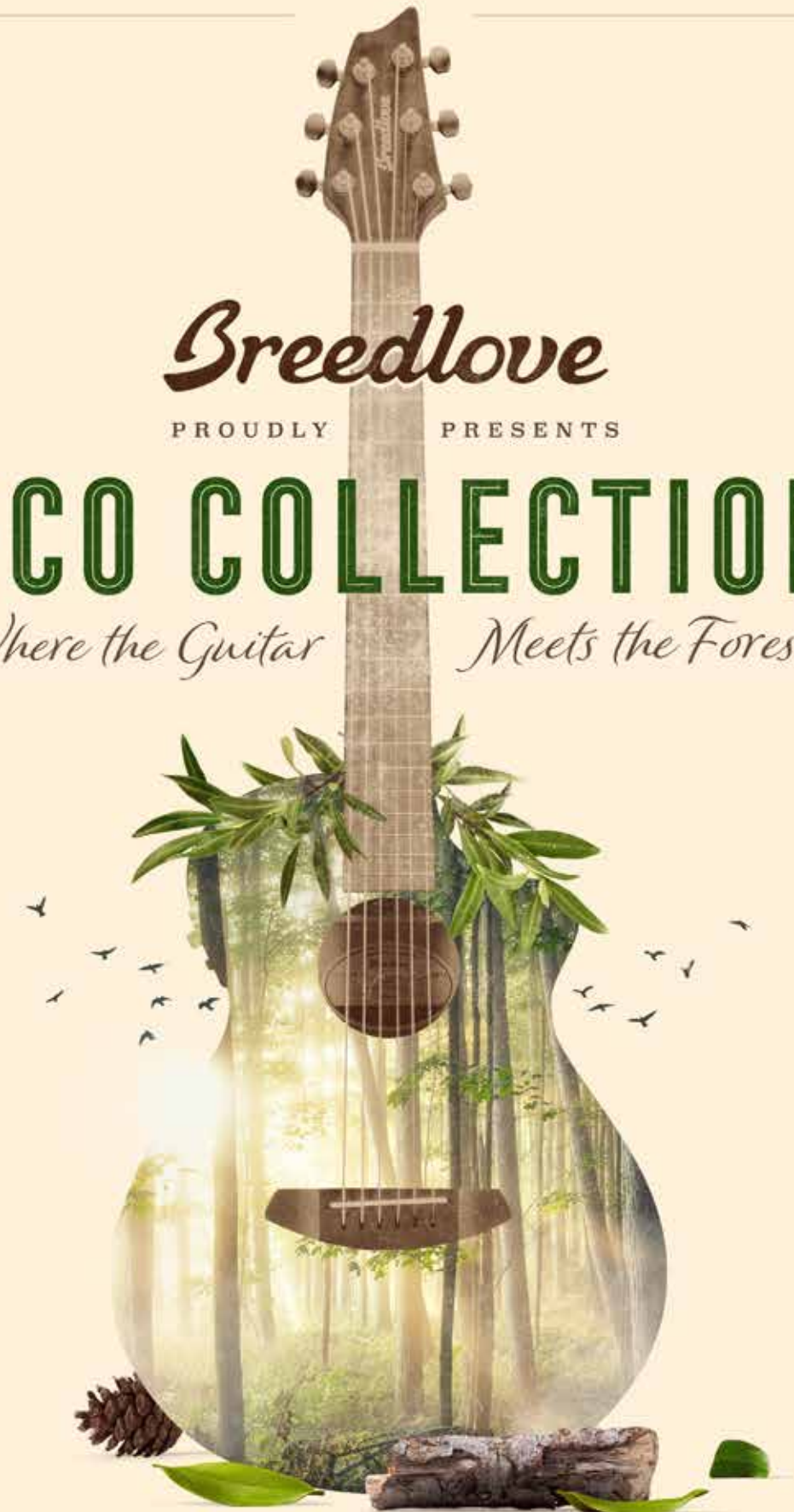
**THE ECO COLLECTION**

THE 2021  
**SUMMER MAGAZINE**

THE SUSTAINABILITY ISSUE

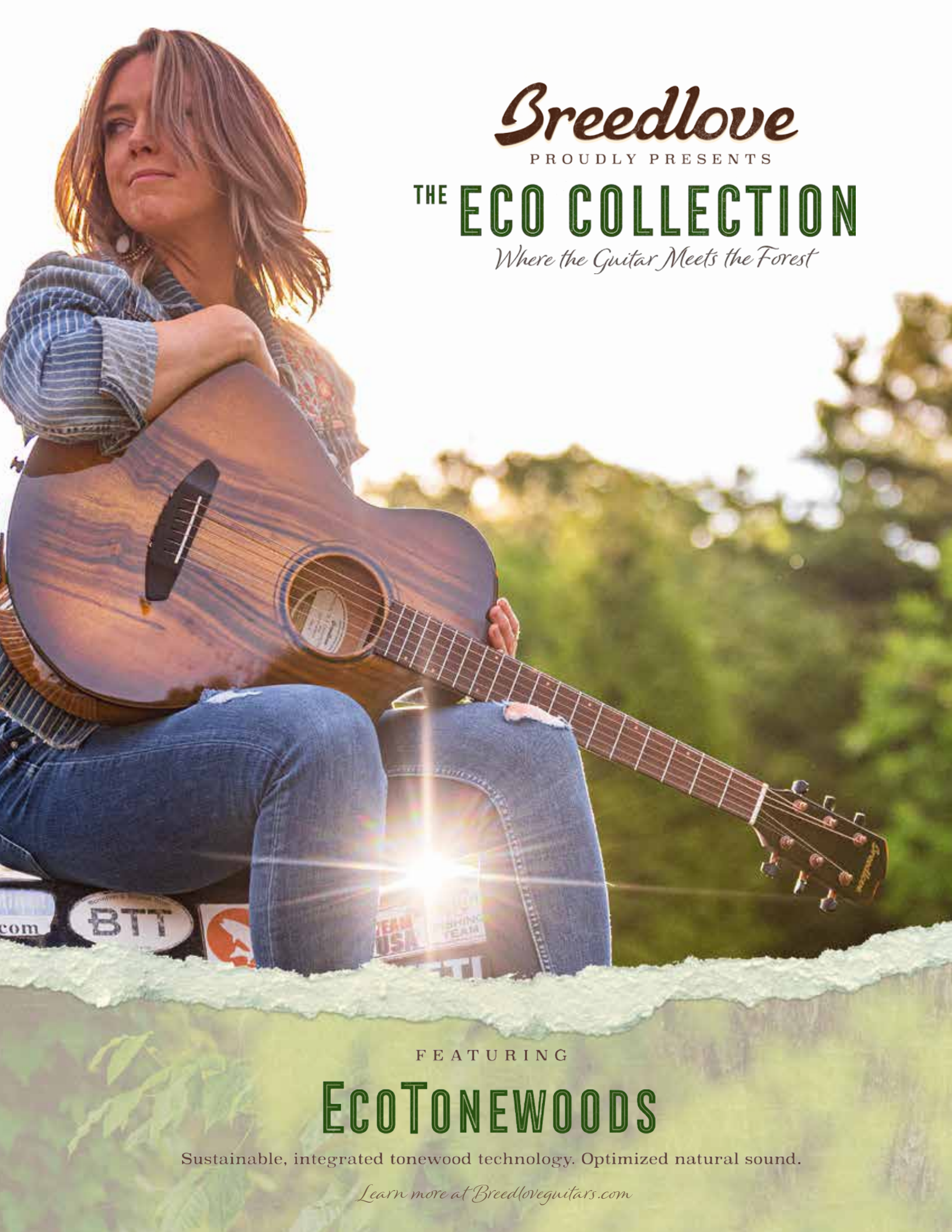


*Breedlove*  
PROUDLY PRESENTS  
**THE ECO COLLECTION**  
*Where the Guitar Meets the Forest*



FEATURING  
**EcoTONEWOODS**

Sustainable, integrated tonewood technology. Optimized natural sound.



# Breedlove

PROUDLY PRESENTS

## THE ECO COLLECTION

*Where the Guitar Meets the Forest*

FEATURING

## ECO TONEWOODS

Sustainable, integrated tonewood technology. Optimized natural sound.

*Learn more at [Breedloveguitars.com](https://Breedloveguitars.com)*



It's time again for the Breedlove Summer Magazine and Show. This issue reflects the achievements of our journey since I re-engaged with the acoustic guitar community in 2009. We

have built an acoustic guitar company based on our Values and Purpose, qualities that have proven their appeal in the market, and with musicians. We have a team of CoHippies who excel, love what they do, and do it well. We are culturally rooted and dedicated to protecting our world's forests, and we live our commitment to Treating Others As We Would Like To Be Treated — Always. This also applies to our planet and environment.

One of our passions stands out above the others: our determination for Breedlove to be a leader, to help set an example for the music community in embracing responsibility for the protection and enhancement of our world's forests. The ecological viability of our planet is top of mind in all we do at Breedlove. We created the Breedlove Tonewood Certification Project committing to never knowingly using clear-cut wood and to tracing our tonewoods back to the forests where the trees grew — to the exact stump whenever possible. We revolutionized our accountability in the use of the world's forests, and we want you to know where the woods came from in your Breedlove and how they were harvested. For years now, we have faithfully lived by this commitment for all U.S.-crafted Breedlove instruments.

My greatest frustration in this area had been a lack of environmentally minded transparency and authenticity regarding the process of building our more affordable acoustic guitars in

China — where a majority of the world's acoustic guitars are crafted. I could find no industry that had broken through the maze of wood supply, honesty in species identification, and chain of custody from where the trees grew to their use in our products. The efforts to fulfill our commitment to never using wood from clear-cut trees or forests was, candidly, unverifiable. So, this became an obsession with me. We've partnered with NGOs, scientists, DNA pioneers — anyone who might help us break through. I have visited more than 100 countries, as well as most of the world's rainforests and temperate forests. Through relentless determination, we have finally partnered with two factories in China where the tonewoods Breedlove uses in all of our guitars can be traced back to the source.

We achieved a milestone in January 2020 when we introduced the Breedlove Organic Collection — instruments crafted with all-solid, sustainably harvested wood from forests I have personally visited, verifying harvesting practices. Now we're launching the new Breedlove ECO Collection — guitars featuring our new EcoTonewood laminate construction, made with tonewoods 100-percent verifiable back to the forest where the trees grew. We can now totally verify that there is no clear-cut wood in any 2021 Breedlove guitar. And I am especially excited that in the future we will be adding a QR code on every guitar, giving the consumer all of the documentation, chain-of-custody information, and the story of the woods used in that very guitar. At that point, we will have achieved our goal of Seed to Song.

I am filled with enthusiasm and anticipation for the coming decade in the music industry. A silver lining to the pandemic has been a validation of the critical role that music plays in all our lives, whether we write it, play it, or just let it surround our daily living. Music lives within virtually every one of us. And I'm looking forward to Breedlove doing its part in creating even more music — sustainably!

Peace, Love & Rock n' Roll,

Tom Bedell - Owner / CEO

# THE ECO COLLECTION

BREEDLOVE RAISES THE BAR SUSTAINABLY — THEN SOARS OVER IT SONICALLY — WITH THE RELEASE OF OUR NEW ECO COLLECTION

## A Breedlove Milestone

The ECO Collection stands as an important new milestone for Breedlove. These innovative, superior-sounding Designed in Bend instruments join our Tonewood-Certified Made in Bend models and our Organic Collection to complete the company's transition to total tonewood sustainability — an industry first. Equally momentous is the radical leap in instrument construction, as the Breedlove team redefines laminate tone and projection, completely altering the sonic landscape. As Breedlove owner and CEO Tom Bedell says, this reflects our dual mission of “creating the absolute best-sounding guitars we can while also helping to protect the world's forests.”



*Where the Guitar Meets the Forest*

*Artist Ryan Ladd*



## EcoTONEWOODS

NO COMPROMISES

Although laminates are less susceptible to the adverse effects of humidity and temperature change, guitar makers traditionally choose laminate over solid wood in order to control costs, with each tree yielding more wood in the process and players getting the most for their money. The problem is that every laminate guitar was made using tone-robbing softwoods for its center core.

With ECO Tonewood, Breedlove sets a new standard by upgrading the traditional soft center layer to authentically clear-cut free, individually harvested African mahogany — a true tonewood (another industry first). Both firm and reflective, the resulting contrast is dramatic, combining backs and sides that perform like solid wood with the sustainability and cost advantages of a laminate. This method combines exquisite tone with sustainable sourcing — for those who refuse to compromise in either area.

Creating an entry-level instrument with the sound quality you've come to expect from a Breedlove guitar was no easy task. By combining our revolutionary body shapes with long experience in hand-tuned sound optimization, our team has reimaged what can be expected from laminate construction. And with Breedlove staples like solid tops, low-profile, pin-less Delta bridges, and Fishman pickup systems, our character-rich DNA is infused throughout the new ECO Collection.

### **But What Do They Sound Like?**

The ECO Collection sets a new sonic standard, with ECO Tonewood's resonant African mahogany center layer projecting like no other laminate. Angela Christensen, Breedlove's Product Development and Wood Manager, says: "It's really the volume that people notice first — that's the first impression. Then it's the sheer quality of the sound: warm and well-balanced. The guitar also feels more vibrant while you're playing. It's more responsive in your hands."

Of the three series of instruments that make up the ECO Collection, the Discovery S (a beginner-friendly line of guitars with a thinner neck profile and narrow nut width) and Pursuit Exotic S series (boasting Tusq nuts and saddles, as well as specialty instruments such as nylon-string, 12-string and fretted/fretless bass models) both employ rich-sounding and visually stunning Hawaiian koa or myrtlewood veneers surrounding the robust African mahogany. This adds a crispness and shimmer to compliment the mahogany's bold low-end and well-defined midrange.

Then there's the loud, lush Rainforest S series, in which all three ECO Tonewood layers are constructed from African mahogany. This essentially acts as a solid piece of wood to produce tone brimming with sustain, as well as a round bottom and pronounced midrange that provide punch and definition. The striking Rainforest S series guitars come in a variety of gorgeous, exotic finishes, so they look as great as they sound.



# THE NASHVILLE SESSIONS

THE ECO COLLECTION MAKES ITS MULTI-GENRE DEBUT IN MUSIC CITY

Historically, Nashville has long been synonymous with country music. But even when it was dubbed “Music City USA” to reflect this fact, few could have realized that the town would continue to grow into a true embodiment of that nickname — with Nashville evolving and its music scene becoming much more diverse, especially in recent years. So, while the honky-tonks on Broadway are still home to various strains of country music, which flows into the street virtually day and night, rock and pop artists and those of various other genres have been flocking to Nashville in record numbers.

Given the high density of extremely talented artists in this one town, we packed up a selection of the new ECO Collection model guitars and hit the road for Nashville. We settled into a modest farmhouse on the quiet outskirts of the city, surrounded by bucolic forests and the rural sounds of roosters crowing and farmers cutting hayfields. While we were ensconced there, a handful of musicians visited us to demo the ECO collection and give us feedback on the new guitars. We filmed the process and labeled the resulting performance videos The Nashville Sessions. Enjoy!





### Guthrie Trapp

Guthrie, one of Nashville's top instrumentalists, grew up on the Florida/Alabama coast. Settling in Music City in 2001, he paid his early dues with the Don Kelley Band at famed honky-tonk Robert's Western World. One of his first Music Row recording sessions was playing mandolin alongside such premier players as Willie Weeks and Ian Wallace. Guthrie has become a fixture on the Artist Works instructional website, along with serving as a music consultant for the Nashville TV series and hosting a weekly talk show on Acme Radio and regular live nights at venue Acme Feed & Seed.

Guthrie played Breedlove's new ECO Collection Discovery S Series Concerto.

### Anthony Smith

Anthony is a Nashville-based singer, songwriter and record producer. As a recording artist, his debut album, *If That Ain't Country*, was released by Mercury Records Nashville in 2002. He has produced three Top 40 singles on the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart, and as a songwriter, he has had more than 250 songs recorded by such country stars as George Strait, Blake Shelton, Tim McGraw, Rascal Flatts, Trace Adkins and Faith Hill.

Anthony played the new ECO Collection Discovery S Series Concerto.



## Trevor McKay & Matthew Mitchell

Trevor was born and raised in Alabama as part of a musical family, becoming obsessed as a teenager with Stevie Ray Vaughan — although country, gospel, jazz and hip-hop would become influences, too. Once he broke into the business, Trevor toured widely backing country artist Tucker Beathard and currently plays with Nashville-based Skylor Anderson.

Born and raised in Syracuse, N.Y., Matthew Mitchell began playing guitar at age 7, then added piano and saxophone. Although initially influenced by funk bands of the 1970s and '80s, he has worked with artists from virtually every modern musical style, from Oingo Boingo to Artur Menezes.

Trevor and Matt played the ECO Collection's Discovery S Series and Pursuit Exotic S Series guitars.







## Lance Lopez

Lance started playing professionally at age 14 around New Orleans. He was hired by soul great Johnny Taylor when he was just 17 and then became bluesman Lucky Peterson's bandleader the next year. Since then, Lance has released six studio albums and several live recordings, earning such famous fans as ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons and legend B.B. King along the way. Lance has recently formed a Nashville-based power trio.

Lance played the ECO Collection's Pursuit S Series Concertina.



## Brian Ripps

Originally from New York City, Brian has been influenced by singer-songwriters and guitarists as diverse as Chris Cornell and John Mayer. Brian says: "The very first guitar I played to gig full-time was a Breedlove."

Brian played the ECO Collection's Pursuit Exotic S Series and Rainforest S Series.



# GRETCHEN MENN

## NEVER GOING BACK

THE TALENTED REVIEWER TEAMS UP WITH GUITAR WORLD AND BREEDLOVE TO BE ONE OF THE FIRST TO REVIEW THE ECO COLLECTION PURSUIT EXOTIC S SERIES

Gretchen Menn once flew jets to support her six-string habit. She holds a BA in music from Smith College where she studied classical guitar under the tutelage of Philip de Fremery. Her musical interests and inclinations span centuries and genres: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Stravinsky, Ravel, Django Reinhardt, Jimmy Page, Steve Morse, Frank Zappa, Jeff Beck...

Her first solo album, *Hale Souls* (2011) is an offering of original, instrumental works. Her second release, *Abandon All Hope* (2016) blends modern and classical instruments in intricate, cinematic compositions that evoke a musical journey through Dante's underworld. She is currently working on a third solo album.

She is the guitarist and a founding member of Zepparella, the acclaimed Led Zeppelin powerhouse, and has performed as a solo artist throughout the U.S. and in guitar festivals in Switzerland and Germany.

Gretchen is also passionate about sharing her love of music through education. She teaches masterclasses and clinics, contributes lessons for *Premier Guitar* and *Acoustic Guitar* Magazines, has an instructional course available on *JamPlay.com*, produces free YouTube lessons on the music of Led Zeppelin for The Zepparella Learning Channel, and recently had a book published by *Stringletter Media*, *How Music Works*.

Learn more at [gretchenmenn.com](http://gretchenmenn.com)



PHOTO BY MAX CRACE



# EXOTIC FORESTS, SOUND PRACTICE

➔ NICHOLAS WEBER IS AT THE FOREFRONT  
OF THE SUSTAINABLE TONEWOOD MOVEMENT

---

When Nicholas Weber was fresh out of college with a degree in economics and landed his first job interview in the wood industry, he had to ask for clarification. “Wood especially for musical instruments? I had no idea that such an industry even existed!” Decades later, he can’t imagine doing anything else.

“I got completely hooked, because it’s everything I had studied,” Weber says. “It’s such an international industry, with wood coming out of exotic countries and going to all parts of the world. It clicked with me, completely.”

Based in Valencia, Spain, Weber now helms his own company, Guitar Tonewoods. He and his team focus entirely on Forest Stewardship Council-certified woods. “I can supply the full array of woods used in musical instruments,” he says. “Mahoganies, cedar, ebony, rosewoods — all coming from sustainable forests.”



Limiting the number of trees cut in a sensitive forest has a vital effect — the forest regenerates on its own. “When you have a certified forest, what you’re actually doing is letting nature take care of reforestation,” Weber says. “If you do selective logging and no clearcutting, seeds go everywhere when a tree falls. You don’t need to do the replanting — you’re letting Mother Nature take care of business.”

Crop rotation and FSC certification are essential for environmental management, but the process is also great for the curious guitarist who might wonder what exactly went into his or her beloved instrument. “When we ship an ebony fingerboard to one of our customers,” Weber says, “we can actually verify which forest it came from and what concession it came from.” Which brings us to Weber’s latest venture: a platform called Forest Chain, which is a block-chain traceability platform that makes tracing the wood from the forest to the final instrument much easier.

“We’ll be putting a QR code in a guitar,” Weber explains about Forest Chain. “Scan it with a mobile phone, and you’ll be able to see the trees it came from, the forest it came from. This connects the end user, the guitar player, with the forest. A customer will be able to see what’s happening in the Congo Basin — without having to travel there.”



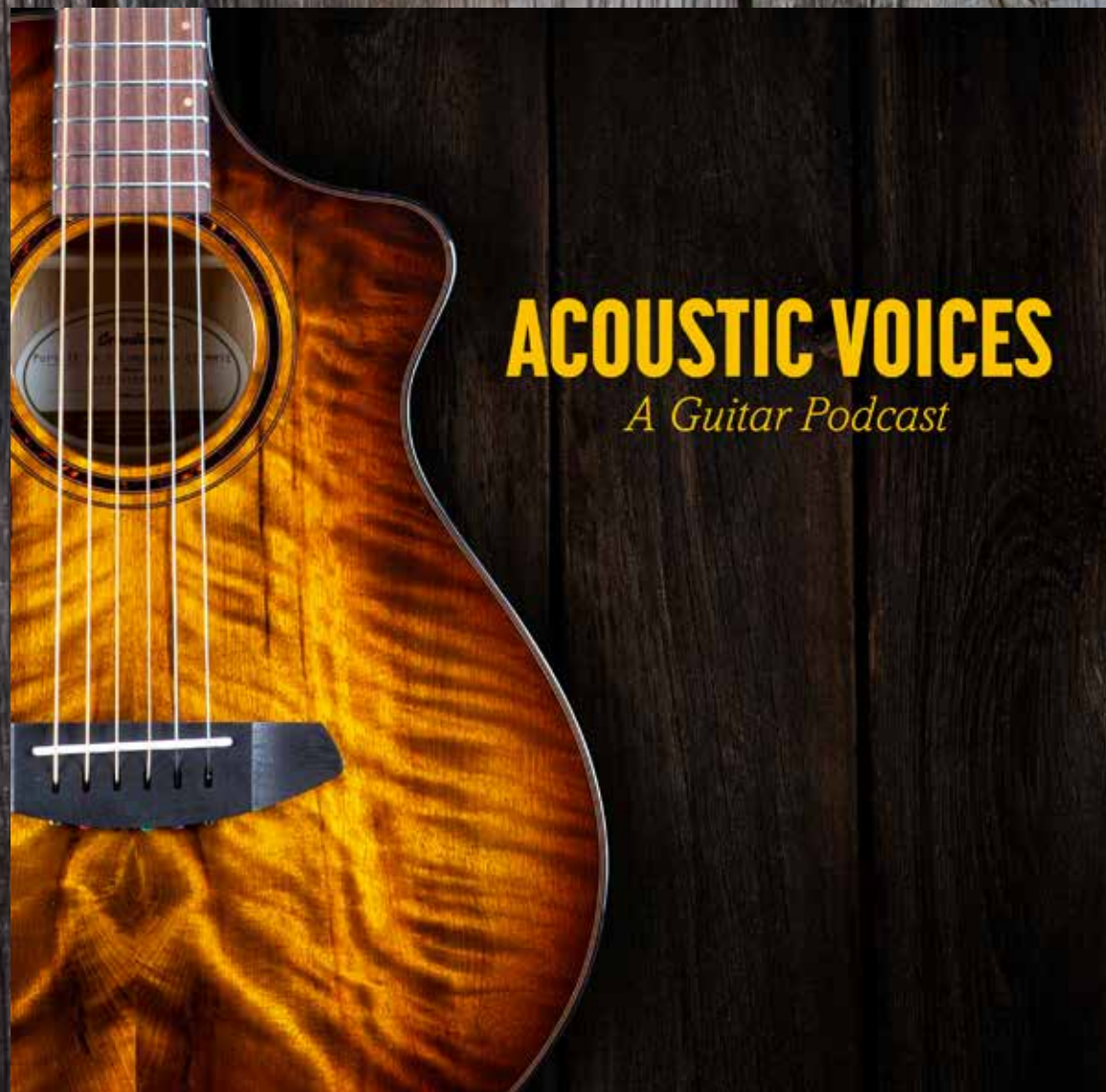
When Weber founded Guitar Tonewoods in 2010, his vision for a guitar fully built with sustainable woods seemed like a dream. But over the past decade, he has watched his suppliers, the industry and its consumers become far more progressive. “When I started, it was hard to find some of the species FSC-certified. Now, more and more is available — a real evolution.”

So what exactly makes some wood FSC-certified? “The FSC is an independent, non-profit organization that protects forests for future generations, and there are a number of things that must be complied with to get certified by the FSC,” Weber explains. “One important part of sustainable forest management is that they do crop rotations, which means there will be wood available not just today, but also 20 and 30 years from now, even a century. There are sources we work with in Africa that are 99-year concessions. Then we have what they call a chain of custody. When the wood goes from the forest to a mill, each part of the chain is certified, basically traceability and volumes. Volumes coming out, volumes coming in.”



**LISTEN TO THE PODCAST WITH NICHOLAS WEBER  
FROM THE FRETBOARD JOURNAL**





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.”

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

LISTEN TO EPISODE #5 WITH NICHOLAS WEBER

## ALEXX CALISE DISCOVERY S REVIEW



Alexx Calise is an accomplished singer, guitarist, and songwriter. Perhaps best known for her hit song, “Cry”, which became a staple on the show “Dance Moms” and boasts millions of hits on YouTube, Calise’s raw emotion, heart-and-soul-lyrics, and unmistakable vibrato have impacted thousands of young girls all over the world. Calise is currently working on new material for her solo project and her other music project, Batfarm.

In addition to her musical pursuits, she also works as a host for Guitar World, writes for Positive Grid, Guitar Girl and Music Connection, and does freelance PR and marketing. When not playing shows or writing music, she enjoys horror movies, photography, exercising, or taking a well-deserved nap.





## ECO COLLECTION DISCOVERY S SERIES

Beginner-friendly design makes the Discovery S Series—part of Breedlove's sustainable new ECO Collection—a perfect introduction to the world of music. A thinner neck profile with narrow nut width and radiused fretboard makes for ultra-easy play. A pinless Delta bridge makes string changing simple and fun. Carefully crafted with trademark Breedlove sound DNA, these instruments, featuring earthconscious, sonically superior EcoTonewood technology, sound like guitars costing three times the price. Welcome to the family!

»» [VIEW SERIES ONLINE](#)



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



# LIVING ALOHA THROUGH MUSIC

FEATURED JULY ARTIST JONAH DAVIS

Ukulele teacher, performer, and this month's featured Breedlove artist, Jonah Davis lives on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. Raised on Maui and of indigenous Hawaiian descent, he knows a thing or two about the concept of aloha, which he describes as more than a simple greeting and salutation. The expression encapsulates a way of life defined by a spirit of generosity and affection for people and the Earth.

"That's the Hawaiian way — we take care of each other," Davis explains. "That's just the way I was raised. We're not rich people. But, still, if we cook, you'll go home with practically enough food to live on for a month."

Alongside that cultural notion of hospitality and generosity, Davis expresses aloha through a life of music. Twenty-six years ago, at age just 15, Davis began performing on stage. He worked as a solo artist, as well as with such bands as Tropic50 and Ka'ena, the latter of which had several hits in Hawaii (including "You Say," a song that Davis co-wrote). Also, about 12 years ago, Davis began to teach music after having had the opportunity to share ukulele with underprivileged youth in his community.

"A friend of mine who is a ukulele luthier here had the dream of teaching ukulele to our underprivileged young people," Davis says. "I thought it was fantastic, but I was still in my 20s and wanting to gig and party and do all the musician things. But, you know, I ended up liking it."

At the time, Davis was also an educator working with children who have special needs, but he had never tried teaching music to kids. He quickly fell in love with it, and now teaching music to kids is his professional life. Davis instructs youth and adults privately through his own company, A'O Ukulele, and with a local nonprofit performing arts studio on Oahu, Na Maka 'O Pu'uwai Aloha.





“Teenagers, man, they go through rubbish, you know? So, teaching, it’s about you making them feel comfortable and having them come to a place where they feel safe and secure,” Davis explains. “I’ve dealt with some pretty heavy issues with students over the years. And, I’m so happy that I’m in this position. I have no kids. I’m single. I love kids. I love family. I just don’t have one of my own. I pour that feeling into working with my students. So, it’s more personal than people realize for me.”

Even during the pandemic, Davis found a way to continue supporting “his kids” and any other students who come his way by building a robust virtual teaching business through Zoom and by streaming via YouTube. In 2017, Davis was ordained as a minister, something he also uses to further spread aloha values. “I’m an ordained minister, even if I’m not your typical view of what a minister looks likem,” he says. “To me, though, a minister should be a real person in the streets, loving people every single day and having fun doing it. My ministry comes through music, using music as a platform. At the end of the day, my life goal is making sure that if Jesus calls me home, people know that I loved them.”

Followers of Davis’s YouTube channel are increasing, and the student turnover at A’O Ukulele is so low that he says some just “refuse to leave,” even after they go to college. Davis is a great teacher and has a “fun uncle” vibe, frequently encouraging his students with surprise gifts — such as a brand-new Breedlove Guitar he recently gave to a teenage student. “She got a great guitar, and she loves it,” he reports. “She plays it every day

and is so passionate about music.”

Davis happens to be a huge fan of Breedlove instruments — not only for his students, but for himself. He says that he loves the way the instruments look and sound; moreover, the sustainability that’s key to the process of building them feels like respect for preserving his vulnerable Hawaiian environment.

“I have a Concertina Artista guitar and a new myrtlewood Eco Collection ukulele,” Davis says. “They sound fantastic — and the wood is gorgeous. I’m also all for sustainability. Here in Hawaii, it’s such a fragile ecosystem, such as with Koa wood. If the trees go, the birds go; if the birds go, other indigenous plants and natural habitats, they also go. So, having a guitar made with that in mind makes me happy.”

To Davis, sustainability is just another way we can serve our community — living with the spirit of aloha. “In Hawaiian, we say ‘be pono,’ which means ‘to be right,’” he explains. “That means you need to be one with all of nature, not just the part you like. That’s my perspective, as a Christian, as a minister, as a teacher, as an artist, as a person —be pono.”





## **ECO COLLECTION** **RAINFOREST S SERIES**

Breedlove's new ECO Collection Rainforest S Series of affordably priced guitars honors the sounds of the magnificent, mysterious Congo River Basin—the caws of colorful birds and calls of the chimpanzee. Crafted with Breedlove's earth-conscious, sonically superior EcoTonewood technology, all African mahogany Rainforest guitars bring you a warm, immediate sound with a strong midrange emphasis and a ringing sustain, along with true environmental sustainability! Versatile Concert body Rainforest guitars come in dazzling finishes like Papillon, Midnight Blue, Black Gold and Orchid, and feature Side-mounted Fishman Presys I electronics (with built-in tuner, volume, contour and phase controls).

**»» VIEW SERIES ONLINE**



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





## EXCLUSIVE REVIEW | ANDREW SWIFT

The Pursuit Concertina's First Report Card,  
from Product Specialist Andrew Swift  
of American Musical Supply

PHOTOS BY TILLY SWIFT



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

Sending off a newly manufactured guitar for its first third-party product review can be nerve-racking, a little bit like watching one of your children climb the steps for his or her first day of school. Breedlove took three years to create its new Eco Collection of instruments, putting heart and soul — as well as decades of hard-won know-how — into a daunting-yet-groundbreaking venture. Ultimately more excited than nervous, we packed up an early prototype of the ECO Collection's Pursuit Exotic S Series Concertina — smaller, short-scaled guitars crafted with stunning myrtlewood from the Oregon Coast, not far from the Breedlove workshop — and shipped it across the country for its first outside appraisal.

When considering someone to give us a critical first impression of the Pursuit Exotic S Concertina, Andrew Swift was a natural choice. A native of Australia, he was captivated by music at a young age and especially inspired by the blues, in particular Stevie Ray Vaughn. A drummer initially, Swift picked up the guitar "late" and has only been playing for about 20 years. But as a product specialist for U.S.-based online retailer AmericanMusical.com — as well as a studio musician and active performer — just about every major guitar model has rested on his lap at one time or another. His Breedlove model experience also runs deeper than with most players, given his role as a guitar reviewer. So, if this new guitar is going to match up to its Breedlove predecessors, Swift is a seasoned historian qualified to make the call.



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

The moment of truth came when we jumped on a call with Swift in New York. He had time not only to play the guitar in studio and record a few demos, but also to venture into a nearby park to get cozy with the small body shape and hear the new Pursuit Concertina ring out in the open air.

Breedlove: What are your first impressions of our new Concertina?

Andrew Swift: It's really easy to play, and the body/neck shape makes the guitar very comfortable to hold. I also feel like it lives up to what Breedlove was trying to accomplish with the sound of this guitar, which is a bigger, modern sound that's atypical for an instrument of smaller size like this. It has a very focused tone, one that recorded really well. I didn't have to do a whole lot beyond playing to make the guitar sit in a track sonically, because what you wanted from the guitar was already

right there.

BL: Has the guitar been inspiring in a certain way?

Swift: It didn't seem to lead me down the road of just playing the traditional blues-type things that you would usually do on a guitar of this size. The sound elicits a different response from me than a typical small-body guitar. Playing chords on it is comfortable just because of the size, yet it still projects really well. With the cutaway, you can stretch out a little bit more on it as well, getting into more of a modern-type acoustic sound, if that makes sense. Not necessarily a finger tapping thing, just using it in a more of a modern way, with a contemporary sound.

BL: You record often, in the studio and for video demos. Does a guitar like this have a place in your studio lineup? If so, how would you use it?

Swift: Sometimes when I'm recording acoustic guitar, just by nature of using a cardioid mic kind of close to the instrument, there is going to be some level of proximity effect happening. On bigger-body guitars, this can be problematic, because that effect can definitely push a lot of low-frequency energy toward the mic. Then you have to do drastic EQ or some level of I/Q on the way in. I felt like I didn't have to do that with this new guitar. I used a standard high-pass filter on the preamp on the way in, and it was cool — the bass response didn't overwhelm things.

For me, the acoustic guitar can serve a couple of different functions in recording. First, there's a rhythmic aspect to it. Sometimes when you're recording a track, you want to have the presence of a strumming acoustic guitar as a rhythmic element, more so than as a harmonic one. I was able to achieve that on this guitar with a minimum of external processing. I was also able to get a clearly voiced chord sound, because it's a very focused-sounding instrument. Some guitars are really wide-sounding — the tonality being broad, with a lot of low-frequency content. But this instrument's focused sound has enough of each frequency band in the spectrum, giving me what I wanted from an acoustic guitar.

Getting back to your question about its use for recording, I think this is a great guitar for a contemporary-sounding singer-songwriter.

BL: How about the look and feel of the guitar? The build? You've played Breedlove's high-end Made in Bend models — how does this compare?

Swift: I was really impressed by the price point of this instrument. It's an incredibly good value, from a sound point of view and how the instrument is constructed

and how it feels. I've played a lot of similar acoustics in this price range, and I feel like the finish on this guitar was definitely a step above what you would generally find on the market.

BL: How about the electronics? Did you have a chance to try them out?

Swift: I didn't record it using the electronics. I only used a single microphone. But I did try the electronics out while just playing the guitar — and I really liked the system. It's very convenient, and I like having the tuner handy.

BL: And your overall judgment?

Swift: Overall, based on the character of other Breedlove instruments I've played, this guitar definitely has that special Breedlove character. I felt good playing it!

You can watch Swift's full video review of the Pursuit Exotic S Series Concertina here on this spread. If you would like to stay in the loop with what he's doing in the studio, on stage or in front of the camera, check him out on Instagram. And you can also catch all of his guitar reviews for American Musical Supply here.



D'Addario



NATURAL FEEL ✕ UNNATURAL LIFE SPAN

INTRODUCING D'ADDARIO XT: stand the test of time with strings that endure. D'Addario XT strings combine our strongest high carbon steel with an advanced corrosion resistance treatment on every string in the set, giving you enhanced break resistance and unyielding pitch stability—all while preserving the tone and feel of your favorite uncoated strings. These strings are made to stay, with uncompromising performance that never fades away.

#DADDARIOX

PLAYERS CIRCLE  
PLAY MORE. DO MORE. EARN MORE.  
playerscircle.daddario.com

NEVER FADE AWAY

XT



## ECO COLLECTION PURSUIT EXOTIC S SERIES

Go Exotic, sustainably! Breedlove has long specialized in offering intriguing alternative tonewoods, introducing, for example, hauntingly figured Oregon myrtlewood to the guitar world 25 years ago. The Pursuit Exotic S Series—featuring TUSQ nuts and saddles and Breedlove’s earth-conscious, sonically superior EcoTonewood technology—allows you to affordably experience the pure, nuanced sound and striking visual beauty of exotically alluring myrtlewood, koa and cedar. All four of Breedlove’s revolutionary body shapes are available in a popular all myrtle configuration, with a stunning gloss Tiger’s Eye finish. Specialty instruments like nylon string, 12-string and fretted/fretless bass models are available in elegant Natural and Amber tones. Side-mounted Fishman Presys I electronics (with built-in tuner, volume, contour and phase controls) make amplification a breeze.

» [VIEW SERIES ONLINE](#)



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







## A REVIEWER'S DILEMMA

---

BREEDLOVE ASKS SEASONED GUITAR REVIEWER JUSTIN LAFORTE TO COMPARE HIS BELOVED OREGON DREADNOUGHT TO A NEW ECO COLLECTION CONCERTO



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

There are some questions you just shouldn't ask, like which of your kids is your favorite? Or, do you love your dog or cat more? No one should be asked to pick favorites between items so close to the heart and soul. But that's exactly what we asked of veteran guitar reviewer Justin LaForte, who has long been loyal to a Breedlove Oregon Series Dreadnought crafted before the advent of the new Eco Collection Concerto – a guitar crafted with an updated body shape designed to replace the traditional Dreadnought in sound, comfort and feel. Given this challenge, how did he judge the new ECO Collection Concerto – crafted with the same Oregon myrtlewood tonewood – against its predecessor?

LaForte first picked up a guitar at his local music shop 22 years ago, eventually becoming a performer and teacher. That promptly snowballed into getting a degree in music from Loyola University in Chicago, earning a good reputation as a guitarist in the Windy City area and, eventually, becoming an integral member of the marketing department at zZounds.com, the online music equipment retailer. LaForte estimates that he has played and reviewed at least a thousand guitars.

“If we sell it on the zZounds website, there is a good chance that we've at least done a demo on it or that we've been sent models by these companies just to try out,” LaForte explains. “Over the years, I have worked and played on all sorts of guitars — such as the pre-built model Concerto that Breedlove sent me.” With his personal guitar having long been a Breedlove Oregon Series Dreadnought, LaForte is the ideal person to review the new ECO Collection Concerto, which is made with myrtlewood like his Dreadnought and which was designed to replace the Dreadnought body shape head to head.

It was in 2017 that Breedlove officially introduced the Concerto body shape to replace the traditional Dreadnought. When we set out to create a guitar that would surpass the classic big-body sound of the Dreadnought, we didn't just want it to be loud. We aimed to bring out more tonal complexity, as well as to offer a much more comfortable playing experience. We designed the Concerto to be loud, textured and supremely satisfying.

Since its release, the Concerto has duly become one of Breedlove's most popular guitars (after our flagship Concert model), even among those players who have long loved our Dreadnoughts, like LaForte. “The Oregon Dreadnought, that was my go-to guitar,” he says. “I'd play it in almost every musical theater performance, if the production called for acoustic guitar. It always cuts through sonically with these theatrical shows. In my experience with the Concerto guitar, I was also pleasantly surprised at the bass output on it. It had way more bass than I thought it would. And it feels defined, not flubby.”

LaForte wasn't just impressed with the Concerto's bass — he also loved its concert-ready treble, which balances the low-end output. “The core definition was really nice,” he says, “and it felt like there were good notes and separation, and it wasn't too fluffy in any one register.” He

was equally taken with the comfort of the body, finding it more comfortable in some ways than his Dreadnought. “I feel like I'd almost be cheating on my Dreadnought to pick the Concerto now, but it's just way more comfortable. The ergonomics make a difference because sometimes I get 'guitar shoulders' from playing my Dread, craning over a big body for hours at a time. But the Concerto has the kind of fit where it's just big enough and kind of puts my shoulders in the right spot.”

The Eco Collection's Concerto also possesses some favorite qualities from LaForte's Dreadnought — especially Breedlove's quintessential use of Oregon myrtlewood, which is used on the back of his Dreadnought. He said it always catches people's eyes. “Everybody would ask me, 'What's that on the back and sides of your acoustic? That has the most interesting grain on it.' It has this very beautiful, swirly pattern. That look initially drew me to the Oregon, but the tone of myrtlewood has always been what keeps me coming back to it — it's a blend between a dry tone and a harmonically rich sound. It's kind of like a mahogany sound, but less dense and with a good snap to it.”

From a performing standpoint, LaForte sees the new Eco Collection Concerto as an ideal option — for its robust sound, striking beauty, comfort during long gigs, and sheer versatility. “This guitar suits a bunch of different situations and venues,” he said. “It doesn't produce a polarizing sound. It doesn't pigeonhole itself.”

You can watch Justin LaForte's full video review of the new Eco Collection's Concerto model here in the Summer Magazine. For more reviews from LaForte, go to Justin's author page on the zZounds.com blog.

[»»» LEARN MORE ONLINE](#)

# THE SPARK

FISHMAN'S FOUNDER EXPLAINS HIS ENDLESS PURSUIT  
➔ FOR THE BEST SOUND POSSIBLE

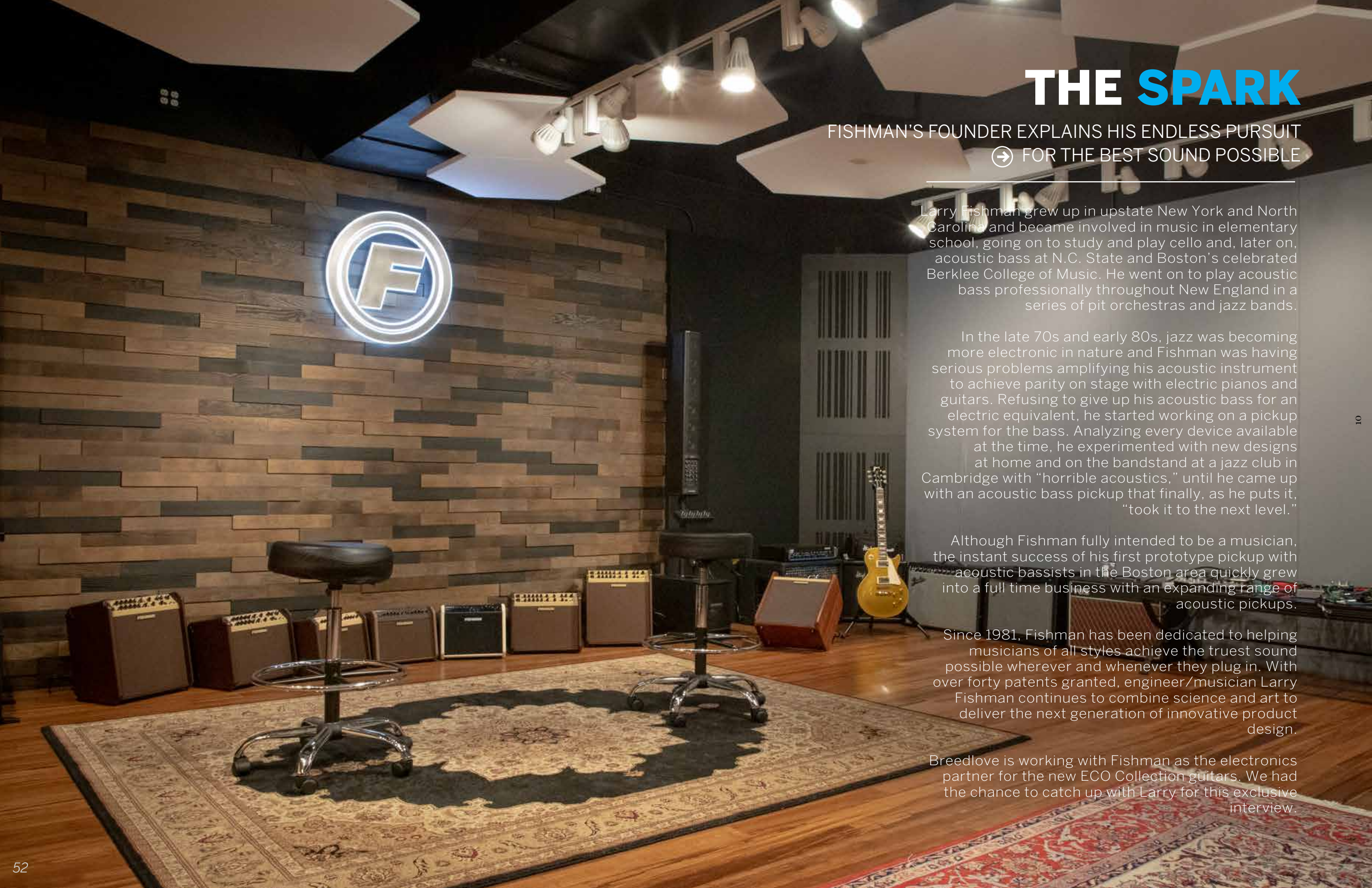
Larry Fishman grew up in upstate New York and North Carolina and became involved in music in elementary school, going on to study and play cello and, later on, acoustic bass at N.C. State and Boston's celebrated Berklee College of Music. He went on to play acoustic bass professionally throughout New England in a series of pit orchestras and jazz bands.

In the late 70s and early 80s, jazz was becoming more electronic in nature and Fishman was having serious problems amplifying his acoustic instrument to achieve parity on stage with electric pianos and guitars. Refusing to give up his acoustic bass for an electric equivalent, he started working on a pickup system for the bass. Analyzing every device available at the time, he experimented with new designs at home and on the bandstand at a jazz club in Cambridge with "horrible acoustics," until he came up with an acoustic bass pickup that finally, as he puts it, "took it to the next level."

Although Fishman fully intended to be a musician, the instant success of his first prototype pickup with acoustic bassists in the Boston area quickly grew into a full time business with an expanding range of acoustic pickups.

Since 1981, Fishman has been dedicated to helping musicians of all styles achieve the truest sound possible wherever and whenever they plug in. With over forty patents granted, engineer/musician Larry Fishman continues to combine science and art to deliver the next generation of innovative product design.

Breedlove is working with Fishman as the electronics partner for the new ECO Collection guitars. We had the chance to catch up with Larry for this exclusive interview.





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

Over 40 years ago you made the first Fishman prototype in your basement. What was the “spark” - where did the inspiration come from to take this step and create your first design?

The spark that really drove me to create my first design was a self-need. I was playing a double bass in a jazz quintet and suddenly the piano was a Fender Rhodes rather than an acoustic piano and the band started getting louder and there was difficulty hearing my instrument. They were urging me to play electric bass, which I was not particularly interested in. So, having a background in materials and engineering and a machine shop in my basement, I decided to see if I can make a better double bass pickup than what was available at the time. And it was a challenge. And that’s really what got me started.

You now hold more than 40 patents. What drives this passion for design and engineering?

The driving factor for design engineering is just a love for the exciting discoveries that you make when you dive into a new arena of some product or idea you have, and you have no idea how to do it. You get some hints, you get some techniques and tricks that you’ve pulled together over the years.

But it’s that creative sense that...well it’s kind of like playing in the jazz bands that I played in. You go in. There’s a tempo and there’s a chord and a chord chart. But that’s it. It’s a new experience every time I dive in. And it’s just a ton of fun. It’s really good. It’s satisfying. And when something surprising comes out of it, that’s really good, you just go, “Wow, that’s putting a big smile on my face.”

Fishman is dedicated to helping musicians of all styles achieve the truest sound possible when they plug in. What is the hardest technical or development obstacle you’ve overcome in your career to deliver on your pursuit? Was there one monumental driving “problem” or obstacle you had to overcome - or you are still working to solve - that keeps you constantly innovating and pushing sound quality higher and higher?

You know, the thing that keeps me working on new designs and different approaches to amplifying musical instruments is the very nature of the guitar, the acoustic guitar that we focus on so heavily. These are beautifully expressive instruments that are very personal in nature and we’re not looking to transform them out of their own skin into something dramatically different. But we’re wanting to enhance that beautiful voice of acoustic instruments, instruments that feel alive in the hand. It’s much more personal than a piano. A guitar you have on your lap. You can feel the vibrations in the neck. You’re touching the strings. You’re not hitting a note, a hammer or something on a guitar. So, you’re really attached to it. The pursuit is to enhance that experience so that the technical aspects of what you bring to the design, never, ever get in the way of that organic feeling that you have when you’re just playing the instrument without the additional electronics.

We found some really innovative ways of enhancing that experience and they’ve been really satisfying for a lot of musicians. So we just keep diving in deeper. How do you become one with the instrument and have the instrument perform

in a variety of venues at different volumes and different size rooms and so forth and still have it a rewarding, inspiring, comfortable situation for the performer?

Do you see yourself as more of a designer and engineer, musician and artist, or all of the above?

When I first meet people and they asked me what I do, they’re a little confused. Are you a musician? Are you an artist? Are you an engineer or a designer or a businessman? Well, I’m everything and it all melts together. And that’s really, uh, those elements are necessary, at least I feel, for what I’m trying to accomplish at Fishman.

Engineering by itself will not produce inspiring beautiful products. Musical intuition by itself will not produce complete engineering designs. You have to have both ends of the spectrum working together, especially today where the tools are much more sophisticated and the technical aspects of how we can get to a certain point in a design are more complicated.



So you have to have a real strong material sense, a real strong engineering background, and really strong musical sense to put it all together so that it works. It works without stress... without being overly complicated and it works to create something that sounds beautiful and inspires musicians to create their sonic art with exciting new sounds and a very comfortable to play reliable scenario that does not get in the way of the music that they're creating.

To design these electronics and create so many patentable products, you must have a strong engineering left brain? As a musician, your right brain must really kick in when you want to get creative. This is somewhat of a philosophical question, but which hemisphere of your brain is more influential when creating electronics? Or, is it a blend of creativity and analytical problem solving?

Well, left brain, right brain to me... I really find that there's a big difference. You know, it's kind of center brain. They're all kind of spinning at the same time. And that's what makes things work for me. I can get out the CAD system or start calculating ratios of things and so forth. Well, that's important to have under control, but what's the point? You really need to be looking at an end that is an artistic end. So, I can't do anything without both of those motors working at the same time. That's just the way I'm made. I'm thankful that I have that mix in me because it makes what I do easier and more productive and actually more fun, more enjoyable. So, I'm neither left nor right brain I'm right down the center and they're both driving a car!

One of the things many players love about your Fishman electronics is

how easy they are to use, and how intuitive and simple everything is to use. Form seems to follow function, and everything is designed with real players in mind. Battery boxes are easy to access and make for quick onstage changes. Controls are side-mounted for easy access and the right "tools" are exactly where they need to be for players on stage.

When designing electronics for musical instruments, the function and the form are a mixed set of elements that can never, ever get in the way of a performer in a performance environment. My years of traveling with bands and playing live taught me what the challenges are in the always varying atmosphere and venue in different venues and different situations at different volumes... different musicians you're interacting with. You really need to be able to focus on the music when you're playing live and the gear has to really work for you without ever getting in the way. So, if you have to reach around in an awkward way to get to your tone controls or your volume controls or something, you're automatically subtracting from the music that you're trying to produce.

So, really getting that mix right. That blend right. And also just the sense of designs. You take a musical instrument and you add things to it. There has to be a proportion and a reason for them to go in certain places. And it also has to look good. So, we look at guitars, in particular, as objects of beauty.

When you work with an OEM and want to add things to their guitar, you have to be very cognizant of the design language of the guitar, what they're looking for, the utility of what you bring to the table. But all in all, it's all there for a reason. And that reason is making music.

40 Years after designing your first pickup, what's something we take for granted now that you never imagined we'd have at your fingertips when you first started?

I think the thing that has evolved most in my work has been launching and the development of my company, Fishman Transducers.

We have a wonderful facility to work in. We have an amazing staff of engineers and production people and machinists, marketing and salespeople that are all driven by the same passion. And having a facility as complete as ours with amazing tools to create and invent and to analyze with, and with the passion of all the people that are involved in the building on an everyday basis.

"Wow. That sounds good. Can I hear that? What about this?" I never thought that was going to happen when we first started. It was kind of me and my basement. There was one other guy working on some stuff. We're in such an enriching environment here now. Looking into the future and bettering ourselves and designing more creative products and breakthrough products.

So, I mean, you know, we could never have done that without the 40 years of building that has occurred. And now when we have an impossible task that someone's asking us to do for them, it's not nearly as impossible as anyone thought it would be. We take the impossible and make it possible. And that's really exciting.

What's the single most important accomplishment you've achieved in your career. What are you most proud of?

Well, again, it's really building the crew, the business and the people that are working here.

If you put them in an exciting, collaborative environment, everybody gets along, everyone gets to contribute it. I feel really good when I can take some really smart engineers and some really creative musicians and help them communicate with each other because they speak very, very different languages and that's always something that can be very frustrating for the technical brain or the creative brain speaking a language that you can convey the good or the bad not, "Oh, I think that's cool." Or, you know these expressions that don't really mean anything to an engineer or when an engineer is talking to a musician. They have to come together. And I think I've created an environment where that really, really works. And I'm very proud of that because this company is so much more than just Larry Fishman and it would never exist without these elements working in lockstep and thankfully, we've succeeded at that and quite surprising my son Bryan has decided to join the company almost two years ago. So, I'm really proud of that. I always wished he would, but he had his own very, very exciting career before that. But one day he decided to see if there's a place for him here... and there certainly is! And this is going to allow Fishman to exist for another generation at least.

It's pretty satisfying when I consider where we started and where we have come to and where we can go. That's what I'm most excited about.



With over 40 patents under your belt, what's next? What's the new frontier that keeps you up at night? What does the future hold for Fishman, and musicians around the world?

I really don't know what the future is going to hold because things on a technical end have accelerated so rapidly. We're doing things with signal processing chips that 15 years ago required a desktop computer or something even larger. Now with the emergence of consumer electronics, we have a little processor running on a 9-volt battery that is doing a huge amount of work that we could never have done before.

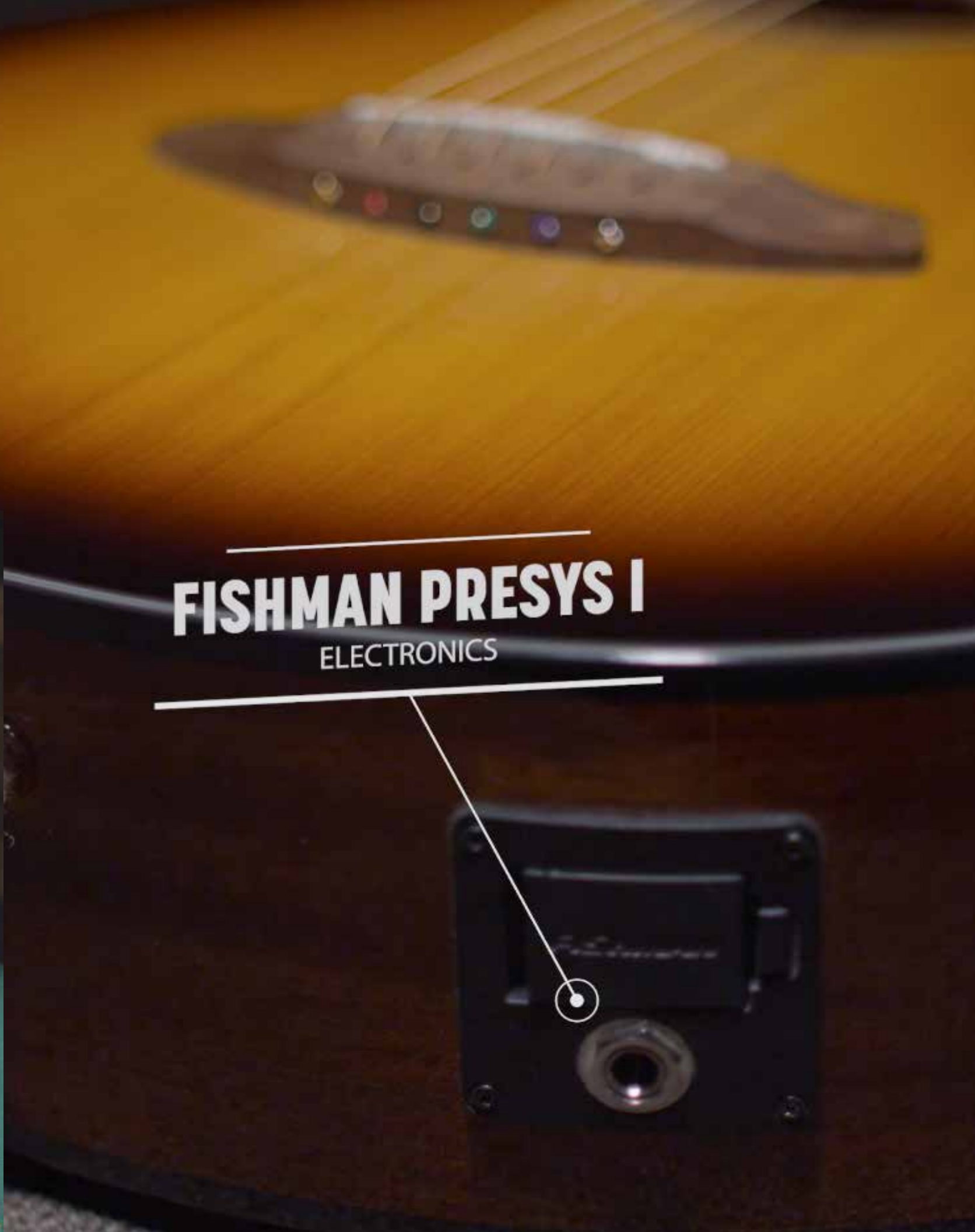
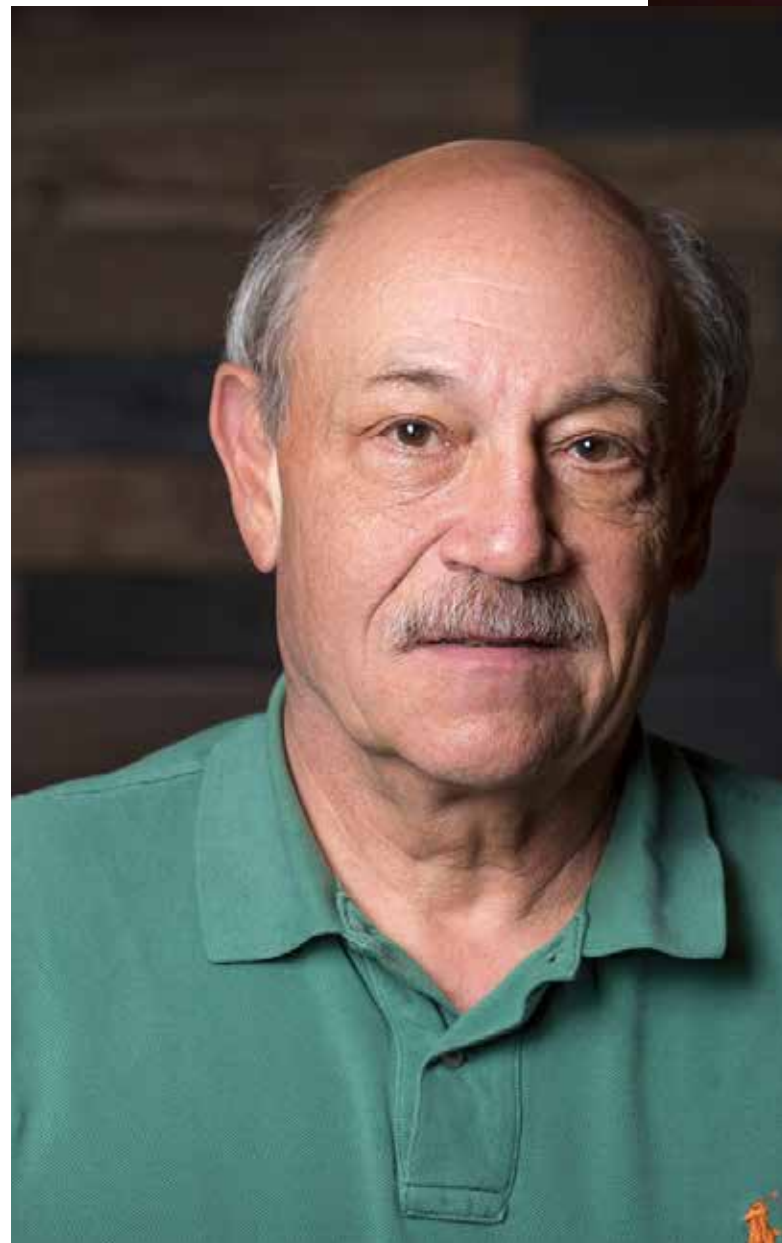
So as the ability grows – and since we've learned, to very successfully and satisfyingly, apply the digital realm to, really good sounding musical instruments – the world's our oyster. Things that would have been so difficult or nearly impossible to do in the past are simply things that we take for granted today and apply it on a regular basis.

This will continue to accelerate. I've seen a massive growth in abilities over the past 10 or 15 years, and it looks like we're going to get into another "jump" in the future years. So, I'm along for the ride. I'm going to be out there working with this stuff and I have no idea what we'll create, but I bet it's going to be fun and it's going to be great. And it's going to make great music.

You know, when I first met Tom Bedell, he was entering this industry after being in another business.

And we met in Germany and I said, "Boy, this is a really interesting guy. I wonder what he's gonna do? And we've been associated with Tom and his different brands over the years.

It's really great to see what Tom has done with the wood initiatives and the ecological aspects of design. So, the fact that he chose Fishman to be in his new ECO Series guitars is really great. I'm thrilled to be there with him and wish Breedlove and Tom the most success with this. I think they're really great instruments!



# CLEAN AND GREEN

BREEDLOVE/TWO OLD HIPPIES EMPLOYEES COME TOGETHER TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF MAKING THE COMPANY AS ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS AS ITS GUITARS ARE SONICALLY AND AESTHETICALLY BEAUTIFUL

How does a company evolve from creating the best-playing, best-sounding acoustic guitars around to crafting those same beautiful instruments with a process that's cleaner and greener, more sustainable and traceable?

At Breedlove headquarters in Bend, Oregon, employees across the company are taking steps, large and small, to make the company work better and smarter — and more environmentally conscious, with the future of the planet in mind. One of these is Erik Has-Ellison, who leads Made in Bend production of Breedlove guitars.

Has-Ellison — who got his start working with mandolin master Ryan Fish six years ago — has helped inspire his co-workers to lean green, even with the little things. He recently made a plea for all workers across the organization to switch from paper paystubs to simple e-mail documents.

“That’s just one little step that we could all take environmentally, by just eliminating something that most of us don’t really need or even look at anymore,” Has-Ellison explains. “With technology today, you can go paperless in lots of ways. That really is the least we can do.”





Breedlove has made progress on such important moves as sealing up its entire 30,000-square-foot facility's previously energy-seeping seams. But Has-Ellison says that the company should always be looking for more eco-friendly ways to work. "With mass production and the amount of stuff we send out the door every month, it would be good if we can find an alternative to what we're currently using — whether it's the plastic bags that we ship guitars in or the shrink wrap that we use for pallets."

Has-Ellison is also using scrap pallets, saved from shipping, to create raised vegetable beds ready to soak up the high-desert sunshine. "I'm currently working on our dust-collection waste, as well as our wood scraps," he says. "It would be nice if we can

find a way to use all the wood scraps and not throw anything away. Same with dust-collection waste — that's nearly 100-percent biomass."

### Going Further...

Two Old Hippies had already drastically reduced its paper trail three years ago by adopting fully digital marketing materials, such as catalogs and dealer notices. Procurement/HR Manager Terri Hensley, a long-tenured co-Hippie at 13 years with the company, has helped Has-Ellison get his paperless project started.

When it comes to procurement, Hensley notes that concerns about sustainability and traceability always inform the process. "Before we work with any new wood source," she says, "Tom Bedell or Angela Christensen will do their due diligence and actually visit the source to make sure not only that it's legally documented, but also that everyone involved in the process is being treated ethically and no one is being taken advantage of. I think that's very cool. As far as using sustainable, clear-cut free woods, that is a big thing here. We know exactly where our woods come from."

A member of the sales team, Erika Mohr is also in charge of Supply Chain Management for Breedlove's import guitars and ukuleles. She has been with Breedlove for 16 years across two stints with the company. She leads the in-house Sustainability Committee, with its goals including such efforts as improving environmental conditions locally in Bend. The small Pacific Northwest city is known for its easygoing, outdoors-oriented lifestyle, with hiking, biking and skiing among the popular pastimes.

Mohr's ad-hoc six-person Sustainability Committee also includes Breedlove owner Tom Bedell, as well as Brand Editor Michael Eck. The latter — an admitted "pencil and guitar geek" — recently sent a gross of Palomino-brand FSC-certified ForestChoice pencils to headquarters so that the company could make its writing as sustainable as its luthiery.

Mohr, who has a degree in Environmental Biology from Fort Lewis College in Colorado, says work for the Sustainability Committee is essential. "Because we've spent

all this time putting together the wood-tracking system, we wanted to bring some of those sustainability conversations to the office space, too, so we can look at how we're acting day-to-day as a company. How do we become carbon neutral? That is the essence. We also want to apply some of these sustainability practices to our everyday lives with our families here in Central Oregon." Development Manager Angela Christensen has been working for Breedlove for almost 20 years. She has deep relationships with suppliers and manufacturers across Europe, Asia and beyond, and she serves as the engine for many of the company's biggest innovations. Currently, Christiansen sources wood for Breedlove and also designs its guitars. The sourcing and development of the recently announced ECO Collection was one of Christiansen's pet projects.

"The ECO Collection is super exciting," Christensen says. "We've always had the challenge of making sure that all of our tonewoods are sustainably harvested. We were able to implement that with our Made in Bend models starting in 2013, and we have been sourcing wood that way ever since. Last year, we were able to bring the new Organic Collection to market, which was a huge breakthrough for us in all-solid-wood construction. We knew where all the tonewoods came from, and we were able to carry that sourcing message throughout that product line. That, like the ECO Collection, was a feat, not just because they're products made in China. It's not as easy to work with factories anywhere that are willing to source woods this way and to track them."







ERIKA MOHR AT THE BREEDLOVE GARDENS



ERIKA HAS-ELLISON

### Signs of Progress...

At the end of the chain, Warehouse Manager Nancy Inglis, a six-year employee, makes sure all TOH instruments get shipped safely. Everyone in the company knows that it's one of the most important roles in the process. Inglis is especially fond of a new cardboard converter: "I've been wanting it since the day I walked in here! It makes trash into reusable stuff."

The imposing looking cardboard converter turns old master packing boxes — five-foot long, four-foot tall, two-foot wide — into renewable, reusable, corrugated board, at a current rate of at least six boxes a day. With a smile on her face, Inglis says: "That's what we use instead of plastic to package our guitars when we ship them."

With containers arriving regularly from Asia so that each Breedlove guitar can be inspected and set up at the Bend workshop, that amounts to 100-200 master packing boxes monthly. "That's a lot of cardboard," Inglis notes. "I'm trying to cut down on our recycling bins outside. We're just getting started with this machine, but every little bit helps."

Marketing Director RA Beattie also leads artist relations for Breedlove, having worked in Bend for a dozen years. He has been environmentally proactive by recycling what might otherwise be useless coffee grounds from the break room into rich, potent composting material.

An accomplished independent filmmaker, Beattie has also been putting his artistic aptitude to use by creating distinctive signage for Breedlove retailers by using recycled materials. He makes use of "fallout" — a term of art for otherwise exquisite pieces of top and back wood, such as native Alaskan Sitka spruce or gorgeous Oregon myrtlewood, that for whatever reason have been deemed insufficient for actual Custom Design Center instruments; he uses these fallout pieces to create stunning signs, each one-of-a-kind and environmentally stable.

Whether it's sourcing sustainable, traceable woods, recycling packaging materials, creating bespoke signage, going paperless or composting coffee grounds, it takes everyone pitching in at a company to make environmental progress. "No one person can do it alone," Has-Ellison says. "You've got to have everyone chipping in and helping out to make a difference."



Organic G  
Bright flavor, w

Two



## PASSION & DESTINY

DAVE EISNER'S HOUSE OF MUSICAL TRADITIONS HAS SUPPORTED THE CROSS-CULTURAL POWER OF MUSIC IN MARYLAND FOR A HALF-CENTURY

---

For Dave Eisner, owner of retailer House of Music Traditions in Takoma Park, M.D., music has been in the air around him since he was a child. Growing up in New Jersey, he was often surrounded by the musician friends of his father, who had a dual career as a dentist in New York City and as a first-chair violinist in the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. "That made me very comfortable being around music and musicians," Eisner explains, "because every time I turned around, there was a quartet or another group practicing in the living room."

Eisner never picked up an instrument himself, being more involved with competitive swimming — which eventually guaranteed his admission to the University of Maryland, in 1966. But once again, he found himself around music and musicians. "I had joined a fraternity, which wasn't a bad thing for an out-of-state kid who didn't really know anybody," he recalls. "A job as student adviser opened up, and that position meant that you got to plan all the parties. So as a freshman, I had to hire bands for events."

As he fulfilled those duties as student advisor to the administrators who planned Homecoming and Spring Weekend, Eisner helped produce shows featuring Aretha Franklin, Sly & the Family Stone and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, among others. By his junior year, Eisner was also taking elective courses that introduced him to non-Western music. "I was taking African history, Asian history, and that broadened my musical interests," he explains. "I not only learned about other forms of music — I could even study the blues by taking courses that touched on African music."

Eisner graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in creative writing, with plans to attend graduate school in American Studies. Meanwhile, he was also getting into lap dulcimers — so much so that he sought out a dulcimer builder in New York City's Greenwich Village named Hank Levin, who ran the business along with his wife, Lynn. Eisner recalls: "I go up there, and Hank says, 'Yeah, I'm building dulcimers, but it's funny timing, because we're moving to California.' I immediately asked him, 'So what are you going to do with the store?'"

Eisner ended up buying Levin's shop, and its name — House of Musical Traditions — for \$1,500. Soon after, he moved the store from Greenwich Village to Takoma Park. Over the decades, the store has become one of the town's most beloved businesses. House of Musical Traditions specializes in selling Western instruments — including Breedlove acoustic guitars — alongside rarer, non-Western instruments, such as tabla drums.

"It had occurred to me that if you wanted to buy a sitar, you had to go to an Indian restaurant and hope that the sitar player working there would sell you one of his instruments," Eisner recalls. "Then if you wanted to buy a dombek drum, you had to go to a belly-dance show and say, 'No, I'm not here to see the dancers — I want to talk to the guy in back playing the drum.' There was no place to find instruments like that under one roof. So, I thought, we can do better than this."

That, he did. Through the store — and his other efforts, such as a non-profit, The Institute of Musical Traditions, and his radio show "Musical Traditions Encounter" on Takoma's WOWN — Eisner preserves and promotes American and international folk music traditions and helps to nurture new forms evolving from these cultural roots. It's all the result of his deep passion for learning about and sharing music.

"My employees have been amazing because they get it — they understand how culturally important music is," Eisner says. "And I take their opinions very seriously as to product selection. They understand how to share the love of music, and they know the power that it has to bring people together. It may sound like a cliché, but it keeps repeating itself year after year, decade after decade here."





When asked about the new release of Breedlove's ECO Collection and the move to use 100-percent sustainable tonewoods across all guitar lines, Eisner says: "Here at House of Musical Traditions, we're proud to carry and recommend Breedlove guitars to our customers as part of our ongoing efforts to make music more green — in its performance, representation, culture and community. Not only are we located in the notoriously nuclear-free city of Takoma Park — a town that's also home to the country's first gas station to transition entirely from fossil fuels to electric-car charging — but we as a store have always strived to implement more environmentally friendly initiatives over the course of our 50-year history.

"It has always bothered me when instrument manufacturers shirk their duty in using sustainably sourced materials, because they think that their instruments are only a minor contributor to deforestation and global waste," Eisner adds. "That's why we believe Breedlove is an environmental pioneer that the music industry needs — and we hope that other instrument manufacturers will take note of Breedlove's methods. For anyone seeking to experience the guilt-free joy of Breedlove's exemplary green guitar and ukulele selections, come see us at House of Music Traditions — or check out our website to view our stock!"

**Learn more about House of Musical Traditions**



# WARRIOR FOR WOOD

World Resources Institute's Chip Barber thinks modern acoustic guitars — such as those of Breedlove's new Eco Collection — can help fight the good fight



Chip Barber with the Breedlove team in Madagascar researching the rosewood trade.

Charles “Chip” Barber isn’t just another six-string connoisseur, although he does have one-of-a-kind Bedell and Martin guitars in his collection. He is Director of the Forest Legality Initiative and Senior Biodiversity Adviser for the World Resources Institute, an environment-and-development policy institute with its global headquarters in Washington, D.C.

In 2015, Barber invited Breedlove owner Tom Bedell and filmmaker (and now Breedlove Marketing Director) RA Beattie to northern Madagascar on a trip that was both enlightening and heartbreaking. Bedell and Beattie learned a lot about where some of the finest rosewood for guitars is grown and how, but they also faced the revelation that much of the famed Madagascar rosewood is illegally harvested. Upon returning home, Bedell — devoted to his environmentally minded Seed to Song commitment — refused to build with 50 expensive sets of Madagascar rosewood already on hand, mistrusting the veracity of the existing paperwork.



Chip Barber and Tom Bedell examining illegal rosewood in Madagascar.

Barber has continued to be an inspiring friend to Breedlove, helping Bedell and company learn more about the world’s endangered forests — from Mexico, Brazil and Ethiopia to China, India and the Netherlands — and how to keep some of the most exotic, endangered and beautiful species of wood safe for the future.

“My program focuses on the problems of illegal logging and associated trade,” says Barber, who previously worked for the U.S. State Department. “We’re expanding these days, also looking at wildlife trafficking, illegal fishing, illicit gold mining, a range of what we lump together as conservation crime. We’re an independent, nonprofit policy institute, a think tank, although we do a lot of action-oriented things.”

About Breedlove and its environmental initiatives, such as the new Eco Collection of guitars, Barber says: “I think Breedlove has been good at communicating the issues — while not being afraid of occasionally crossing swords a bit with other people in the industry. That can come with the territory. When it comes to business, people can be friends, but they’re competitors, too, of course, often with different perspectives on greening the industry.”

Barber’s parents owned and operated the famed Music Inn venue in Lenox, Mass., during the 1950s, and he also worked there in the mid-’70s for a subsequent owner. So, he grew up hearing much of the same life-changing, border-blurring music as Tom Bedell. After all, the Music Inn was a magical place, where iconic musicians from Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez and John Lee Hooker to The Band, The Eagles, Bruce Springsteen and Bob Marley performed. And, like Bedell, Barber grew up to become a player, and lover, of guitars. As such, Barber is pleased that those who create acoustic guitars may be ready to play their part in preserving the world’s great forests.

“Guitar manufacturers can certainly help,” Barber insists. “The thing about the instruments is that they can punch above their weight when it comes to

the environment. They don’t represent a huge volume, but the acoustic guitar is a wood product that millions upon millions of people know. The added benefit with guitars is that you have the musicians who play them. They can be a very powerful ally. The flooring industry, for instance, doesn’t have thought-provoking advocates quite like that. I can’t think of many people who are going to stand up on a piece of flooring in front of an audience of 25,000 and make a beautiful sound with it!”



»» LEARN ABOUT WRI

## The Future of Sustainability Looks Brighter Than Ever



Acoustic guitars have never been more popular, and with so many eco-minded young players picking up acoustics, prospects have never been better for guitar manufacturing to incorporate environmentally sustainable methods

In 2018, a Gallup analysis determined that there is “a global-warming age gap.” For instance, 70 percent of adults age 18 to 34 say they worry about global warming compared to 56 percent of those age 55 or older. In other words, it is young people who care most about the environment.

Inevitably, these environmentally conscious values are influencing virtually every industry this new generation touches — including the guitar business, which has been blessed by a wave of new, young players during the global pandemic. Bradley Johnson, Guitar Center’s Director of Merchandising, Acoustic Instruments & Guitar Accessories,

says this demographic’s influence is

single-handedly reshaping the values of the guitar industry — a fact that Johnson, who has worked at Guitar Center for 22 years, would know well.

“This is the biggest guitar boom in modern history,” Johnson says. “From my vantage point, there are no signs of it slowing. I know that so many young players feel strongly about sustainability. There is a growing number of consumers who believe sustainability is critical, and they’re expressing that in what they buy.”

As a result, Johnson — who follows the latest trends in the musical instrument industry and often collaborates with manufacturers to bring compelling, high-quality instruments to market — says Guitar Center has numerous consumers asking about the environmental sustainability and responsibly sourced woods of the acoustic guitars it sells. And that’s just the sort of push the members of the industry need to focus on becoming better global citizens.

“I think our industry is beginning to better comprehend the need for responsible wood sourcing and increasing its commitment to sustainability,” Johnson says. “There are certain manufacturers out there, Breedlove included, that are leading the way and absolutely take it seriously. But there are many other manufacturers just beginning to recognize the need for responsibly managing the entire chain of custody, from where their wood resources are grown to how they’re being cut and all the steps in between. The industry is taking strides, but we still have a long way to go.”

Johnson notes that the influx of young, eco-minded guitar enthusiasts will surely speed up the process toward sustainability. After all, the industry’s first job is to serve the customers — including their values beyond music. That’s why Guitar Center loves to work with brands like Breedlove: Both sustainability and quality are at the forefront, with a younger generation of guitarists in mind.

“I can see within the numbers that interest grows when sustainability is part of the equation,” Johnson explains. “You can see that with Breedlove’s Organic Collection, for instance. It has been successful because of the message behind it, what that name represents. Plus, for \$600 to \$800, customers are getting a killer instrument that has a story behind it.”

Johnson sees sustainability and eco-friendliness only growing in importance, with brands across the industry needing to square up with their environmental impact sooner or later. “My kids are millennials and Gen Z, and I happen to know that they absolutely do care about the environment and sustainability,” he says. “And that’s not an isolated thing. They hang around people who also share those values and concerns. So, I think that as the younger generation consumes guitars and guitar-related products, this is only going to become more and more of an issue in the industry.”

That said, Johnson insists that he’s not for calling out folks who haven’t yet broached this issue within their companies. The message he wants to get across is that it’s never too late to start considering the impact of your company on the future of the planet: “Even if you haven’t started an environmental initiative yet, it’s not too late — just start, soon. We need to do our best to spread the message that environmentalism is good for the planet and for humanity — which, by the way, includes all of us in the guitar industry.”

# 6-STRING RECYCLING

D'ADDARIO'S STRING RECYCLING PROGRAM AIMS TO KEEP THE INDUSTRY BAR HIGH, WASTE LOW

Ever since it was founded 30 years ago, Breedlove Guitars has kept fine-tuning the company's efforts to protect the planet as it crafts premium instruments. Breedlove has not only developed innovative luthier technology; it has nurtured strategic partnerships along the way with brands that share our respect for the environment.

A shining example of Breedlove's tireless effort toward creating both sustainable and sonically superior acoustic guitars is the new Eco Collection, which incorporates our sustainable Eco Tonewood laminate technology — and features strings exclusively supplied by D'Addario. Breedlove chose to use D'Addario strings for this new line of instruments not only because of their superior sound and quality, but also because the string-maker's values are complementary with ours, with D'Addario leading the string industry in sustainability practices. Its Playback program is an uncommon initiative for recycling mixed-metal guitar strings, which helps reduce the 1.5 million pounds of waste strings that have ended up in landfills yearly.

Brian Vance, Vice President of Fretted Strings and Accessories at D'Addario, says that the company started this ground-breaking program about six years ago as part of an ongoing effort to reduce the environmental impact of the approximately 14 million sets of strings it makes annually. Even before Playback, D'Addario aimed to be greener by redesigning its packaging to eliminate the six individual paper envelopes typically used to identify and protect each string inside the package.





"We came up with a way to put all the strings together in one bag, and then that bag itself is recyclable and acts as a corrosion inhibitor," Vance explains. "So, it protects the strings better, but then each string has a colored ball on the end that becomes the code to identify which string is which. By eliminating all that paper, we've saved a lot of trees over the past 30 years."

Vance estimates that about half of the strings produced in the industry now incorporate this colored-ball method for packaging strings, evidence that D'Addario's initiative to protect the environment has influenced the entire industry. Such success helped motivate the company to take its environmentalism further with Playback.

"Playback is a unique program because you were never able to just take your old guitar strings and put them in a recycling bin," Vance says. "Strings are made of so many different types of metals and each one of those metals is completely different in terms of its reusability and recyclability. So, unless you were going to physically unravel a string and take it apart and then put all the individual components in separate bins, guitar strings have traditionally been unrecyclable, basically."

But D'Addario found a company willing to put in the labor to make recycling guitar strings a reality: TerraCycle, a New Jersey-based company that's "on a mission to eliminate the idea of waste" by creating and implementing recycling programs for companies whose waste can't be processed at the usual municipal recycling facilities. "They're a fantastic organization," Vance says. "Their mission is to help companies or even whole industries either upcycle or recycle materials that had traditionally ended up in a landfill."

From there, D'Addario began to offer an incentive to their dealers and customers to use Playback by making it easy, free and rewarding. All a consumer or dealer has to do to recycle their old strings is collect at least two pounds of them, pack them however they like, and then print a mailing label off the website for D'Addario's Players Circle, a free loyalty program for consumers, for shipping to TerraCycle. (There's also a map on the Playback site so you can see if there's a Playback collection location near you.)

Once TerraCycle receives the old strings, D'Addario gives a Players Circle customer points that can eventually be redeemed for new sets of strings or other merchandise. "It's similar to an American Express or Starbucks rewards program," Vance says. "The more strings you buy from us, the more you can save up points. Then you can get free products with the points."

The ease of the program seems to be working. So far, Playback has recycled six million strings in the U.S., with a goal of reaching eight million by the end of this year. "It costs us money, but if you want to do something that you believe in, sometimes you just have to pay for it," Vance says. "Organic food costs more, but people who are into that are willing to spend more money. We're the biggest string manufacturer in the world. And if you're a big company in a small industry, you have a responsibility to set the guidelines and standards for the rest of the business. It's our

responsibility to do what's right."

To that end, D'Addario has made Playback available to the entire industry, with the program accepting strings from any brand (including nylon and orchestral strings). The company has even partnered with one of its competitors, Martin Guitar Strings, to broaden the program's impact. "Martin had similar goals, so we invited them to partner with us," Vance explains. "They use the logos from our displays, and they support Playback on their website. I think it would be really cool if all the major brands had that logo on display someday. Because if you get the whole industry doing this, that's how we're really going to get critical mass for recycling strings and doing the right thing for the environment."

To learn more about how you can recycle your guitar strings as a dealer or customer, check out the Playback website.





## ECO COLLECTION LU'AU UKULELES

---

Beginner-friendly design makes the Discovery S Series—part of Breedlove's sustainable new ECO Collection—a perfect introduction to the world of music. A thinner neck profile with narrow nut width and radiused fretboard makes for ultra-easy play. A pinless Delta bridge makes string changing simple and fun. Carefully crafted with trademark Breedlove sound DNA, these instruments, featuring earthconscious, sonically superior EcoTonewood technology, sound like guitars costing three times the price. Welcome to the family!

»» [VIEW SERIES ONLINE](#)



# Breedlove

MAGAZINE

