

Creating Instruments for Worship

James Goodall,
Guitar Maker

by Tom Krauter

"... and 4,000 were praising the Lord with instruments which David made for giving praise."

(I Chronicles 23:5)

Isn't this a fascinating concept? David designed and built instruments for the specific purpose of praising the Lord. They were to be used for no other function except glorifying God. Certainly any instrument, regardless of its origin, can be consecrated unto the Lord for His purposes. But to start with the basic raw materials and build an instrument especially for giving glory unto the Living God... there seems to be a qualitative difference.

Fortunately, this idea wasn't just for David's time. All through the ages there are examples of people building instruments for the express purpose of glorifying the Lord. Even today, in late-twentieth century America, there is at least one man with whom we are familiar who builds instruments with this concept in mind: James Goodall.

How It Began

James is a self-taught guitar luthier. After he became a Christian he began to see the importance of music and worship in the church. Because of this, James would consistently and fervently pray for those involved in this ministry at the church he attended. James feels that it was due to his love for worship and his commitment to praying for his church's musicians that he woke up one morning in 1972 with an obsession to make and play a musical instrument. Living in San Diego as a professional seascape artist, James traded one of his oil paintings for the wood to make his first guitar. That was 19 years and over 400 guitars ago.

Goodall guitars have been acclaimed by *Frets Magazine* (a secular

guitar magazine) as having "exceptional balance and clarity." They spoke very highly (in three different write-ups) of his attention to detail and of one of Goodall's guitars they stated that it was "one of the most playable instruments we have tested all year."

Attention to Detail

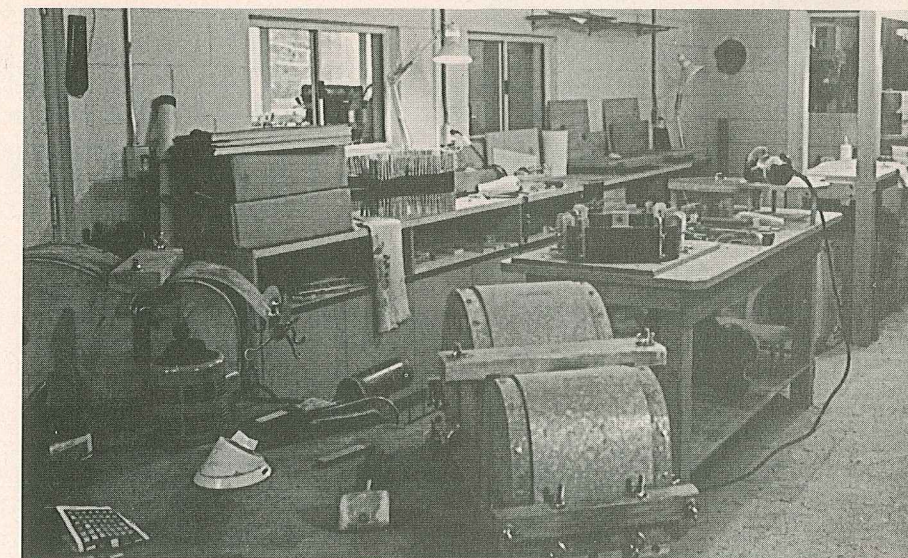
Frets' statements about his attention to detail are certainly accurate. James builds twelve guitars at a time (48 per year) and takes as long as two weeks just to choose and match the wood. He carefully color coordinates the spruce tops to the sides of rosewood, maple or koa. Then he carefully matches the abalone inlay and makes and "mirror matches" all the binding and purfling strips. James says, "I expend great effort creating every guitar as an aesthetic work of art." In fact, James does everything in-house from sharpening saw blades to skin diving for abalone shells!

James Goodall met the Lord in 1969 after being invited to a youth meeting. He had been fully involved in the worldliness of the southern California culture in which he lived at the time. Although he was a bit uncertain about going to the meeting, he there found a realness both in God and the people which he had not experienced before. He was born-again at the meeting and was baptized in the Holy Spirit soon after.

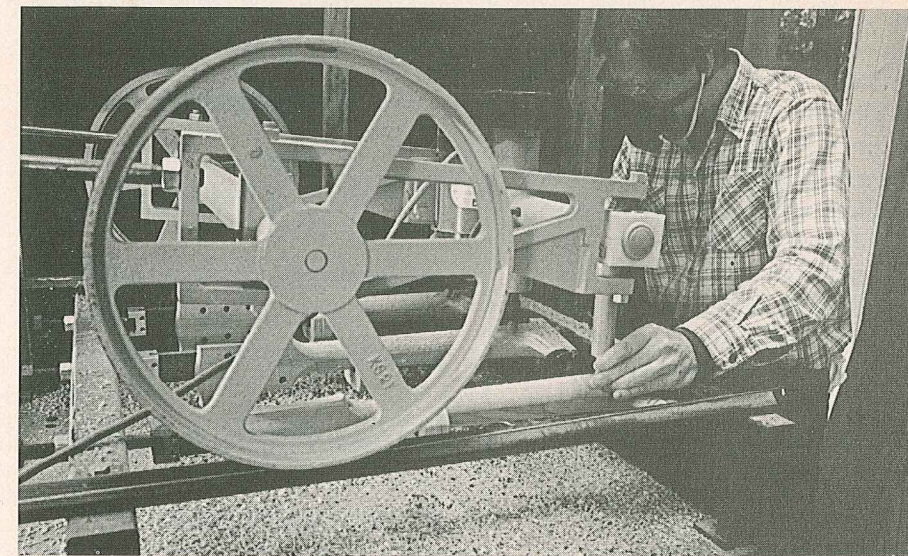
A Heart Toward Worship

One of James' deepest desires is to build his instruments for those involved in the ministry of praise and worship. Being a part of the worship team at his church, he understands not only the musical instrument function, but the heart attitude as well. He agrees that there really is some sort of intangible difference in using an instrument which was designed and built for God's glory. "If I didn't believe that I would probably have to stop making guitars. I feel that having the mind of Christ will affect all that I do in my creating musical instru-

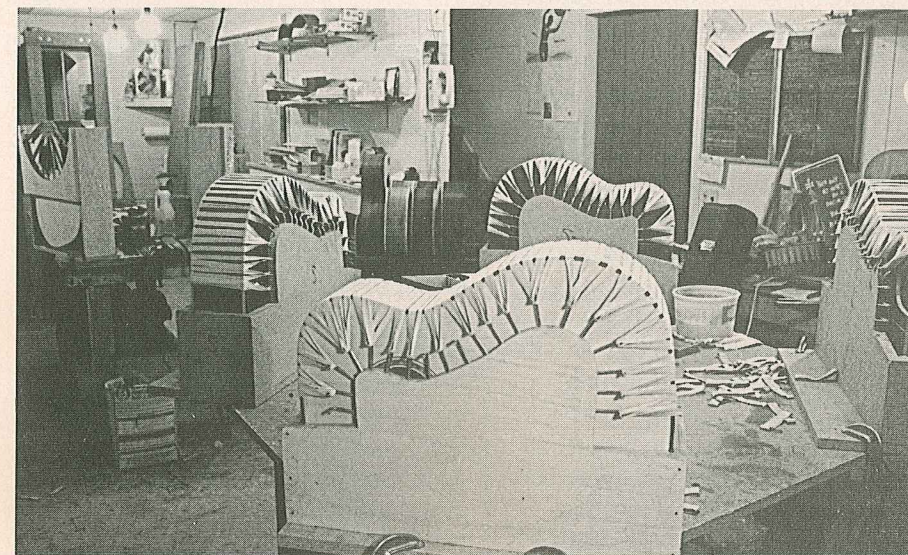
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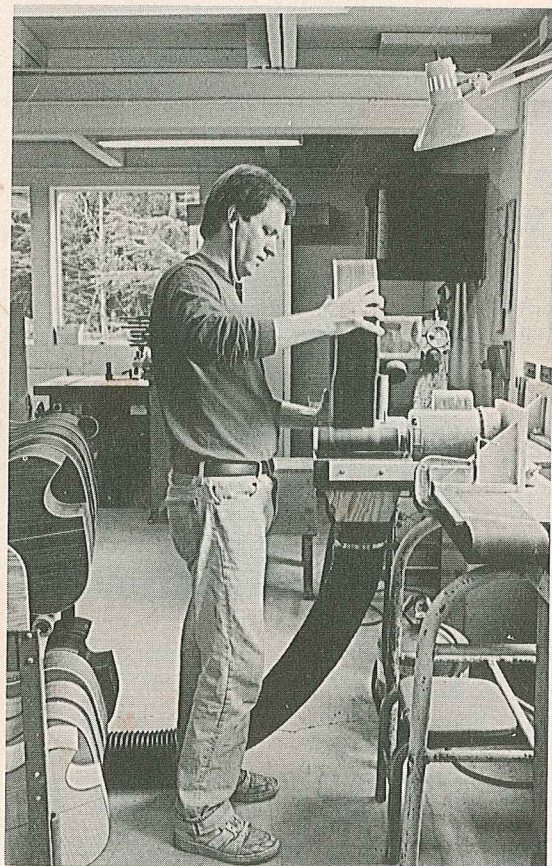
This is the room where most of the gluing is done. "Electric side benders" which James built for bending the wood to make the sides of the guitars are in the foreground.



Pattern carving machine rough carves the "heel" and peg head "ears" on two necks at once. The template is in the foreground.



Several guitars being glued simultaneously in specially designed gluing jigs.



James sanding the sides of a guitar using an airbag sander which he built.



This is the gluing area showing some of the tools and jigs James uses as well as a few guitars in various states of completion.



James built this specialized tool for sanding the tops and backs of the guitars. Over the years he has made a number of sanding machines.



The dehumidifying room. The guitar pieces are kept here before and after gluing. The humidity is a constant 34%.



This is the milling area of the shop where all of the larger machines are kept.

(cont'd from page 13)
ments, especially toward the final end of using them for worship. I am convinced that if someone is using one of my guitars for God's glory there could come a greater creative anointing. I pray for that to happen all through the building process."

Although James' full-time vocation is building guitars, he does not really consider himself a guitarist. He actually is a concert flutist and has built two silver flutes for his own use, as well as many woodwinds and stringed instruments including recorders, oboes and dulcimers. His personal instrument however, is something which the Lord gave him the vision for: a 12-string "dulcitar." A cross between a dulcimer and a guitar, it has a lower, more mellow tone than a guitar and is played in the lap like a dulcimer. Because this is a one-of-a-kind instrument, James had to teach himself how to play it. Now he uses it during worship on a regular basis.

James Goodall is in many respects carrying on the tradition

started by David a few thousand years ago: building instruments of

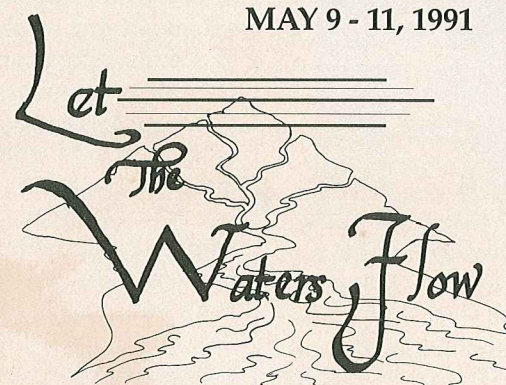
worship to be used by God's people to glorify Him. ♦



James Goodall holding his favorite instrument which he has built, a "dulcitar." It is a cross between a dulcimer and a guitar with a lower, more mellow tone.

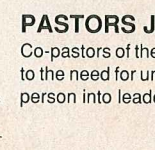
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