

Boucher Guitars

By Susan Marquez

From the deep woods of the Appalachian Mountains, in the far northern reaches of Quebec, a special red spruce grows. A hybrid blend of black and white spruce, the density-to-lightness ratio of the *Picea Rubens* is such that it is known worldwide for its harmonic qualities. “Our little village of Berthier-sur-Mer is actually surrounded by red spruce,” says Robin Boucher. “Many bluegrass artists now know that it is the best spruce species for making bluegrass guitars.”

Boucher comes from a guitar-building family.

“My Uncle Norman was the founder of Norman Guitars, the first acoustic guitar company in Canada.” He started the company in 1969, and young Boucher first toured the guitar factory when he was ten years old. “I remember it like it was yesterday. When I was 11 years old, my uncle let me put a top knot on one of his guitars. That’s where my passion for making guitars came from.”



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It was also at age 11 that Boucher learned to play the guitar. He took it very seriously, practicing whenever he could. From 1983 to 1987, he earned his income solely from playing the guitar. "I played a lot of styles of music, including country, folk, rock-n-roll and Top 40." Boucher explains that his father played the banjo and steel guitar. "I grew up listening to country and bluegrass."

In 2005, Boucher followed in his uncle's footsteps and founded Boucher Guitars.

He knew that he would utilize the rare red spruce that grew so abundantly in the area where he lived. "I source the wood from various saw mills and lumber yards. I even have farmers who contact me directly, because they understand that I buy large lots of wood at a time."

The wood grows in Appalachian regions from Virginia to New York, Vermont to Maine and into Canada in New Brunswick and into Nova Scotia. "It grows exclusively in the Appalachian Mountains," says Boucher. "It's sometimes called Adirondack spruce, because it grows in the Adirondacks, which are in the middle of the Appalachians. Boucher sources other woods as well, including exotic rosewood, cocobolo and bubinga in addition to South American mahogany, koa and western Canadian bigleaf maple.

Boucher developed his goose series that began with the studio goose series. About that time, he got a call from a guy in Ft. Kent, Maine named Toby Saucier. Saucier played with a bluegrass band called Blistered Fingers. "Toby found us in a roundabout way," laughs Boucher. "He received a damage bass amplifier from Chicago Music Exchange. In communicating with them about the amplifier, which was quickly replaced to Toby's satisfaction, Toby noticed on the Chicago Music Exchange website that they sold Boucher guitars. He had never heard of us, but his wife's maiden name was Boucher. I invited him up to tour our factory, along with his band. I asked them to

bring their instruments. They played for about an hour, then I had them play a few more songs on our guitars. After two or three chords, they were amazed. We've developed a great relationship over the years, and I consider Toby and his wife, Jennifer, to be good friends. It was after that visit that I created the Bluegrass Goose series. Before meeting Toby, I was not in the bluegrass market. Now 35 to 40 percent of products we sell are for bluegrass."

The Bluegrass Goose series crafted and engineered to meet the high standards of bluegrass guitarists

both on stage and in the studio, according to Boucher. "Our guitars are very 'present' among the other bluegrass instruments. The sound spectrum on the Bluegrass Goose includes rich low ends, driving mids and beefy highs."



Boucher Guitars Studio Escrito Goose www.12fret.com

Boucher says his company makes 400 guitars a year and supplies 20,000 acoustic guitar tops to other guitar manufacturers. "We have 14 employees, with four of them dedicated to making acoustic tops." The word about Boucher guitars spread like wildfire after the company was named the Backer Best of Show in the guitar category at the 2014 National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) show.

"I like the bluegrass music style," says Boucher. "And I like the bluegrass community. They are very respectful. It's the

only music that can be played outside and really heard, because the people in the audience respect the musicians and they want to really listen to the music."

BREAKOUT BOX:

<https://boucherguitars.com/>

When Toby Saucier, a bass player in a bluegrass band in northern Maine, stumbled across Boucher Guitars on a musical supply website, he took a second look. His wife's maiden name was Boucher. He made a call to Robin Boucher, the company's owner, and asked if he and his band could come tour the factory. "We were welcomed with open arms, like we had been friends all our lives," says Saucier. "We were all hooked," laughs Saucier. "The playability is butter smooth. A Boucher can stand up to any guitar. Now we eat, drink and sleep Boucher. Between all of us, we have 11 Bouchers. The quality and sound are second to none. There's no doubt in my mind that the Lord lined it up for Robin and me to meet. We've become great friends, and he has become a life-long bluegrass fan.