



"IF I OFFERED COLORED FINISHES, SOUND PORTS, AND EXTRA-FANCY INLAYS, I WOULD NOT BE AS PRODUCTIVE AS I AM."

GOODALL GUITARS

IN 2009, AFTER spending 16 years in Kailua Kona, James Goodall moved his workshop from Hawaii back to Fort Bragg, California, where he had built guitars from 1984 through 1992. His decamping from the idyllic locale surprised the cognoscenti, but what really got people talking was Goodall's decision to scale back from a 13-employee company that shipped 10 instruments a week to a three-person operation, with his son Luke helping to build guitars and his wife, Jean, handling shipping, bookkeeping, and other managerial responsibilities.

"As an artist, I am inspired more here in Northern California than I was in Hawaii," Goodall says. "For some reason I am drawn to the rugged coastline and the muted grey colors. This equates to our understated approach to guitar building."

"Understated" is certainly one way to describe Goodall's guitars, although traditional is a suitable adjective as well. Unlike many custom shops and independent luthiers, Goodall refuses to decorate his instruments with excessive ornamentation, such as elaborate inlays and fancy finishes. He prefers, instead, to craft each instrument to sound its best.

"Some people think that the fancier a guitar looks, the better it is," he explains. "My guitars may not end up in a museum, but I think they're some of the best-sounding and best-playing instruments available. If I offered

colored finishes, sound ports, and extra-fancy inlays, I would not be as productive as I am. I prefer to make guitars that are refined and elegant and sound incredible."

While Goodall today produces a fraction of the output that he did with his Hawaii-based operation, the variety of his offerings remains impressive. He offers a choice of 10 body sizes, eight series (Aloha, Baritone, Classical, Crossover Nylon, Pacific, Royal Hawaiian, Standard, and Traditional), and a selection of 30 tonewoods, with 12 choices of top woods. All Goodall guitars are finished with catalyzed urethane, which he says offers a significant improvement in resonance compared to polyester

finishes, and unlike nitrocellulose does not degrade.

"All of the woods we use are very rare, precious, and expensive," Goodall says. "We treat each instrument as if it were equally special, no matter what wood it is constructed from, whether it's an Aloha model or a guitar made from our finest master-grade tonewoods. We craft each top differently depending on its stiffness, weight, and species. If a top is a little heavier or denser, we'll work with it to make it thinner. There's an orchestration of thousands of tiny details we go through and adjust to a great degree to make sure each guitar has our signature sound."



ANNUAL PRODUCTION
90 GUITARS

STARTING PRICE
\$5,200

AVERAGE PRICE
\$6,000 TO \$7,000

NOTABLE PLAYERS
ALEX DE GRASSI, KEB' MO',
SEAL, AND DOUG SMITH

Goodallguitars.com

