



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

By Paul Schwartz - Peekamoose Custom Guitars

There is a space which lies between the unique physical approach any given instrument design type needs to be played well, and what any musicians' personal technique brings to the equation. That middle ground is where we as guitar makers and repair people can ply our skills to bridge the gap. It's our responsibility to find an effective solution that satisfies the union of man and machine.

Ultimately all stringed instruments are functional art. An instrument must be aesthetically pleasing while simultaneously fulfilling the mechanical requirements allowing it to generate a versatile and pleasing sound that in turn becomes music. Instruments are the tools that enable a composer to create their sonic art. It might be appropriate to say that music only hangs in the air long enough for us to hear it. This beauty is so fleeting and delicate that accepting the nature of what music is sets the requirement that any instrument should be as technically facile as it can be. If an instrument is not supple and forgiving, if it does not have empathy for how an artist will play it, the instrument will cause an artist to struggle physically attempting to realize sound they hear from within.

This is not to say people should be able to manipulate any instrument style without regard to the nature of its design. We all must accept there are rules of physics that apply to musical instruments that cannot be changed, and it is the obligation of a musician to learn appropriate techniques to control the model they play. But with this in mind, I know it is possible to make instruments more forgiving and responsive to playing technique appropriate to that design. Maximum realization of responsiveness, allows greater access to the subtle nuances of an artists touch. When an instrument facilitates a greater range of expression, the inspiration an artist will experience while playing comes more naturally.

There are things about classic designs that create the signature sounds people love. Classic influenced physical characteristics provide a tactile experience people crave. There are aesthetic qualities we all think are beautiful and very cool. There is a lot to be said in favor of classic and classically influenced instrument designs. I've discovered through experimentation that there are ways to move beyond what classics offer while retaining important qualities we all enjoy. You may look at my instruments that are based on classic body styles and wonder how could there be much difference aside from the obvious Art Deco - Zoning Architecture influenced headstock. When you play a Peekamoose CS instrument you'll discover it's the

subtle differences that can make dramatic improvements.

In my life guitars and basses have been a source of attraction and motivation since childhood. I have been drawn to them since the first time I saw one. At about five or six, I was with my parents visiting another couple. Their teenage daughter had an acoustic guitar on a stand in the living room. I felt compelled to touch it and pluck the strings. The sound it made captivated me even though I was too small to actually handle the instrument. That moment stayed with me.

For as long as I can remember, I've loved figuring out how mechanical and electric things worked. The process of deduction through observation and experimentation has always been irresistible. My childhood hero was Sherlock Holmes. One of the key things about his character was the inexhaustible obsessive-compulsive need to tinker and experiment for the sake of discovering how things worked because each new discovery helped him solve some other puzzle. That character embodies elements that sparked my inquisitive nature. In the early 60's when other kids went to toy stores to poke around, I went to hardware and electrical supply stores. By the time I was twelve or thirteen I'd rebuilt my mom's Electrolux and every other electrical appliance I could sneak into my room. I pulled apart my parents tube stereo. Made new speaker enclosures because I was convinced I could get better frequency response from a ported cabinet design long before I knew ported cabinets existed. In college during the mid 70's the band I was playing in needed a rehearsal space. The school gave us a raw space and would provide the materials and tools needed to sound proof it. The rest was up to us. I bought a copy of the Audio Cyclopedia and read about the design and construction of sound stages, recording studios, and screening/scoring rooms. This research helped me develop a plan to tune the room that would become our rehearsal facility. Every opportunity to experiment with sound was another learning experience. I never thought about whether or not any of this stuff was supposed to be hard. If there was a need, I wanted to find a way to make it. I really had no idea all these seemingly random experiences would lead me towards a career making guitars.

[Click here for part 3](#)