

Teye's Story

Teye tells De Gitarist how his magnificent line of guitars came to be.

By Oscar Timans

A flamenco player from the town of Groningen who constructs electric guitars in Texas, what's the deal?

Teye: 'That's a long story, you got a minute?' (*laughs*) First, I played in bands: electric guitar, released a single, it was very nice. But my other passion was and remains the classical guitar, Spanish sounds, the flamenco! This passion of mine is older than that for rock 'n' roll. For flamenco, you need to visit the source, so: off to Spain! I was 'adopted artistically' by a Gypsy family in Cordoba. Then I met an American girl and followed her to the States. Where I established contact with Joe Ely. Joe offered me a job and arranged for my work permit. We wrote songs together and it went well. Later we recorded an entire CD. Then we went on tour. I lived in one of those big Airstream trailers in Austin.

When work with Ely became thin, I founded a flamenco group together with my wife: we've performed ten years with that. We were on tour constantly. In those years I never hung up the electric guitar. I always built my own gear: either because I had no money, or because existing guitars simply did not please me. Constructing was my hobby, the Spanish guitar my job. I carried my home-made electric with me on tour and showed it to the stores on the East Coast: Everybody reacted with enthusiasm! People offered me terrific amounts of money for that guitar. So I took a gamble, and started building guitars. Orders poured in immediately!

Many builders have experimented with materials other than wood, but without much (commercial) success....

'Man, I have an enormous wait list! I'm building six or seven guitars a month!'

The Mood-knob reminds me of a continuously variable coil-split...

'That's the knob you wished your wife had! How this works exactly is not so interesting, right? In the guitar, there's a coca-cola cap filled with epoxy, and all kinds of wires come out of it. This is my secret. It's very elaborate, it isn't a variable coil split, and it's passive.'

Zemaitis

Can you tell us about the Jason Lollar pickups you use?

'My first guitars were equipped with Seymour Duncans that I bought in the music store. There was one model that really worked well. That one wasn't available with chrome covers so I got the covers separate. I had to pot the pickups myself, and mount the covers. That was not 'the way'! Then I got to talk to Jason Lollar. He sent me a set, I mounted them, and the result was so musical, so deep, so wonderful!'

In comparison with other guitars, the neck is remarkably flat and wide...

'We can customize the neck according to the wishes of the owner. Standard, I construct the guitar in a way that I think plays great. It is my experience that 90% of people find my neck very comfortable after an hour's play. Alas, guitarists have become accustomed to necks that really don't play all that great, but that have become the norm.'

Taking into consideration the innovative character of your electronics, why did you choose for a look that may remind people of another brand?

'Ah! Zemaitis! When I hear that name, I always think of my friend the late Tony Zemaitis, and not of the current re-issue guitars. And a comparison with Tony is IMHO always a great compliment! To quote the dutch band Normaal: (*quote gets absolutely lost in translation*)

I use aluminum to achieve a certain tone and the engraving is then a logical solution to make it more beautiful. The engraving is totally inspired by Moorish culture. But quite frankly, it doesn't bother me that people compare my guitars to other brands: I simply construct the way that I find good, beautiful, and enjoyable!'

What's next?

'Too much to mention! I'm designing a tremolo system, and a tube amp that will sound great at any volume. And this way I have a great life, filled with pleasure!' (*laughs*)

Disclaimer: this is just a translation of the original article, without facts check or the correction of data.