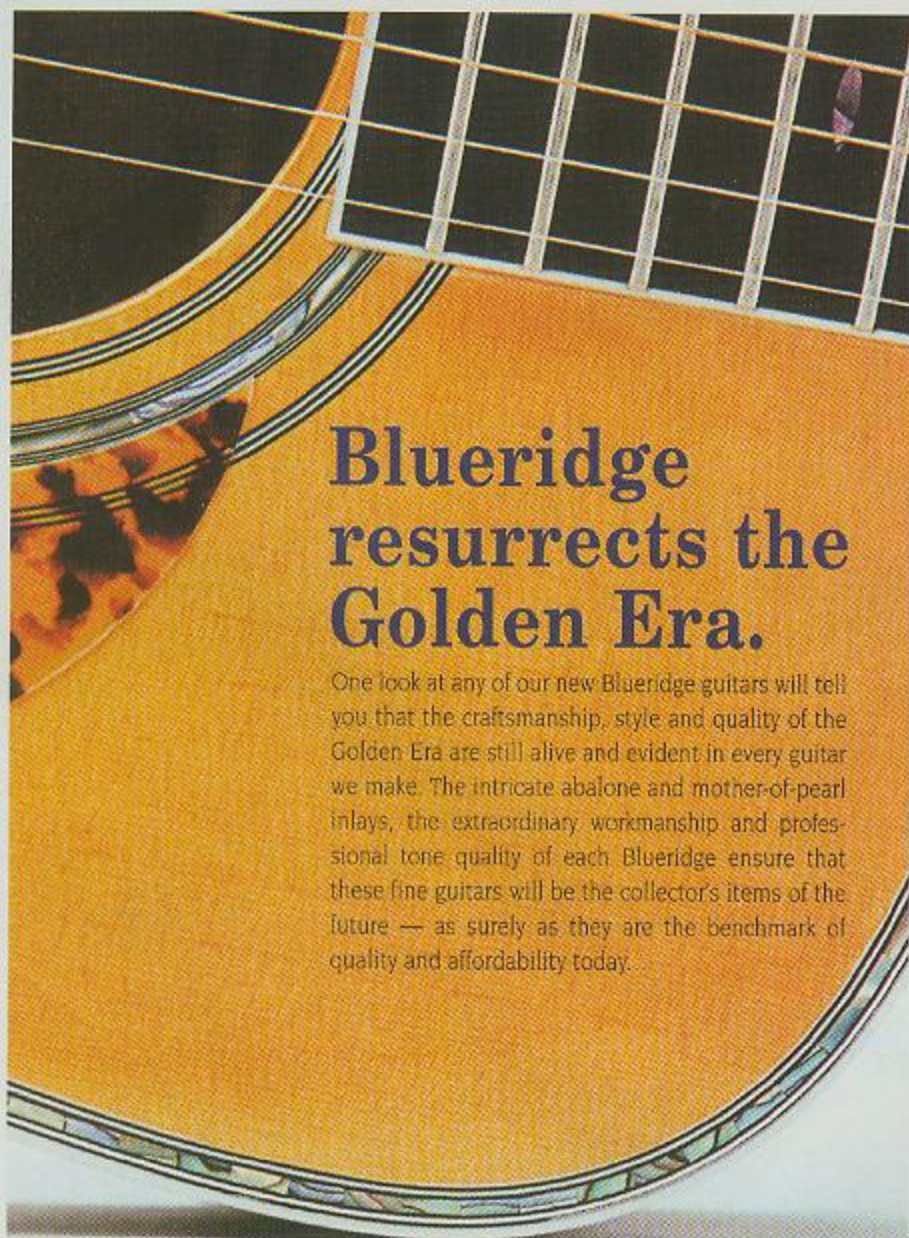


Among them are my Parisian Internet pals: Patrick, with his leanings toward Gypsy jazz, and Philippe, a very musical player with sweet tone and great fluidity. Another guitarist, also named Philippe (out of the seven guys I traveled with, three are named Philippe), has an unusual sound and approach to the fingerboard. I can't recognize positions he's playing in—his left hand crab-walks all over the place, while his right hand does a lot of cross-picking and hits open strings every fifth or sixth note.

At an afternoon workshop, Czech guitarist Ondrej Plucha of the Petr Brandejs Band handles his break in an extremely



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fast fiddle tune by using a sort of modified Carter picking, inlaying a simpler and more melodic element into what might otherwise have sounded like a barrage of notes. It fits so nicely into the tune that I make a mental note to borrow the idea.

There are other interesting musicians here as well. One afternoon, I chat with Lilly Drumeva, a Bulgarian singer and guitarist now living in England, whose CD with her band Lilly of the West I happened to review some years ago. Lilly is here with Rosie Davis and Rick Townend—their trio Lilly and Rosie showcases the music of the Carter family. Friday evening I get into a session with Netherlanders Elly Beurskens and Bruno van Hoek of the trio Skyland. As we work out three-part harmonies to old-time and country favorites on the fly, we quickly discover that we know and love many of the same songs. Soon the jam grows to a dozen or more people. A German fellow who has been sitting quietly on the sidelines requests the rather obscure Carter Family number "Winding Stream." Partway into the song, we falter on lyrics, but another joiner-in provides the missing words. It's a comfort to find so many like musical minds 9,000 miles from home.

One of the most pleasant things about this festival is its warm and welcoming atmosphere. Though the venue is not large and things are a bit cramped because inclement weather forces everyone indoors, the staff and volunteers go out of their way to treat us as guests. When a jam in the corridor outside the concert hall gets too loud, an official T-shirted crew member comes over. We expect to be summarily shut down, but instead he says, "Come with me, I'll show you another room you can play in." Now that's hospitality.

Cheers,

Sue Thompson
Sue Thompson