



Photo by Robert Corwin



Photo courtesy of Guild Custom Shop



Photo by Cindy Benedetto

**Left, Bob Benedetto tutors Guild Custom Shop Master Builder Evan Ellis in the intricacies of building the Benedetto archtop guitar. Center, Custom Shop Senior Builder Jon Kornau works on the finish of a Benedetto La Venezia. John and Evan will work closely with Bob to make Benedetto archtops available to more players by producing the guitars at the Guild Custom Shop in Nashville. Right, Benedetto and Joe Cabral of Guild's factory at Westerly, Rhode Island, measure the inside depth of a rough-carved Artist Award top.**

BB: While Guild was aware that these two models were great guitars, they were also aware that they needed refining. I can remember the earliest years of the Artist Award. I even recall restoring one when it was called the Johnny Smith Award. They looked and felt right. Yet, over the years, I watched and felt they were not advancing in the marketplace. The reason was obvious. While an occasional change in design was common enough, the guitars did not seem to be evolving. Fortunately, the workmanship at Guild has always been first-rate. That makes my job much easier. The Guild staff is already a fine group of dedicated artisans. I'm just going to help them fine-tune these already great instruments.

GG: *I understand a number of the existing Benedetto standard models will now be available exclusively through Guild's Custom Shop.*

BB: Yes. Most of the popular models, like the Manhattan, the "Benny" and a few others, are now going to be made there under my supervision. I'll also continue making guitars at my shop, but only one-of-a-kind custom instruments.

GG: *On most high-end archtops, spruce is used for the top and maple for the back, sides and neck. I know you have built a few instruments with rosewood, mahogany, etc. Do you have any plans to experiment with alternative wood sources for future projects with Guild or on your own?*

BB: Alternative woods are one of the things I hope to address. There's no doubt about traditional maple and spruce being the best choice on the traditional archtop. There are, however, a lot of new instrument designs bouncing around in my head. A completely new archtop design is where alternative woods would be a really good consideration.

GG: *Could you give us your opinion on built-in versus floating style pickups on carved archtops?*

BB: It really is a matter of personal preference. One is not necessarily better than the other. It just depends on what each individual player prefers. I've made several finely tuned acoustic archtops with one built-in pickup, and I'm usually surprised how good these guitars sound acoustically.

GG: *You are well-known for your 7-string archtop. Will that model also be offered at the Custom Shop?*

BB: Sure! The Custom Shop is a small group of really fine guitar makers. They cater to the niche market, something the large factories are not set up to do.

GG: *Besides the fact that Robert Benedetto is not actually making the guitars at the Custom Shop, will there be any structural, material or design differences between the Custom Shop Benedetto and the guitars that you make in your shop?*

BB: As far as the Custom Shop Benedetto guitar, you won't be able to tell the difference. I'll personally be doing the training, while maintaining close contact in terms of quality control. The guitars will be made and set-up exactly as I do it myself. And, as mentioned before, the guitars that I'll be making at my own shop will all be custom instruments. On those, I expect quite a few design changes.

GG: *What kind of vision do you have for your involvement with Guild?*

BB: A very clear one—Guild is going to become the leading manufacturer of archtop guitars. I don't say that lightly. It's a commitment.

GG: *What about the future of the Benedetto guitar?*

BB: The Benedetto name will likewise be brought to another level. This will be a real renaissance for both Guild and me. There's no limit to the possibilities.



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In addition to collaborating with Guild's Nashville builders, Benedetto's work with the craftsmen at Guild's factory in Westerly, Rhode Island (as described above) to refine the Stuart and Artist Award models expands Guild's offerings to the serious jazz guitar player. The three Benedetto models on pages 22–23 are currently available through the Guild Custom Shop. For more information, call the Guild Custom Shop at 615-742-9094 