

PAUL BRETT'S THUMB-BUSTER

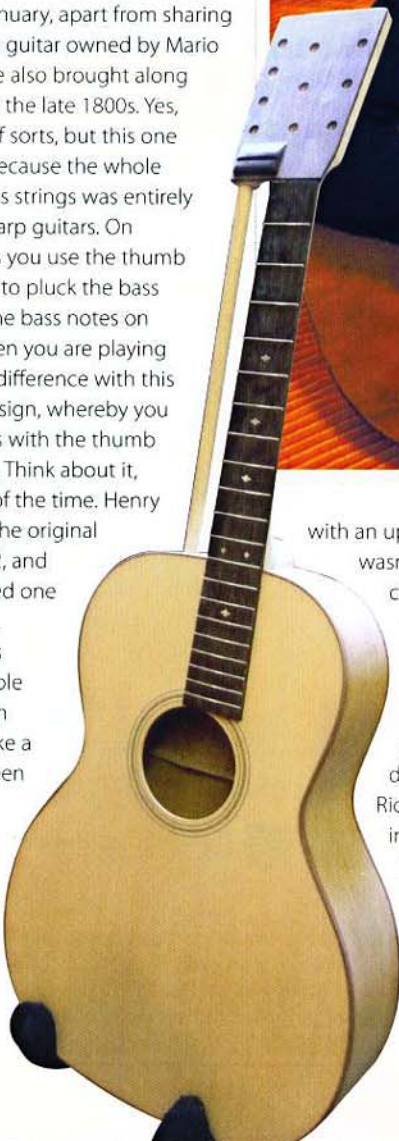
Take Paul Brett's enthusiasm and expertise for all things stringed, Gregg Miner's harp guitar know-how and a luthier from Wales. What do we get? Paul Brett's Thumb-buster. Check it out on stand **B4** at the **London Acoustic Guitar Show**.

With the initial success of my two signature guitars this year in partnership with Vintage and JHS, I wanted to come up with a further concept somewhat off the beaten track from the normal guitar designs.

Whilst I must confess to not having been a purveyor of harp guitars, I do have a few early ones in my collection, including a 1916 Gibson U-harp. When I met with Gregg Miner at NAMM in January, apart from sharing with me his rare harp guitar owned by Mario Maccaferri himself, he also brought along a unique model from the late 1800s. Yes, it was a harp guitar of sorts, but this one really intrigued me because the whole concept with the bass strings was entirely different to normal harp guitars. On standard harp guitars you use the thumb of your picking hand to pluck the bass notes, thus loosing the bass notes on the 6-string neck when you are playing the bass strings. The difference with this one lay in a clever design, whereby you pluck the bass strings with the thumb of your fretting hand. Think about it, it's redundant most of the time. Henry Dolman introduced the original concept back in 1892, and Greg recently acquired one of Dolman's originals.

Within ten minutes of working out a simple tune, I was hooked on the concept. It was like a halfway house between a 6-string and a traditional harp guitar.

When I returned to the UK, I made up my mind to try and get a prototype made



with an updated design. It probably wasn't the sort of project that a large company would consider in the first instance, so I searched for a luthier who would join me in the business of crafting such an instrument. Stumbling around *Acoustic Magazine's* forum one day, I came across the work of Richard Meyrick, a luthier based in Wales, who's also a reader and forum member. As I too live in Wales, I wanted to try and use traditional Welsh timber as much as I could, bearing in mind the international CITES law that is causing

many people problems with the import and export of woods. Richard proved a great find and he has been working throughout to get a prototype ready for The London Acoustic Guitar Show this September. As Fishman provided such a great pickup system for my Vintage signature guitars, I asked Chris DiMaria of Fishman if he could help with a system for the new guitar which he has indeed delivered. The build has gone very smoothly, so far. The photographs are of the guitar which I have named the Thumb-buster (for obvious reasons), are prior to finishing as you can see and Richard confirms that the whole project will be completed with enough time to allow me to show it to you all at the show!

Paul Brett