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Grateful Dread

BEDELL TB-18-G By Chris Gill

THE CONCEPT OF a high-quality, low-cost acoustic guitar isn't new to Bedell Guitars founder Tom Bedell, who started importing affordable acoustic guitars back in 1964 when he was 14. In 2010, Bedell formed the Two Old Hippies company and began to manufacture Bedell acoustic guitars, which feature upscale details like handcrafted construction and solid woods, and sell for surprisingly reasonable prices. The Bedell TB-18-G dreadnought resides in the middle of Bedell's dreadnought model lineup, which has a price range from \$399 to \$2,599.

FEATURES The first thing I noticed about the TB-18-G was the quality of its wood. The solid AAA Alaskan Sitka spruce top has extremely tight grain and a flame-like cross-hatching pattern—it's the kind of wood one normally sees on expensive custom acoustics. The back and sides are African sapele, an alternative to mahogany that produces similarly warm, rich tones. My review example's sapele back had a stunning, subtle striped figuration enhanced by the book-matched halves. Other upscale construction details include the jet-black ebony fingerboard and bridge, classy wood pinstriping between the binding that surrounds the fretboard and headstock overlay, the wood Bedell peace sign logo inlay on the headstock, and gold-plated

Grover tuners.

The TB-18-G's one-piece African mahogany neck has a comfortable shallow C-shaped profile, a 25 1/2-inch scale, 20 frets and a 1.7-inch nut width. It's attached to the body with a dovetail joint and hide glue, which means you don't have to trash the entire instrument if you ever need to reset the neck in years ahead (many other acoustics in the Bedell's price range have necks affixed with glues that aren't easily softened). Another detail that shows Bedell cares about the instrument's longevity is the hydrometer built into the deluxe sculpted hardshell case, which helps you monitor humidity to avoid conditions that can damage the guitar.

PERFORMANCE The TB-18-G's sapele back and sides mellow the bass and treble somewhat and enhance the midrange frequencies, resulting in tone that is exceptionally well-balanced for a dreadnought. Strummed chords don't sound boomy and bassy, and picked single-note lines on the upper E and B strings cut through without being piercing. Even when the strings are driven aggressively, the stiff premium-grade spruce top refuses to overdrive. The neck is very comfortable to play, and the tall, medium-profile frets make it easy to fret notes cleanly.



CHEAT SHEET



LIST PRICE \$1,299
MANUFACTURER
 Bedell Guitars,
bedellguitars.com

- Uncommon attention to detail, including a neck affixed with hide glue, show Bedell's dedication to making a guitar that's built to last.

- Solid African sapele back and sides deliver tone similar to mahogany, with mellow treble and bass and enhanced midrange, producing well-balanced tone.

- **THE BOTTOM LINE**
 With its combination of premium-quality woods, handcrafted construction and custom-style appointments, the Bedell TB-18-G provides exceptional value.