

As part of the Event



CremonaFiere, in collaboration with the
Cultural Association "Armadillo" APS,
organizes a

Masterclass of Lutherie for acoustic guitar

26th – 27th - 28th September, 2025

**Teachers:
RICHARD HOOVER (US) – TOM BILLS (US)**

Italian translation and assistance by Max Monterosso, Mirko Borghino

The places are limited

Application deadline: 10th September 2025

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

CREMONAFIERE

P.zza Zelioli Lanzini, 1 26100 Cremona
Tel.0372.598011 | info@cremonamondomusica.it

Participants:

Luthiers, guitar makers, (amateur and professional), guitar fans

Working methods:

Collective theoretical lectures

Venue

The Masterclass Hall 1 is at CremonaFiere's offices

Teachers & Programme

Master luthier RICHARD HOOVER

Intro and Raison d'être:

Santa Cruz, as a pioneer in applying time-honored "secrets" of the school of Amati, including contributions from Stradivari, Guenari, etc., changed the way modern guitars were made.

Heretofore, the steel string guitar had become a mass-appeal folk instrument where affordability far outweighed any concern for inspirational quality of sound.

Everything changed when the major brands enjoyed a spectacular post-WWII sales boom.

The Allies won, and with the spoils of war, we bought subsidized housing, cars, and guitars by the hundreds of thousands.

Brand credibility wasn't based on the quality of the guitar's sound but rather on its association with celebrity artists, radio, and television presence.

Acoustic loudness and prevalent bass volume were the desirable properties in the folk boom repertoire simply because steel-string guitar players had yet to be introduced to the sophisticated qualities of the professional violin or classical guitar.

With no challenge yet from low-priced offshore competition, which wouldn't arrive until the 1970s...

With the limits of a pre-internet marketing culture, Martin and Gibson ruled and prospered.

They could afford to dumb down to reduce the costs of their products while maintaining the profitability of a near monopoly in the American market.

This is the environment into which Santa Cruz Guitar entered the scene.

Players were ready for a better guitar at a time when the big brands had effectively blocked the entry of new brands into the marketplace.

Santa Cruz Guitar's reintroduction of repeatable sound quality through:

A return to the proven methodology of the violin masters

Our ability to customize, where others can't or don't know how

Raising the industry's bar for quality and upending the downward spiral of new guitar quality from the 1970s to the present day.

www.santacruzguitar.com

Program:

Friday 26th September, from 10am to 1pm:

- **Intro to Santa Cruz Guitar Company and Its Mission:**
 - *Starting with the status of guitar making in the mid-20th century, Richard pays tribute to the pioneers of a new wave of builders who hoped to become the "Next Martin."*
 - *How the comeuppance from:*
 - *The effects of the early 80s recession*
 - *Disco*
 - *MIDI*
 - *Boomers coming to grips with babies and student loans*

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- All combined to defeat the first serious threat to the corporate American guitar-making monopoly.
- On the first day, Richard will introduce SCGC's history, beginnings, and the challenges faced to educate the public on the possibility that:
 - A guitar can be hand-built by humans to a higher level of sound and personal playability than one made by experts in a factory.
 - The idea of a repeatable degree of excellent sound while capturing personal preference for EQ, tone, and presence is something most would assume would be best done by an old brand like Martin or Gibson.
 - However, this isn't possible while maintaining the goal of a profitable price target.
- Richard will explain how:
 - Achieving these desirable properties of sound has long been abandoned by bigger companies.
 - Larger market share is prioritized over esoteric and inefficient practices.
- In our first day, we will:
 - Debunk some common myths about how to control sound.
 - Explain those proven through the scientific method and repeatable experimentation.
- **Close with:**
 - Demo of voicing and tuning.
 - Wood choices.
 - Myth-busting on the role of tonewood with examples.
 - Intro to tomorrow's Modal Analysis talk.

Saturday 27th September, from 10am to 1pm:

- One of Richard's career goals has been to take his lifelong study and half a century of practice in the violin makers' art of evaluation and manipulation of individual tonewood examples.
- This isn't a quest for the "best" but rather to:
 - Quantify the optimal qualities and properties of sound for each instrument.
 - Unlike the violin, whose target is from established tradition, the guitar is voiced to accommodate individual preferences specific to Bluegrass, jazz, or classical genres.
- **Our goal:**
 - Put these findings into a scientific vocabulary.
 - Develop the tools to measure them.
- **Here today is Santa Cruz VP of Operations and Acoustic Science, Rick Barto.**
 - Rick will share the journey and collaborators along with a presentation of the world's most sophisticated modal analysis for tonewoods.
- **Rick Barto's presentation:**
 - Bridging Tradition and Science: Advancing Lutherie with Acoustic Modal Analysis
 - **Description:**
 - This talk explores the **Acoustic Modal Analysis Program (AMAP)**, a groundbreaking approach that merges traditional lutherie craftsmanship with scientific data analysis.
 - **Modal analysis** is a technique used to:
 - Study how materials vibrate by identifying their natural resonance frequencies, stiffness, and damping characteristics.
 - By applying this method to tonewood at various stages of guitar construction, AMAP enables predictive modeling of sonic characteristics.

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- Optimize wood selection, voicing techniques, and training processes.
- Learn how this **data-driven method**:
 - Enhances consistency.
 - Refines customization.
 - Preserves the artistry of fine guitar making while pushing the

Sunday 28th September, from 10am to 1pm:

- **The Business of Lutherie**
 - Anecdotes on success and failures.
 - Including:
 - Design
 - Marketing
 - Artist relations
 - Industry awareness
- **How to run a prudent business through:**
 - Budgeting
 - Money management
 - Accessing professional data on sales trends
 - Customer access
- **Standing out in an increasingly competitive field of guitar builders.**
- **How to be a respected source of builders.**
- **This is less a “how-to” guide and more a guide to sourcing pro bono individual advice specific to your business.**
 - (Provide handouts)
- **Closing Remarks**
 - **Rick, closing statement.**
 - Q&A
 - Exchange of contacts
 - **“Don’t Try This Alone” lecture:**
 - Give back, open source.
 - “A rising tide floats all boats.”

Master luthier TOM BILLS

Tom Bills has been crafting one-of-a-kind guitars for top players and collectors around the world since 1998. Tom is also the author of the guitar building book/DVD “The Art Of Lutherie” published by Mel Bay and has written and contributed to numerous publications, both print and online, as well as appearing in several TV and movie commercials

“Guitar building is something very special to me, something I enjoy immensely and it deeply affects every aspect of my life. I don’t look at it as a business or a career, to me it’s the art and music of my life, one of the reasons I’m here on this earth now, at this time and in this place”

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ATOMIC LUTHERIE

Harnessing the Power of tiny details to create extraordinary guitars

Program:

Friday 26th September, from 2pm to 5pm:

The Primary Wave: Understanding Scale and String Dynamics

- Introduction
- *Vibrational DNA: String Theory and Tonal Architecture*
- *Beat The PLEK: Fine Tuning Your Fretboard Design*
- *Force Dynamics: Neck-Bridge Geometry and Tonal Energy*
- Q&A

Saturday 27th September, from 2pm to 5pm:

The Energy Cascade: Bridges, Braces & Resonance

- *The Energy Gateway: Bridge Design and Vibrational Transfer*
- *Orchestrating Vibration: Strategic Bracing Patterns and Profiles*
- *The Acoustic Canvas: Soundboard Architecture and Air Cavity Dynamics*
- Q&A

Sunday 28th September, from 2pm to 5pm:

Harmonic Convergence: Materials, Proportions, and the Maker's Voice

- *The Art of Listening: Strategic Selection of Woods and Other Materials*
- *Sacred Geometry: Dimensional Harmony and Proportional Relationships*
- *The Artist's Touch: Final Elements and Finding Your Voice*
- *The Reciprocal Journey: Personal Applications and Cultivating Artistic Growth*
- Q&A

Admission

The Masterclass must be paid for and has a limited enrolment number

Admission to the Masterclass will take place, presenting simultaneously the **Application Form** with the payment for the participation fee by **the 10th of September 2025**.

Sending the application without the concomitant payment will not be considered valid.

Participation Fee

Price per person: **€. 250.00** (VAT included)

- The registration fee must be paid in full.
- The registration fee is not refundable in case of withdrawal or missed MasterClass.
- The registration fee includes free pass to Cremona Musica-Acoustic Guitar Village ticket.

Application Procedure

The Application Form must be sent **by the 10th of September 2025**. In alternative, it must be sent by:

- fax +39 0372 598222
- mail: ilaria.seghizzi@cremonafiery.it and info@armadilloclub.org

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together with a copy of the participation fee payment, by electronic bank transfer in favour of CremonaFiere spa (purpose of payment: *Lutherie masterclass 2025*) on the following bank account:

BANCA POPOLARE DI SONDRIO branch of Cremona Via Dante IBAN IT49S0569611400000003630X76 BIC POSOIT22
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Information

For any information regarding the contents of the masterclass, please contact:

Cultural Association "Armadillo" APS

Alessio Ambrosi

Email: info@armadilloclub.org

Tel: + 39 (0)187 626993

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Application Form

Masterclass of Lutherie for acoustic guitar
26th - 27th - 28th September, 2025

Teachers:
RICHARD HOOVER (US) – TOM BILLS (US)

(Fill in Capital Letters)

The undersigned:

SURNAME: _____

FIRST NAME: _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTAL CODE _____ TOWN _____

PROVINCE _____ Landline/mobile: _____

E-MAIL _____

I'm a natural person freelancer

Personal Identification number _____

(e.g. National Insurance Number, Identifikationsnummer, numéro de sécuritésociale, Número de Identificación Fiscal, etc...)

Tax/v.a.t. (Value Added Tax) number _____

(only for companies or freelancers)

DATE OF BIRTH _____ IN _____

Asks for admission to the Masterclass of Lutherie for acoustic guitar 2025 at CremonaFiere and claims to have read and accepted the Masterclass Rules

➔ Date _____ Signature _____

Privacy

Personal data indicated in this registration form, collected for organizational purposes, will be treated in full compliance with the provisions of the Legislative Decree, 196/2003 and subsequent amendments or modifications. Any form of distribution/transfer of these data to third parties is excluded. You can request, at any time, the modification or removal, and exercise your rights towards the data controller, by sending an email to info@cremonafiere.it or a fax to n. 0372 598222. The regulation is available at <http://www.cremonafiere.it/trattamento-dati/>. I acknowledge the terms and conditions and expressly consent the handling of my personal data. I acknowledge the terms and conditions, and consent the handling of my personal data.

➔ Date _____ Signature _____

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