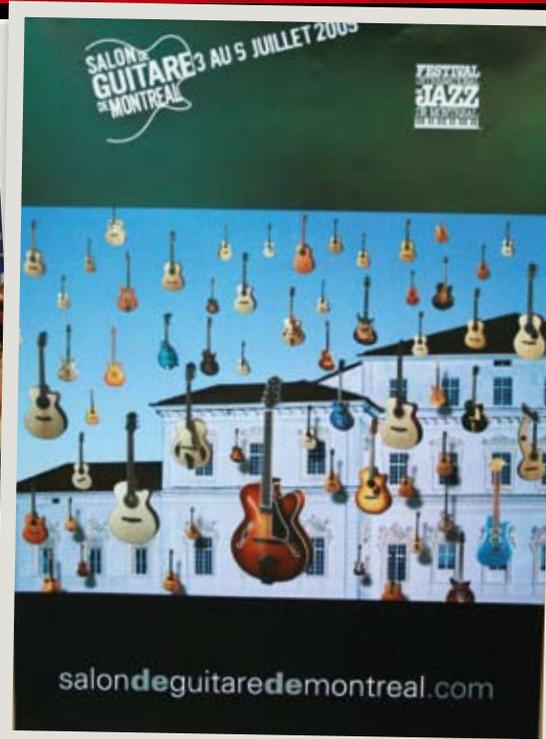


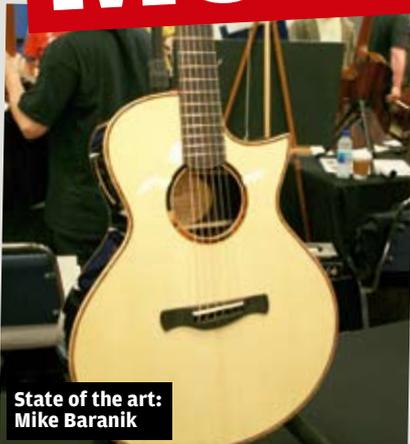
Woke Up This Mornin'... Show Report

You won't find any cut-price bargains in Montreal – but you will see some of the best and the most beautiful handmade guitars on the planet. Report by Rick Batey



Montreal

Guitar Show



State of the art:
Mike Baranik

Bigger, busier and better than ever before, the third Montreal guitar show was a guitar-spotter's paradise. Crammed with flat-tops, classics, archtops, gypsy jazz guitars and even electrics, it was everything you'd expect from a showcase of some of the world's best solo and small-shop luthiers. What nobody expected to see was a handful of designs so jaw-droppingly radical that even makers with 40

years' experience behind them were left scratching their chins in stupefaction.

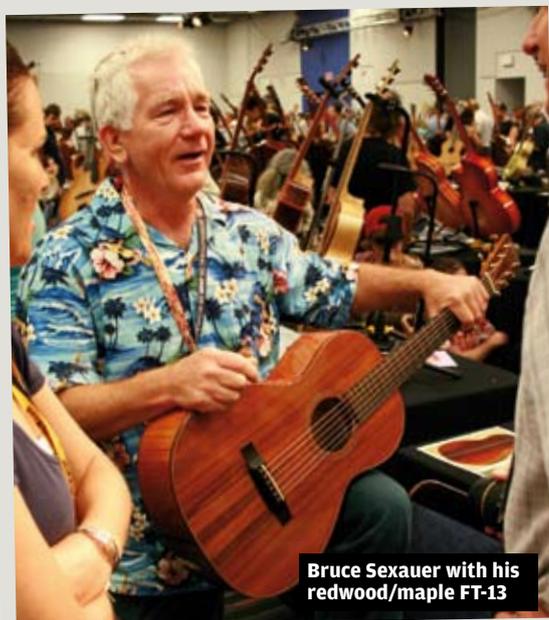
Take, for example, a guitar from the little-known Toronto luthier Edward Klein – a maple/spruce acoustic with fanned frets and two green ovals decorating the top. Those who moved in for a closer look discovered an instrument that blended art and craft to an incredibly developed degree by taking the concept of the ellipse



California's
Kathy Wingert



Michael Greenfield's
extreme fan-fretter



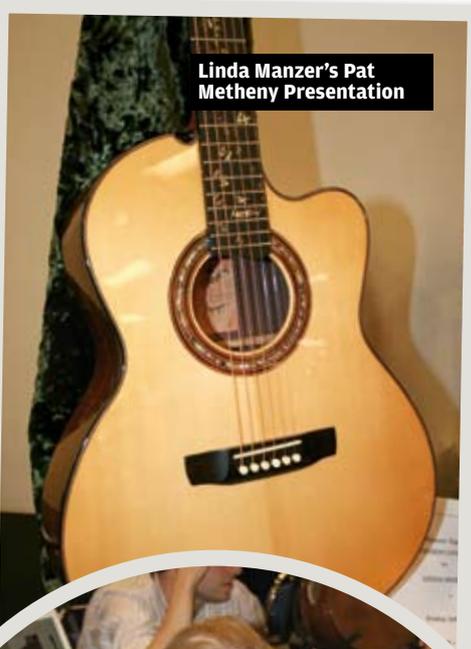
Bruce Sexauer with his
redwood/maple FT-13



Radical Schwartz guitar with drop-top and scalloped cutaway



Varnish-finished family by Laurent Brondel of Maine



Linda Manzer's Pat Metheny Presentation



Guitarist Muriel Anderson samples a de Jonge classical

through the design from start to finish, from body to headstock to bridge. It really was entirely new - and one of the stars of the show.

Another futuristic wonder came from Oakland's Michihiro Matsuda, a guitar notable not just for its extended dropped-D headstock but also for a v-shaped neck bracing that actually emerged from the inside of the box in the cutaway. Charles Fox, a radical-thinking maker whose Ergo guitars are picked by players like John Etheridge, thinks luthiers like Matsuda are showing the way forward. 'In the old days, guitar decoration was appliqué - added to the surface, if you like,' he points out. 'What we're beginning to see with this guitar and a few others are designs that are integral, that come from within. It's like the Pompidou Centre in Paris... you can see the works from the outside.'

The typical guitar at a show like Montreal is the 'modern fingerstyle' design: medium-

sized, strongly waisted, long-scale, made with exotic hardwoods and topped with fine spruce such as Engelmann, European or Adirondack, generally with a cutaway, and often the add-on du jour - an upper-bout soundport. It might be the flavour of the decade, but it's fascinating to see how each maker adds his or her particular spin. Mike Baranik's delicious cocobolo/blue spruce beauty was a stand-out, as were Marc Beneteau's 12- and 14-fretters and Judy Threet's delicate small guitars. Then there was Kathy Wingert's Gustav Klimt-inspired, beautifully inlaid African blackwood guitar; Paul Woolson's high-tech double-top 6- and 12-strings; Bryan Galloup's cutaway models; Michael Greenfield's attention-grabbing fan-fretters; William 'Grit'

Laskin's mind-boggling 'keyboard' neck inlay, paying tribute to Oscar Peterson; John Osthoff's strong mini jumbos; and Bruce Sexauer, who has an ability to do trad and modern with

SHOW STOPPERS

We've chosen five 'best of show' guitars from Montreal 2009 - two ground-breaking steel-strings, a traditional steel-string, one archtop and one electric... guitars that made us go 'sheesh!' more than any other, whether for their incredible designs or - what the heck - just because we just plain fell in love with them...



Art meets music in Edward Klein's ellipse-themed fan-fretted green guitar, built of maple and spruce



A flying brace on an Italian spruce/wenge model by Michihiro Matsuda, a real modern-day guitar pioneer

Credit Pierre-Luc Dufour

Show Report

Toronto's Sergei de Jonge with dread



An Ervin Somogyi guitar can fetch over \$25,000



'Official' D'Angelico built by Mike Lewis



Super-light electrics by Joseph Yanuziello



equal aplomb. One hidden gem was a guitar by Sheldon Schwartz, which rewrote the book on the forearm-cossetting bevel-edge feature by actually bending the top, with a result rather like a 'drop top' on an electric.

In the new electric room we saw the exotic-topped humbuckerisms of Germany's Nik Huber, Hungary's Fibenare and Finland's Juha Ruokangas, the high-class partscasters of Chiloe Hahn, and the Aussie timbers and bright colours of Allan Tomkins. Neat, too, were the LP Jr/T-style crossbreeds of Mike Potvin. But

our favourite electrics included a matching pair from Toronto's Joseph Yanuziello, sound-chambered for light weight with wickedly retro Harmony-style pickups made by Lindy Fralin, guitars which nailed the hard trick of being traditional *and* original. Our other pick was the Air Mail Special by France's Jean-Yves Alquier, a jaw-dropping '50s-inspired hollowbody tour de force in eye-aching red with auto-style aluminium binding, a single Charlie Christian and the appearance of being *sucked* rather than carved from wood. From the fearless concept to the tiniest detail of the handmade hardware, it was killer.

If your tastes are a little more old-school there was plenty to sample, such as the stylish varnish-finished range of Laurent Brondel, a koa OM by Rob Bustos and some super-nice flat-tops by Tony Duggan-Smith. Also there were some ➤



Stanley Jordan

SHOW STOPPERS



Our fave traditional flat-top: a Julius Borges OM in golden grain mahogany and red spruce. So simple, so right



John Monteleone's stunning Deco Vox, styled after the Chrysler Building with a 'New York skyline' sunburst



Straight out of the blue, the amazingly beautiful Air Mail Special hollow electric by Jean-Yves Alquier of France

Credit: Pierre-Luc Dufour

Woke Up This Mornin' ...
Show Report



Jeff Beck was the recipient of the first-ever Montreal Guitar Show tribute award



Tony Karol's Travel Twin with both guitar and baritone necks



Jerome Casanova's retro gramophone horn guitar

luthiers who have reached the next echelon in terms of both reputation and price. Linda Manzer showed the prototype of a 20-string series of Pat Metheny models, with the man's own doodles translated into pearl neck inlays... at \$32,000, a whole lot of wodge for an Indian rosewood guitar. Sergei de Jonge showed up - his tribe of children are already seizing his guitar-making baton - and California's Ervin Somogyi chose Montreal to display his insanely detailed 'Andamento' model inlaid with over 700 wood-mosaic tiles. Ervin also unveiled his long-awaited *The Responsive Guitar* book at a launch where Michael Watt from Brighton's Acoustic Music Company played a restored 1980 guitar.

In archtops there are few bigger names than John Monteleone, who showed an extraordinary D'Angelico/D'Aquisto-inspired teardrop model and an art deco oval-hole with

the most remarkable sunburst we've ever seen. Other great archtops included Peter Hopkins' minimalist designs, Ken Parker's futuristic model and Erich Solomon's retro oval-holes, all featured in *G&B 19/10*; Michael Lewis's richly detailed D'Angelico re-make, and a sweet Bambino mini jazzier from carver to the stars Robert Benedetto.

Light relief and innovations included a fun, funky six-string guit-jo from Lame Horse Instruments of Austin, Texas; a 'Travel Twin' guitar with swappable standard/baritone necks by Tony Karol; clever detachable-neck guitars by Brunner of Switzerland; newcomers Dagmar Guitars, whose archtops have sides laboriously built up of carved blocks; the futuristic electros of France's Fred Kopo; and Germany's Rolf Spuler, whose curvy guitars come with extended-D headstocks and clever electronics to

provide perfectly-tracking sub-bass low octaves on the bottom four strings.

With over 100 top-level guitar makers displaying their wares the Montreal show is fast approaching the status of California's Healdsburg, and every visitor agrees that it's the best-organised show around. Its home is the huge Palais De Congress, a couple of blocks from the hub of the Jazz Festival where, on the same weekend, you could catch gigs by everyone from Stanley Jordan to Monte Montgomery to Jeff Beck. The show even had room for a long row of playing booths so players could sample the guitars of their dreams in private, while three concert rooms played host to a never-ending array of demos, workshops and talks. You'll be shattered - but Montreal is a treat for the eyes, ears, brain and fingers. 



A pair of OM's by Gordy Bischoff of Wisconsin



A Dagmar rounded-edge guitar: why not



20-string harp guitar by Michel Pellerin