



HOME GROWN HONEY

Win an amazing guitar at The London Guitar Show 2006! 5-6-7 May, Wembley Conference Centre

WIN AN EXCLUSIVE ORGANIC CLASSIC, SPECIALLY MADE FOR ONE LUCKY GUITAR BUYER READER, BY DUNCAN WALES OF ORGANIC GUITARS. DUNCAN AND GB'S TIM SLATER GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE INITIAL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION STAGES...



Every May since 2003, London has been the only real place for all you self-confessed guitar freaks to hang out, when THE LONDON GUITAR SHOW rolls into town. Now approaching its fourth year, LGS 2006 is going to be bigger and better than ever, with more guitars, amps, effects and amazing gear than you'd ever imagined was possible to see under one roof. We can't let the cat out of the bag just yet, but we're also expecting some very famous faces indeed to be making an appearance, so keep reading GB for further information as it comes in.

To celebrate this year's London Guitar Show, we've teamed up with Organic Guitars to create a specially-built Organic Classic electric guitar, that will be presented to one lucky GB reader at the Organic stand during the LGS weekend!

Organic Guitars is rapidly gaining a reputation as one of the finest custom-made electric guitar brands around, having attracted huge praise from players and the guitar press alike. Some of the best

guitarists in the country have caught the Organic bug big-time, and the LGS guitar is actually taking shape in the workshop alongside another custom Organic axe, ordered by Snail's Pace Slim of The Hamsters.

Every Organic guitar is hand finished and built using the best tone woods, including a resonant paduak body and neck with a hand-selected ebony fingerboard, and a bookmatched

flame maple top, chosen by Organic Guitars main man, Duncan Wales.

You'll find details of how to win this unique guitar later on, but because this is such an amazing prize, we've decided to follow the entire building process, from start to finish, over the next couple of issues of GB.

We travelled to Organic's workshop in the wilds of the Cambridgeshire Fens, where Duncan



Setting the wood: Duncan and mallet get down to it



Tap testing each individual piece makes for a highly resonant guitar

"PADUAK IS A FANTASTIC TONEWOOD – IF YOU TAP IT, YOU CAN HEAR THAT IT'S GOT A REAL RING TO IT"

Wales personally selected the woods and hardware, and explained in detail how he's creating the guitar. We'll be reviewing the finished axe in full before the presentation to the lucky winner at the LGS in May. For this first report, Duncan selects the timbers for the body, neck and fingerboard, and chooses a block of maple to be eventually transformed into a sumptuous-looking flame maple top.

TIMBERING UP
Duncan Wales takes us through the initial selection of wood for the body, neck and fingerboard.

"The main character of the guitar is the pickup, but everything else that's going on in the tone is down to the types of woods used. I've built different guitars that have been exactly the same shape and had the same pickups and hardware, but with different woods, and there's no doubt that they sound noticeably different."

The LGS competition guitar's body and neck are made from two separate pieces of paduak, which Duncan carefully selects by examining the grain, before striking the wood with a small hammer, listening carefully to the resulting resonance and 'ring' from the block of wood.

"Paduak is a very tactile wood, as well as looking very beautiful," he explains. "I love the striking open

grain, and although it looks bright orange when it's new, it eventually matures to a really rich red/brown. Paduak is a fantastic tonewood, and xylophone makers value the tone for the xylophone keys. If you tap it, you can hear that it's got a real ring to it." As he speaks, Duncan gives the wood another hefty tap, producing a loud clear note with a surprising amount of sustain for a simple block of as-yet un-worked timber.

"Another reason for tap testing is to check for any dead spots or cracks inside the wood, and, just like a plate that's got a crack in it, the timber will sound dead if there are any faults. This is a good piece of wood, with a nice tone. It's got to



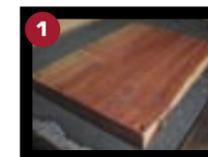
The fingerboard is checked for grain patterns: nothing is left to chance here

have a good resonant tone to it, and likewise the wood for the neck has the same quality. I don't tap-tune bodies and necks, because tap tuning is more important when making acoustic guitars than electric guitars. When I am matching the neck to the body it's more important that they are resonantly similar. Whenever I can, I try to make the neck and body from the same piece of wood, so that's not really an issue, but occasionally I have to match the body and neck from two different sources.

"I'm making sure that both pieces have a good resonant quality, that will translate into a beautiful 'woody' sounding instrument with plenty of natural sustain."

NECK & NECK
Organic necks are designed to enhance the guitar's tone, as well as its overall strength.

Like all Organic guitars, the LGS Custom has a glued-in one-piece Paduak neck, featuring Duncan's distinctive – and very strong – diagonal neck/body joint. The diagonal joint offers a wider surface area than a conventional square-on neck joint, and consequently allows room for more glue. An extra long tenon also bonds the neck tightly to the body, and even in its raw unglued state the Organic neck joint is incredibly strong – one of the strongest in the business. When Duncan picks up an unfinished guitar by the neck, supported only by an unglued neck tenon, the neck remains firmly fixed in place, with the tenon locked tightly in its socket adjacent to the neck pickup hole. "The piece that we've selected has a beautifully straight grain and we've



1 Woods for the body blanks are selected and cut

2 Top blanks are also selected for striking and unusual grain patterns

3 Organic's distinctive neck joint allows more glue to surface area for a much stronger joint

4 Duncan uses a curved former to join the top and body together



5 A template is laid over the bookmatched top, to line up the most effective grain patterns on the guitar's top

6 Duncan 'shoots' the edges, planing the wood to achieve a perfect match

7 After shooting, Duncan locks both sides of the top together before fitting it to the guitar's body

8 Matching top and headstock veneers in their raw state



This is how you begin the bookmatching process for a maple top...



...then once opened out, the top's template is carefully drawn up



The neck joint takes shape, each wood individually selected to be only the best

tap-tested it to make sure that it has a nice resonant tone," Duncan explains, while checking the neck's grain to make sure that the quarter-sawn grain is of the correct standard, avoiding any risk of the neck twisting or warping over time.

"The LGS Custom will have a 22-fret neck, because my guitars are designed so that the pickups are positioned in harmonically sensitive points," Duncan continues, "there's no real scientific approach, but after years of experimenting I found that this was the best place to put the pickups. The entire guitar is designed to be harmonically sympathetic from top to bottom."

CHAIRMAN OF THE 'BOARD

An important visual component, the guitar's fingerboard also plays a vital role in the overall tone.

Once the neck and body timbers are selected, Duncan then pulls out a long strip of Macassar ebony, and uses a template to line up the grain, judging how it will appear on the finished neck.

Macassar ebony has a fairly open grain, and a dark brown colour that looks closer to Brazilian or Indian rosewood than the jet-black, almost resin-like ebony more usually associated with ebony, and the LGS Custom's fingerboard duly has a particularly striking area where the grain starts to widen. Despite being just a small plank at this early stage, the beautiful grain structure quickly becomes evident after Duncan gives the wood a quick rubdown with a dab of white spirit.

Using the neck template as a guide, Duncan lines up the area of

"DUNCAN'S MASTERFUL CRAFT IS SECOND TO NONE — HAVE A LOOK AT WWW.ORGANICGUITARS.CO.UK"

figured ebony so that it corresponds to the area where the 12th fret will be on the finished guitar, looking carefully for any tell-tale imperfections in the timber as he does so.

"Different woods have different influences on the tone – very hard fingerboards give you a very bright, percussive tone. What we're looking for is a good straight grain, with no imperfections such as cracks. I personally select every piece of wood before this stage, and if there were any imperfections it wouldn't be in my workshop."

Organic fingerboards have a comfortable 16-inch radius, that

enables wide string bends and a comfortable, low action. Finished Organic 'boards have a distinctive long 'tongue', or overhang, at the end of the fretboard due to the neck pickup's strategic position. "I moved the fingerboard back slightly because I found that the tone was better there." Duncan concludes with a shrug.

DREAM TOPPING

Flame maple? Suits You, sir.

Choosing the top for the LGS Custom is a very pleasurable job indeed. Selecting a prime flame maple top for the guitar involves a method similar to choosing his

fingerboards, as Duncan closely examines several large blocks of figured maple, looking for interesting patterns in the wood, including small knots, that he can position at aesthetically pleasing points on the guitar's top.

The block is then cut straight through the middle with a band saw, whereby both halves literally open

out like the pages of a book, exposing a beautiful symmetrical grain structure that starts to resemble the classic flame top effect. Creating the correct bookmatched effect, with no visible joint between both sides, requires a technique called 'shooting' the edges, which means that Duncan planes the edges of both sides in

a jig, so that the edges are not only flat but also perfectly square. This results in two perfectly matched sides, that are glued together before being applied to the paduak body back. Duncan has an ingenious method of 'persuading' the flame top to follow the contours of the body, as he explains. "The top is only around 6mm thick, and is mainly for the aesthetic effect. I use a curved former, which clamps down and bends the top over the body. When the top is bookmatched and glued together, I bend the whole thing around the curve of the body so, rather than just having a straight line across where the join is, the join is curved with the whole guitar."

Whether you're the lucky winner or not, Duncan's masterful craft is second-to-none, and you could do worse than having a look at the whole range of options on their website by heading over to (www.organicguitars.co.uk). Like our feature, the website goes to great trouble to carefully outline each of the steps involved in creating each guitar, and has images of a number of finished products, each unique in design.

So make sure you come to The London Guitar Show for a chance to win. The comp will be open AT THE SHOW ONLY, and is totally free to enter!

We'll see you there! **GB**

■ MORE NEXT MONTH!



The London Guitar Show, 5-6-7 May 2006, Wembley Exhibition Centre. Be there to win one of these!

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WHAT'S IN IT & HOW TO WIN IT!

Next month we will be following the next phase of The London Guitar Show Organic Custom's construction, including finishing, fitting the hardware and setup. Tim Mills from Bare Knuckle has worked in tandem with Duncan, designing pickups that are exclusive to Organic Guitars, and he will explain his role in helping to create this very special guitar.

Duncan signs off with a promise to the eventual winner...

"This guitar is going to have fantastic sustain and a really resonant tone with lots of overtones. The bridge will be a Schaller Nashville tune-o-matic style, with through-body stringing. There'll be the Bare Knuckle pickups, Schaller back-locking tuners and Schaller strap locks. There'll be a lot going on in the sound, but it will be a very Organic – of

course! – woody-sounding guitar. We've developed the pickups with Tim Mills from Bare Knuckle Pickups specifically for these guitars, and the brief that Tim was given was that we wanted to hear the guitars rather than the pickups, so I wanted as transparent-sounding a pickup as possible."

Remember that in addition to the guitar, the prize will also include a hard-shell case, certificate of authenticity, Organic guitar strap and picks, and a specially engraved control plate inscribed with the winner's name and 'London Guitar Show 2006'.

TO WIN THIS FABULOUS GUITAR, HERE'S WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO

The prize guitar will be on display at The London Guitar Show 2006 (5-6-7 May, Wembley Exhibition Centre). The competition

will be offered ONLY AT THE SHOW, meaning only show visitors will be able to enter. So, simply fill out a form, available from Organic Guitars or the Guitar Buyer stand AT THE SHOW, and post it in one of the provided boxes. We will make the draw on Sunday afternoon at 4pm, and the lucky winner's phone will ring. More next month...



THE RULES

Entries accepted only at The London Guitar Show 2006. Entries must be completed in full and posted into a designated box no later than 3.45 on Sunday 7 May AT THE SHOW ONLY. The winner will be picked at random and will be notified immediately. If the winner is at the show, they can collect the guitar from Organic Guitars stand at The London Guitar Show. Employees of MB Media or Organic Guitars may not enter. There is no cash alternative, the editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. No multiple entries.