



* *Editor's Note* - This is part three of a four part series. If you missed part one or two click [here](#) .

By Paul Schwartz - Peekamoose Custom Guitars

As Luthiers go I have a few heroes. These are people who have helped improve the quality of life for guitar and bass players. These people influenced my early development and continue to do so; because what I learned through exposure to their work will always be a part of who I am. You might want to search the web and see what their accomplishments, if you don't already know.

I'll list them in order of appearance. There are numerous other people who've helped me over the years. I hope you will find my articles interesting and Guitar Jam Daily will afford me the time and space to thank everyone. But I should start by acknowledge my core influences.

Charlie LoBue: Had a company called Guitar Labs. At one point he was and Carl Thompson were partners. Charlie was responsible for my first summer internship. My first solid body electric was a LoBue. Charlie was the top cat in NYC in the early 70's. Every major player passing through town probably went to Guitar Labs at some point. Back in those days there were very few people doing this type of work and only a handful were any good. Charlie's shop was a lightning rod for guitar making talent. Larry DiMarzio, Steve Blucher, Ralph Novak, and Woody Pheifer all worked with Charlie at early points in their careers.

Woody Pheifer: Trained me as his apprentice. He started out working for Charlie, then had his own shop after Charlie moved to California. In the late seventies and early 80's I feel Woody was the top guy in town. Then Roger Sadowsky, who is quite brilliant, rose to prominence at a time when Woody moved his shop out of Manhattan. Woody wanted to experiment with creative design ideas and less repair work; moving would make that transition easier. The boilerplate of what I know and how I think stems from Charlie and Woody. I was especially blessed by working with Woody for two years before starting out on my own. Being exposed to how great his skills are, and having to execute at standards both he and his client base would accept, facilitated my sense of quality. Woody's fretwork and instrument building clearly established the original benchmarks in my life as a guitar maker.

Ralph Novak: Is probably best known for the Novax Fanned Fret System, but years before that he worked with Charlie LoBue. I met Ralph at the old Guitar Labs. He was always very encouraging and helpful in bettering my understanding of how this industry works. He has also been very generous in discussing his design ideas and some of his manufacturing methods

with me. Knowing Ralph is an asset to my growth.

Jimmy D'Aquisto: I have been extremely fortunate with the experience of having many clients who are D'Aquisto owners. Some of who were also Jimmy's clients purchasing the instrument directly from him. Luckily, since I was in the city and these players were also clients of mine, I was graced with discovering Jimmy's work first hand. I worked on many D'Aquisto instruments when Jimmy was alive.

Sadly I never met Jimmy but a mutual client related a few experiences to me. I was happy to learn that Jimmy had seen my work. He felt comfortable with the choices I was making; and the quality of execution was appropriate in maintaining the integrity of his designs. This was a source of great relief to me because I was totally blown away with the instruments this amazing man created. That is a nice perspective setting anecdote, isn't it? But the most important part of my life around archtop guitars has been the revelation of being able to compare the performance of Jimmy's instruments compared to other classic archtops. The remarkable tone and responsiveness that comes from Jimmy's guitars will always be a huge part of what I feel represents how instruments should sound and feel.

Ned Steinberger: Ned's design sense and innovative technological advances forever changed my life. The Transposing Tremolo completely transformed my understanding of how instruments could work. Ned has always been very generous with his time. His ideas of how to take modern materials and create instruments capable of classic sounds plus new tones unique to the designs helped me think outside the box. Involvement with Steinberger instruments caused my skills to grow and exposed me to a very special area of this industry.

You might find it strange to learn I found unexpected similarities between what D'Aquisto and Steinberger instruments do sonically. Both tend to sound very balanced and when adjusted properly possess a dynamic range that is rare in a broad field of manufacturers. That discovery led me to the desire of putting extended dynamic response in my own instrument designs.

There are a few other people and companies worth mentioning that were also instrumental in my development. Seymour Duncan was always happy to answer any question when I was cooking up new circuit designs. No matter how far outside the norm I went, Seymour always took time to help me. Later, as I began to head towards putting out a standardized product line, Seymour, M.J., and Scott Millar were priceless in helping me realize goals. In the early 80's when I was first starting out, Bill Lawrence gave me a few very clever tips that influenced my circuit designs. Rob Turner at EMG has always been there when I needed help. The same is true for Henry Zajac of HAZ Labs who created the active circuits used in Steinberger instruments. There have been several heads of product support at each of the major companies over the years. Each one has always been extremely helpful in aiding my company with information and insight. There are also all the wonderful people in various manufacturer's custom shops and repair divisions whose insight regarding production methods often clarified where to direct my ideas for changes when coming up with a mod.

But at the very beginning of Peekamoose the most pivotal person responsible for giving me a leg up is Henry Goldrich. Henry is Manny Goldrich's son. Henry and the rest of Manny's kids

and grandchildren ran Manny's Music on 48th Street. I'd been a Manny's customer since the age of 16. The Goldrich family watched me grow up. When I was working for Woody they were always supportive. When Woody moved his business out of Manhattan and I started on my own, Manny's Music asked me to do product support for them because they had no in-house repair department. Henry personally introduced me to all the manufacturer's reps and assisted in getting me established as a warranty service center. Manny's knew the quality of my work and my skills at customer support. They felt comfortable recommending me to the big companies to represent Manny's as a warranty center. These introductions allowed me to develop long-term working relationships with every company that offered warranty support in the field during the early 80's into the 90's. I continue to support these companies today because I feel this interaction is extremely educational and I enjoy the relationships I have with a large number of people and artists I've met as the result of this association. So, to Henry and everyone in the Goldrich family, I will always be grateful.

In the last few years I've had the good fortune to become involved with Plek, A+D Gitarrentechnologie GmbH. Gerd Anke and Michael Dubach are the men behind Plek. Gerd developed the machine. Michael is his partner and has been instrumental in making the dream a reality. Together they have created a wonderful product and a remarkable company. Joe Glasser of Glasser Instruments is their right arm in the U.S. Gary Brawer is an early innovator in the use of Plek. Phil Jacoby, John Suhr, Charlie Chandler, Rodney Millar, Anthony Cameron, and I are all long-term Plek users. There are several other companies and manufacturers, but at the core these guys have all been very helpful in sharing experiences with me and I truly enjoy knowing them. I found the Plek machine is capable of being tweaked to execute fretwork in the style my clients have long been accustomed. It gives me time to do other things. It saves a great deal of wear-and-tear on my body. I did thousands of fret jobs by between 1981 and 2005 before owning my Plek. So I truly appreciate this machine and it's inventors. Plus, the friendship of Gerd, Michael, Joe, and the Plek owners I've come to know over the past few years has been an enriching experience. A lot of people think this technology is a magic bullet. Ultimately the machine is a great tool. But without the knowledge and skill required to execute high-level fretwork, the machine will not make magic on it's own. You have to understand the subtleties of fretwork, know how to make them feel and perform great by hand, to create magic.