

The Tonewood Masters™ Series Treatment

Logline: A groundbreaking series exploring the mystical journey of acoustic guitars, from their origins as trees to their transformation by master luthiers and their ultimate expression in the hands of virtuoso musicians.



Synopsis: The Tonewood Masters is an innovative documentary series that explores the enchanting world of fine handmade acoustic guitars, tracing their progress from living trees to exquisite instruments capable of producing sublime music. Each episode weaves together the interconnected stories of nature, craftsmanship, and artistry that culminate in the creation and performance of these remarkable instruments. A common touchstone to each episode is the [Tonewood Masters Collection](#) of fine modern guitars.

The series showcases a new golden age of acoustic guitar craftsmanship that continues to unfold, where time-honored traditions meet cutting-edge innovations. Modern luthiers are pushing the boundaries of instrument design. Their creations boast unprecedented efficiency, dynamic range, and tonal versatility, resulting in guitars that are more responsive, ergonomic, and sonically diverse than ever before. This renaissance in guitar making is not only honoring the instrument's rich heritage but also expanding its expressive potential, thereby shaping the future of guitar music.

The series opens with a powerful visual metaphor: a majestic forest, alive with the whispers of wind through leaves, transitions to a luthier's workshop where those same trees are lovingly crafted into instruments. This sequence is punctuated by the poignant Latin inscription:

“VIVA FUI IN SILVIS
SUM DURA OCCISA
SECURI DUM VIXI TACUI
MORTUA DULCE CANO”

*I was alive in the forest
I was cut by the cruel axe
In life I was silent
In death I sweetly sing*

Episode Structure

1. **The Living Wood:** Each episode begins in a forest, whether the Alaskan wilds or deep in the Amazon—exploring the unique properties of different tonewoods and the environmental factors that shape their sound potential.
2. **The Luthier's Vision:** Follow master luthiers as they select and work with these woods, blending traditional techniques with cutting-edge innovations to create instruments of unparalleled quality.
3. **The Musician's Touch:** Renowned guitarists are introduced to these newly crafted instruments, exploring their sonic capabilities and pushing the boundaries of musical expression.
4. **The Performance:** Each episode culminates in a specially arranged performance, showcasing the instrument in various settings from intimate studios to urban landscapes.
5. **The Legacy:** Reflect on how each guitar contributes to the ongoing evolution of music and instrument-making.

Key Themes

- The harmony between nature and human craftsmanship
- The pursuit of perfection in both instrument-making and musical performance

- The spiritual and emotional connections forged between trees, luthiers, musicians, and listeners
- The blending of tradition and innovation in luthiery and music
- The universal language of music as expressed through the acoustic guitar

In the process, the pragmatic details are presented in creative ways. These include the myriad combinations of tonewoods and the spectrum of sonic results they produce: Sitka spruce tops on Indian rosewood bodies, Adirondack spruce on Brazilian rosewood, Engleman spruce on Honduran mahogany, cedar on cocobolo... Body shapes, neck woods, scale lengths—the many variables that combine to yield instruments of varying form, function, and character, each suited to particular musical styles.

Audience: Tonewood Masters is not just for guitar aficionados: the series targets a broad and passionate audience that extends to fans of acoustic music and the Boomer generation who came of age with iconic singer-songwriters like James Taylor, Dan Fogelberg, Paul Simon, and John Denver. Additionally, the series will resonate with the dedicated subculture of fingerstyle virtuosos and their followers, featuring artists spanning David Wilcox to Earl Klugh and others who have pushed the boundaries of acoustic guitar music. Like the Ken Burns series on jazz, this series aims to have a long life, offering enduring appeal through its rich storytelling, historical depth, and the universal language of music. The series will captivate not only those who play and build guitars but also those who cherish the cultural and emotional connections music creates.

Visual Style: The series employs a cinematic approach, with lush forest cinematography, intimate workshop scenes, and dynamic performance footage. Macro photography reveals the complex details of wood grain and luthier techniques, while performance sequences utilize creative camera work to capture the emotion and energy of the music.

Audio: Pristine audiophile-quality recording techniques are used throughout, especially during performances, to fully capture the nuanced tones of each instrument.

Detailed Episode Example: "The Spruce Symphony"

1. **The Living Wood:** The episode begins in the misty forests of Alaska, where towering Sitka spruce trees stand. Harvesters explain the environmental factors that make Sitka spruce an ideal tonewood, highlighting its strength-to-weight ratio and acoustic properties.
2. **The Luthier's Vision:** Transition to the workshop of a master luthier known for their expertise with spruce. Watch as the luthier selects the perfect piece of wood, explaining the characteristics they look for. Detailed shots capture the process of transforming the wood into a soundboard.
3. **The Musician's Touch:** Introduce a renowned guitarist, eager to test the new instrument. The musician discusses their playing style and what they seek in a guitar's sound. They play the first notes, reacting to the guitar's responsiveness and tone.
4. **The Performance:** The episode culminates in a breathtaking performance set in several indoor and outdoor locations. The guitarist performs a piece that showcases the guitar's capabilities, the pristine recording capturing every nuance.
5. **The Legacy:** The episode concludes with reflections on the journey from forest to instrument, highlighting how this particular guitar contributes to the evolution of playing and the broader world of music.

Summary: The Tonewood Masters offers viewers a profound appreciation for the acoustic guitar as both a triumph of craftsmanship and a vessel for human expression. The series aims to inspire a deeper connection to music, nature, and the enduring quest for beauty in art and life. Through stunning visuals, intimate stories, and unforgettable performances, the series celebrates the wonder that occurs when nature and humanity come together to create something truly extraordinary.