

BOUTIQUE ACOUSTICS: 180 Years Of Handbuilt American Guitars

One definition of 'boutique' is 'a business that serves a sophisticated or specialised clientele.' In the realm of custom built, one-off acoustic guitars that is a fairly fitting explanation! Author Michael John Simmons, has previously written: 'Taylor Guitars: 30 Years of a New American Classic' and co-authored 'Acoustic Guitar: An Historical Look at Composition, Construction and Evolution of One of the World's Most Beloved Instruments.'

In his latest book 'Boutique Acoustics: 180 Years of Handbuilt American Guitars,' Simmons transports us back to 1833 with C.F. Martin Sr. as the

first known American luthier. Large volume acoustic guitar manufacturers like C.F. Martin, Taylor and Gibson continue to dominate the buying landscape, but there are also musicians that seek a unique instrument that is handcrafted one at a time and in smaller quantities.

This book transitions through boutique builders and what brought them about like the gut-strung Austrian

classical guitar, the effect of Spanish luthiers, Hawaiian steel guitars and even Italian mandolins. Attention is given to harp and 12 string guitars, both of which are gaining again in popularity today.

Features that we consider common place like 'cutaways' are discussed as is the implementation of modern man-made materials like carbon fibre in the creation of instruments. Some obscure builders are recognised such as Max Krimmel, Gower and NBN, but so are current pioneers like Michael Gurian and the Santa Cruz Guitar Company.

The reference listing in the back of Simmons book delves into basics of body shapes and elements of construction, wood types (with explanations of tonal properties), bracing, and my favorite part a 'Selected Directory of American Luthiers' including addresses and phone numbers! Someone recently asked me why I don't make and build my own guitars and I explained that I prefer to play them than create guitars! But I'm also very thankful for the luthiers that do pursue this craft and provide us such incredible instruments to play and enjoy.

The pictures and images within 'Boutique Acoustics' are attention grabbing but the stories and explanations will keep you turning the pages to find out more. Thanks to Simon's past experience as a magazine editor for Acoustic

Guitar and his involvement with The Fretboard Journal and The Ukulele Occasional magazines he has a keen eye for layout and composition. I always find it fascinating that many of the innovations developed and created by small guitar builders are eventually adopted by major manufacturers once the public requests them.

Simmons does a great job paying homage to historical boutique builders and showing the fascinating future of the new batch of modern day luthiers. Whether you have a collection full of small builders guitars or you have always dreamed of owning and having one built to your specific features 'Boutique Acoustics: 180 Years of Handbuilt American Guitars' is a fun and informational read.

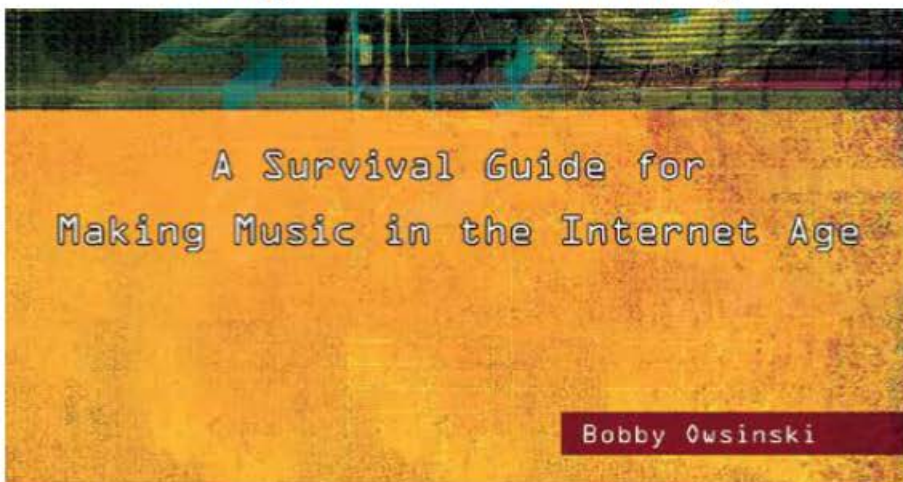
This is a book you will refer back to again and again on many points, just as you do your favourite acoustic guitar. The interviews with the luthiers is a plus as they are the artists behind the instruments that allow us to make music with the instruments they have created. There is something special about a one off guitar that is built specifically for you, how you play and how you want it to sound and to me the joy is that there will never be another made exactly like it. Boutique Acoustics definitely has inspired me to consider the acquisition of just one more acoustic guitar – watch out it may do the same for you? **Eric Dahl**

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BOUTIQUE ACOUSTICS: 180 Years Of Handbuilt American Guitars by Michael John Simmons, reviewed by Eric Dahl



MUSIC 4.0: A Survival Guide For Making Music In The Internet Age



How musicians create, record, market and distribute original music has changed drastically and will continue to change thanks to increased technology. Bobby Owsinski, bestselling author in the realm of self-help music industry books, has 23 tomes to his credit and Music 4.0 is an update to his popular Music 3.0 printed in 2011.

When you look back in history, many major artists were adept at writing and making music, but baffled by the business/marketing side of things. This is where bad things happen to good artists when

they relinquish control to record labels, managers or producers and have little in how their music provided to their fans.

Owsinski strives to demystify the new technology that now drives music and show artists the best paths to take like utilising YouTube as compared to a radio station relationship. I like how Bobby simplifies things but doesn't speak to us like we are illiterate either. My biggest take away from his book is that the artist/musician can no longer avoid involvement in the music business, but must now spend as much time managing the process as they do creating

music. Is it the fun part of music for most of us? NO, but if you have an expectation to have your music heard by more people and garner money from it Owsinski states, "Communication with the fan is now integral to an artists' success."

So even if you are the best musician it isn't enough and you can't expect music buying fans to know you have a new album or song out if you don't inform them! Bobby outlines full plans in the book for building your e-mail list, blogs (a must in this day and age), marketing with Facebook, Twitter methods, promoting with YouTube, and holistic

social media management.

Points like developing your brand and what will make fans like and want to gravitate to your brand are explained. Websites, although changing convey more of the social media elements, are still an important part of your total music package. Bobby even provides the reader with ten promotion ideas that could be adapted to any of the platforms.

In chapter nine he delves into a major artist issue and topic of conversation 'The New Distribution.' I frequently have this conversation with major and up-and-coming artists on the best way to send their music to their fans, and whether or not they should deliver it a song at a time or the entire album at once? Vinyl records, once considered a dying format, are now on the upswing with young music fans – but the question remains is that your best avenue?

Owsinski explains that even with all of the digital tools and methods at your disposal it still comes down to building your audience and fan base one live show at a time! The author has plenty of music knowledge and background to share on his own but he also enlisted top tier music industry personalities to provide their perspectives like Dae Bogan, Richard Feldman, Bruce Houghton, Ariel Hyatt, Gregory Markel, Rupert Perry and Dan Tsurif.

As an artist if you just read this book and apply a handful of the suggested messages you will be farther along than many of your friends that are musicians as well. Dreams and wishes are a great thing but without a plan and a strategy they may just remain in that form, Bobby Owsinski's book Music 4.0 may not only help you survive but thrive in the new internet age? *Eric Dahl*