



By Jim Basara - GJD

Another Winter NAMM show has come and gone. This year's show was bigger than ever, but the overall "wow" factor of the new products wasn't quite as great as the 2007 show. Once again, Nick gave you all a great feel for what it was like to attend the show, and I'm going to try to give you a feel for some of the more impressive products. There were lots of great candidates, but the award winners are those products that I really feel separated themselves from the competition.

In case you haven't read this series in the past, here are the award categories:

1. Best Guitars - Clearly the show covers a lot more than guitars, but we're focusing on what I thought were some of the best instruments of the show.
2. Best Products in a Supporting Role - These are some of the cool non-guitar products that I particularly liked.
3. Technology Awards - These are technological advances that I feel are innovative and have the potential to take the guitar industry in a new direction.
4. Best Innovations on an Existing Product or Design - These are new advancements or improvements to anything guitar related.
5. What Were They Thinking? - These are products that you have to wonder what the product manager or creator was thinking when they made the go-forward decision.



In today's article, I'm going to name some of the best guitars that I saw at the show. As always, this is the hardest category to select. There were some fantastic guitars at the show from all of the major manufacturers, as well as a large number of boutiques. This year, I tried to pick one standout in both the high-end and mid-tier guitar markets.

First up is the new Electric SolidBody guitar from [Taylor](#) . Some of you may remember the article from the 2007 Summer NAMM show, where we highlighted a yet-to-be announced guitar that we weren't permitted to talk about at that time. We later announced Taylor's limited launch of their new SolidBody venture, and some of you may have seen the guitars debuted by the band Sixwire on Fox's "The Next Great American Band"; Sixwire also played a set at Taylor's booth during the NAMM show.



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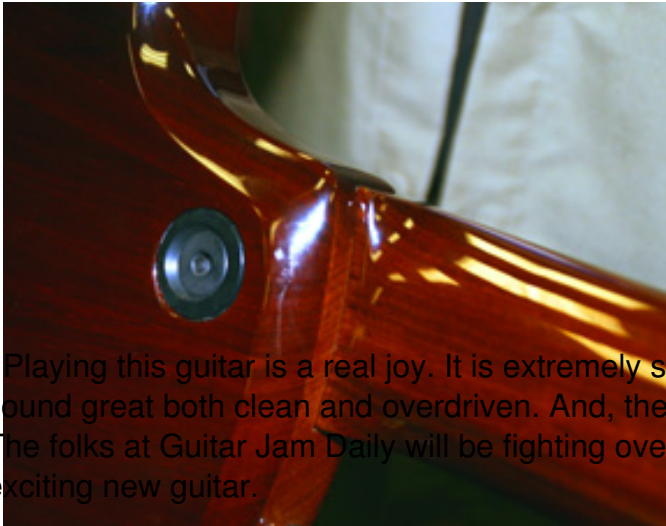
... electric lineup consists of... models: the Custom, the Standard, and the
... of the guitars share... features. According to Taylor's Andy Robinson,
... models were actually trig... new pickup design. Taylor was experimenting
... for the T5 and came up with... design that demanded a hardbody. The body style
is... outaway, but is thinner and light... a Les Paul. The Custom and Standard models
... sapele bodies. The Custom of... geous inset koa (shown in the picture above) or
... walnut tops that are stunning, and... you'd expect from a top-tier Taylor axe. The
... model is solid swamp ash. The ne... of the Custom and Standard are sapele with
... fingerboards, and the Classic... maple with a rosewood fingerboard.

... engineered pickups on... and Classic models are 3/4 sized humbuckers
... may still... model pickups are full sized open humbuckers.

Like the pickups, every other key component is designed, engineered, and manufactured by Taylor. The bridge, also originally designed for the T5, is an extremely elegant, low-profile design that feels smooth and comfortable. Each string is in its own shuttle that locks in place,

preventing movement even when the strings are off of the guitar.

Another eye-catching innovation is the neck joint, shown in the picture below. Also taken from the T5, the neck joint is a "puzzle piece" design that locks tightly together and is secured by a single hex bolt. The design is alleged to be extremely tight, preventing any movement in any direction, and provides maximum resonance.



Playing this guitar is a real joy. It is extremely smooth and fast (15 inch radius). The pickups sound great both clean and overdriven. And, the overall feel of the guitar is very comfortable. The folks at Guitar Jam Daily will be fighting over who gets to do a detailed review of this exciting new guitar.

Next up is the new 61 South model, semi-hollowbody from [Saint Blues Guitar Workshop](#) . Saint Blues has been putting out high-quality, mid-level guitars since '06. The guitars are designed in Memphis and built at a factory in Korea.

The 61 South has a double bound, semi-hollowbody, select grain ash body and sports a 25 1/2 inch scale length. Customers have a choice of two pickup configurations: dual-tapped single coil St. Blues or a P90 at the neck with a tapped single coil at the bridge, which is a nickel Wilkinson WTB bridge with stammered brass saddles. The tuners are vintage nickel Kluson style 15:1 ration tuning machines.

