

Electric Gypsy Guitars

The story of Electric Gypsy Guitars is in some ways typical, and in other ways unique. Founded in April, 2006, when Teye Wijterp, who earned a living playing guitar and touring with his wife, Belen, built a guitar for himself. The axe proved popular, as many who played it wanted one. But despite the fact they were happy being professional musicians, the Wijterps had other ambitions.

“We needed to get off the road in order to be able to start a family,” said Wijterp. “So guitar building seemed like a good option.”

Then, while visiting their record label in Nashville, the Wijterps showed Teye’s guitar to label head Evert Wilbrink, who was impressed enough with the concept to develop a business plan and track down funding for Teye to tool up and start building for a living.

“We decided on a name, which wasn’t that hard, considering my decades-long career playing flamenco guitar and living and traveling with the flamenco Gypsies from Spain,” said Teye.

Vintage Guitar: So, are you now up and running as a full-time guitar builder?

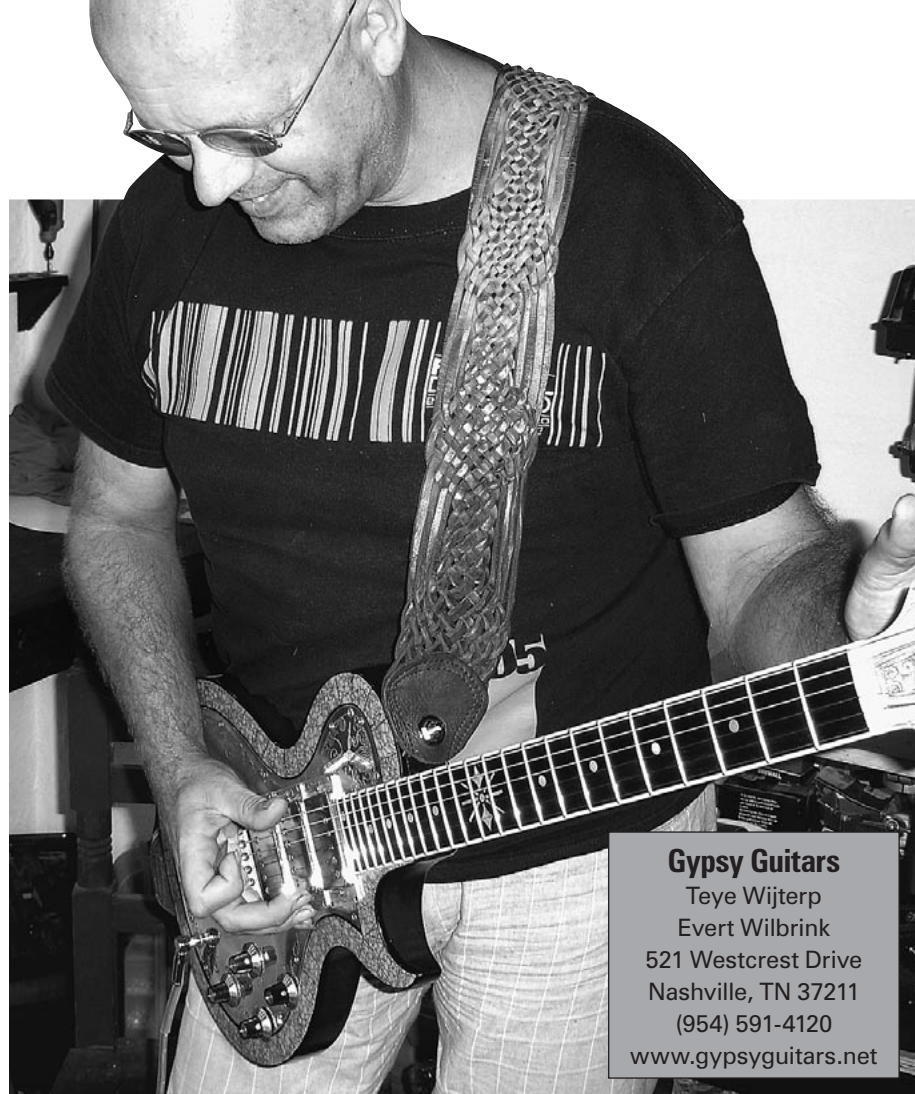
Teye Wijterp: Well, I still perform

regularly, but definitely, the emphasis for me is on building guitars. You cannot pursue a dream halfway. It sounds kind of strange, quitting a “day” job as a guitarist, but that’s how it is. After a quarter century of playing guitars professionally, I’m pursuing the dream of building them!

How many models are you building?

I have two that differ mostly in cosmetics; the La India has turquoise and silver aluminium trim on autumn-colored mahogany, and the La Mora, with black anodized front plate, ebony wood outline, and black-stained mahogany body. They’re both three-pickup Les Paul-shaped guitars with a more pronounced waistline, very elaborately adorned.

What do you think sets your guitars



Gypsy Guitars

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Teye Wijterp puts a new La India model through a bench test.

apart?

Well, in terms of electronics, they feature a unique concept of switching. Plus, the black version differs slightly in sound from the turquoise; the aluminium and the ebony contributes differently to the sound.

But more importantly, I’m trying to make *my own* dream guitar, one with which I can achieve all kinds of sounds within the scope of one song – one solo even – when a quick guitar change is out of the question. Efforts by other guitar makers in this direction have so far failed to please me, either because half the sounds were compromises or because of the complex switching.

I’m a very intuitive guitarist and need to focus on my playing, not on the dashboard. So I need all these sounds to be accessible very much on intuition.

On my guitars, all sounds have been treated with equal respect and perfected individually. Hidden behind a conventional knob setup – two volumes and a master tone – is a knob that controls the “mojo” or “mood,” and a rotary switch slanted on a lever. With it, there is no weird groping about, as with push/pull, miniature switches and things.

Onstage, you want a guitar to catch the attention and imagination of the audience, even before you start to play. But I consider myself, first and foremost, a *player*, so I construct for the player in me.

How many employees do you have?

Full-time employees are something for the future, perhaps, but several people help me with details. Brett Johnson is a machinist who makes the bridge and

tail blanks, Dick Dubois helps with the fretting, Mark Morgenlaender pre-cuts most of the aluminium parts, Phil Anderson and Jeff Turner do the anodizing, and sculptor Russ Thayer advises me on the finish.

And I install special Jason Lollar pickups, which contribute heavily to the quality of the instrument.

Any thoughts on what the future may hold for the boutique guitar industry?

Just like the current emphasis on quality instruments is basically a temporary resurgence of the music and instruments of the 1950s and ’60s, there probably is a wave ahead that will revive the obsession with synthesized sounds and MIDI, transistor-distorted guitars, and the 1980s. We can only hope that enough people got hooked on what can be done with wood and coils to have a continued interest in this high-end/high-priced guitar thing.

I’m just going to build guitars and think there will always be a market for quality.

What are your goals for your own company?

I hope to be able to streamline my production, without sacrificing quality, to the point where I’ll actually have some time for myself (laughs)! Also, I’d like to get some high-profile players to use my guitars in high-profile situations. So far, everybody who has tried my guitars likes them, so I do not have many worries for the immediate future.

My whole heart and passion are in the guitar, and I love what I do. People fall in love with the result. What more can you ask for? 🤘



The Electric Gypsy La Mora



The Electric Gypsy La India