



Hordes of handcrafted instruments blew us away at the Montreal Guitar Show. Pictured here is an array of Kauer Daylighters built by luthier Doug Kauer. The guitars feature carved tops, set necks, and a 24.75" scale length. Photo by Joe Coffey

## FEATURES

### 78 Paul Gilbert

Long dogged and annoyed by the "shred" epithet, Paul Gilbert uses engrained jangle-pop sensibilities, deft tone selection, and jaw-dropping licks to prove he can't be pigeonholed—even on an all-instrumental album like his new *Fuzz Universe*.

### 99 Builder Profile: Sand Guitars

Kirk Sand designed Chet Atkins' go-to acoustic/electric nylon-string, as well as guitars for notables like Lenny Breau, Tommy Emmanuel, Jerry Reed, Steve Wariner, and José Feliciano.

### 107 Zen Guitar for the 22nd Century . . . and Beyond

Four tradition-flouting guitarists—Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo, Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Nick Zinner, and Rangda's Sir Richard Bishop and Ben Chasny—offer tips on how to take your playing into the future by freeing your mind, hands, and 6-string from the confines of orthodox guitarisms.

### 118 Crossroads Guitar Festival 2010

*Premier Guitar* braves record-breaking temperatures to take you inside the year's hottest guitar gathering—which featured performances by Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Buddy Guy, John Mayer, Ron Wood, Derek Trucks, and other guitar greats.

### 137 Builder Profile: EMG

As the active-pickup maker celebrates 35 years of business, we take a look at how their groundbreaking products have affected music in the hands of players like Eddie Van Halen, Metallica's Kirk Hammett and James Hetfield, David Gilmour, and Peter Frampton.

### 142 Montreal Guitar Show

Your trusty contingent of *PG* tonehounds travels to the boutique guitar extravaganza to sniff out the latest intriguing and lust-worthy axes from this invitation-only show.

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# MONTREAL GUITAR SHOW

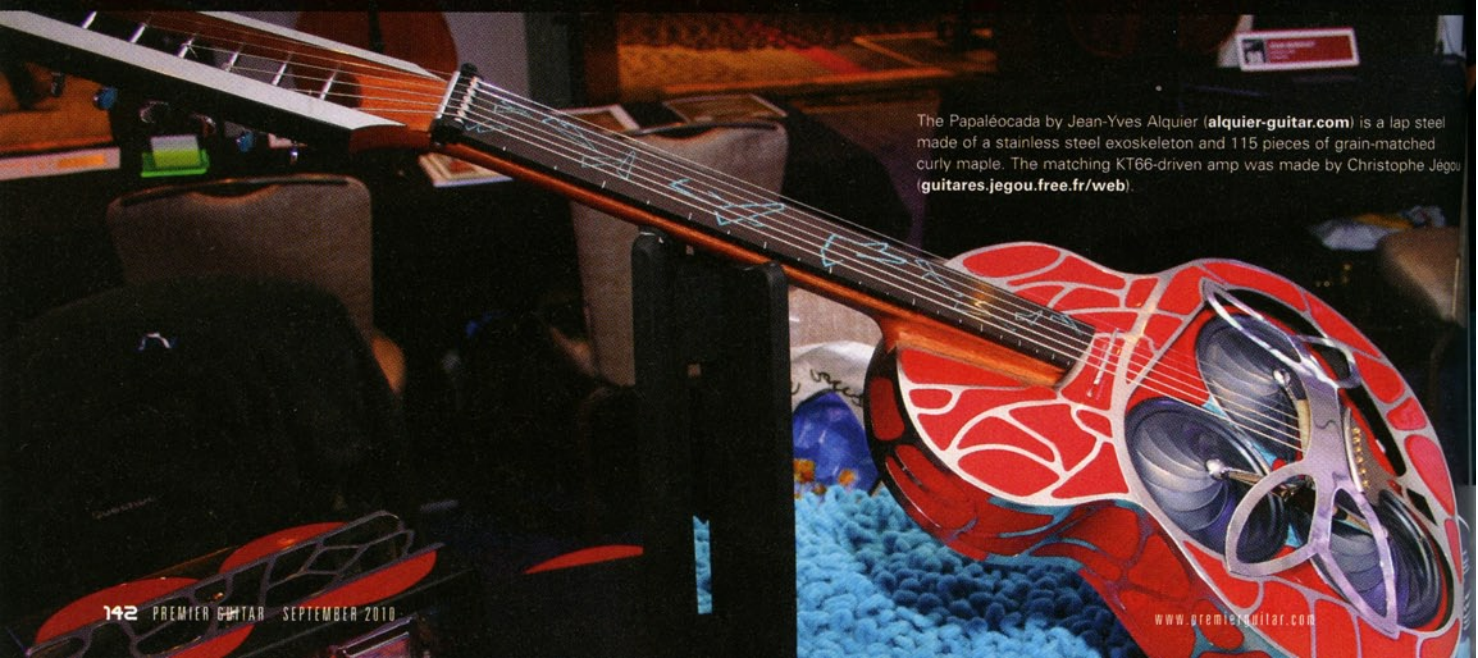
BY JOE COFFEY, ANDY ELLIS, AND LIANA PRUDENCIO

**T**he best guitar makers in the world can walk down the street unnoticed. In some cases, they are unknown even to the faithful who play their instruments. Heck, the word "luthier" isn't even in most dictionaries. This is fitting, actually. Most luthiers are happy to fly under the radar and quietly work on their craft. Avoiding the spotlight seems to be part of the job description. You might have a different opinion, however, after taking a stroll across the Montreal Guitar Show floor.

The MGS is like an all-star game for luthiers. More than 130 of the best guitar makers in the world were at the fourth iteration of the event showing off their stuff, sharing their design philosophies, and soaking up a high level of appreciation from A-list artists, fellow gear makers, and fans of stringed instruments. Some of the luthiers' reputations preceded them. Some were relative newcomers whose innovative work got them an invitation to exhibit.

For attendees in the market for a handcrafted instrument as well as those just curious to see and hear some cool stuff, the MGS was the proverbial candy store for wide-eyed, eager kids. More than 60 mini concerts took place, pairing notable musicians with guitars right off the show floor. There were workshops. There were lectures. Oh, and the world-famous Montreal Jazz Festival was going on right outside the door.

It's impossible to crystallize the event in a few magazine pages, but here's a taste of what we encountered this year. Be sure to go to [premierguitar.com](http://premierguitar.com) to see a larger photo gallery and videos of the mini concerts.



The Papalécocada by Jean-Yves Alquier ([alquier-guitar.com](http://alquier-guitar.com)) is a lap steel made of a stainless steel exoskeleton and 115 pieces of grain-matched curly maple. The matching KT66-driven amp was made by Christophe Jégou ([guitares.jegou.free.fr/web](http://guitares.jegou.free.fr/web)).



Michael McCarthy specializes in acoustic archtops that he builds using a CNC machine to carve self-bracing tops. [mccarthystringedinstruments.com](http://mccarthystringedinstruments.com)



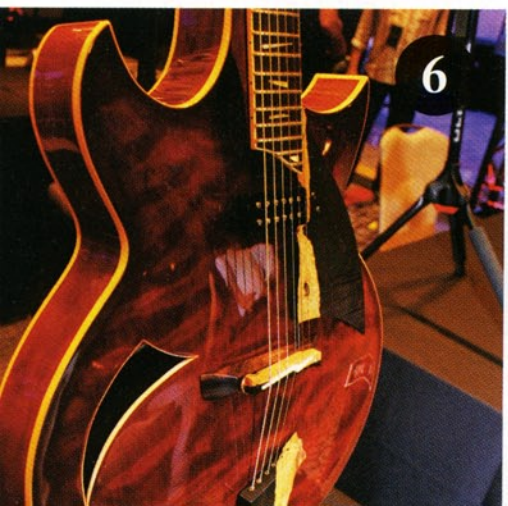
Prairiewood Guitars' Midwesterner (left) features a butternut body, while the Hardtop (right) has an Eastern maple body. [prairiewoodguitars.com](http://prairiewoodguitars.com)



Ken Bonfield demonstrates Alan Carruth's latest creation, a harp guitar with a separate soundboard for the bass strings. Carruth built it as part of a competition in which luthiers create instruments from materials that cost less than \$100. [alcarruthluthier.com](http://alcarruthluthier.com)



Tom Ribbecke's fan-fret Halfing is so-named because it combines a bass side that's flat like a steel-string acoustic with a treble side that's carved like an archtop. [ribbecke.com](http://ribbecke.com) ►►





The Cherry Seven guitars by (left to right): Randy Muth ([rsmuthguitars.com](http://rsmuthguitars.com)), Joseph Hart ([hartguitars.ca](http://hartguitars.ca)), Jeremy Anderson ([legatolutherie.com](http://legatolutherie.com)), Marc Saumier (archtop, [saumierguitars.com](http://saumierguitars.com)), Alan Carruth ([alcarruthluthier.com](http://alcarruthluthier.com)), Marc Saumier (classical), and Joshua House ([houseguitars.com](http://houseguitars.com)).

In 2009, Marc Saumier, a Canadian luthier who builds guitars exclusively from woods he cuts in nearby forests in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, had a bold idea: invite a group of luthiers to each build an instrument using wood from the same trees. In addition to Saumier, five other luthiers took part in the project—Randy Muth, Joshua House, Alan Carruth, Jeremy Anderson, and Joseph Hart. These six builders created seven instruments (Saumier contributed two) from red spruce, black cherry, and Eastern hop hornbeam that Saumier sawed himself and provided to his fellow builders. Because each guitar features a cherrywood back and sides, the endeavor quickly became known as the Cherry Seven Project.

Exhibited as a collection at this year's show, the seven guitars attracted a lot of attention for their sonic appeal and visual beauty. Though the woods used in these acoustics came from the same logs, each guitar emerged from its respective workshop with a unique look and sound, proving it's a luthier's hands—not the materials he uses—that ultimately determines an instrument's character.

With his Cherry Seven Project, Saumier wanted to prove a point. "I make my instruments entirely from local woods, including cherry, maple, butternut, red spruce, hornbeam, poplar, basswood, blue beech, Eastern hemlock, Eastern white cedar, willow, and apple," he said. "Though our native hardwoods are not as dense as some of the more exotic woods from the rain forests of Africa, it is certainly possible to make master-grade instruments from local materials."

**Opposite Page:** 1. C.P. Thornton's HTL model honors the classic Fender Strat but features a 4.5-degree neck angle meant to make the 25"-scale guitar immediately comfortable for players used to a Les Paul. [cpthorntonguitars.com](http://cpthorntonguitars.com) 2. Edward Klein has developed a reputation for bringing head-turning designs to Montreal every year. This year he brought two guitars with metal sides that were bolted to the top and back. [edwardkleinguitars.com](http://edwardkleinguitars.com) 3. Michael Potvin's Mercury GT features a black-walnut body with a maple top, while the Rancho Grande Thinline has a flamed, spalted maple top and back with a mahogany core. [potvinguitars.com](http://potvinguitars.com) 4. This custom archtop by Claudio Pagelli reflects his philosophy that "Jazz is not symmetrical." [pagelli.com](http://pagelli.com) 5. Kenji Sugita guitars are known for their small neck joints and elegant touches. [sugitakenji.com](http://sugitakenji.com) 6. Dimitri M. Tenev custom archtops feature a 25.5" scale length and Florentine or Venetian cutaways. [dmtguitars.com](http://dmtguitars.com) 7. These jazz guitars were built by Sigmund Johannessen, a senior luthier and instructor at the Summit School for Guitar Building and Repair. [summitguitars.com](http://summitguitars.com) 8. Dean Campbell made this UK-1 for Dave "Fuze" Fiuczynski of the Screaming Headless Torsos and the Jack DeJohnette Group. [campbellamerican.com](http://campbellamerican.com) ▶▶▶

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