

THE MATHEMATICS OF MUSIC

When a guitarist is looking to play something really special, they head to Graham Esson's Fibonacci Guitars

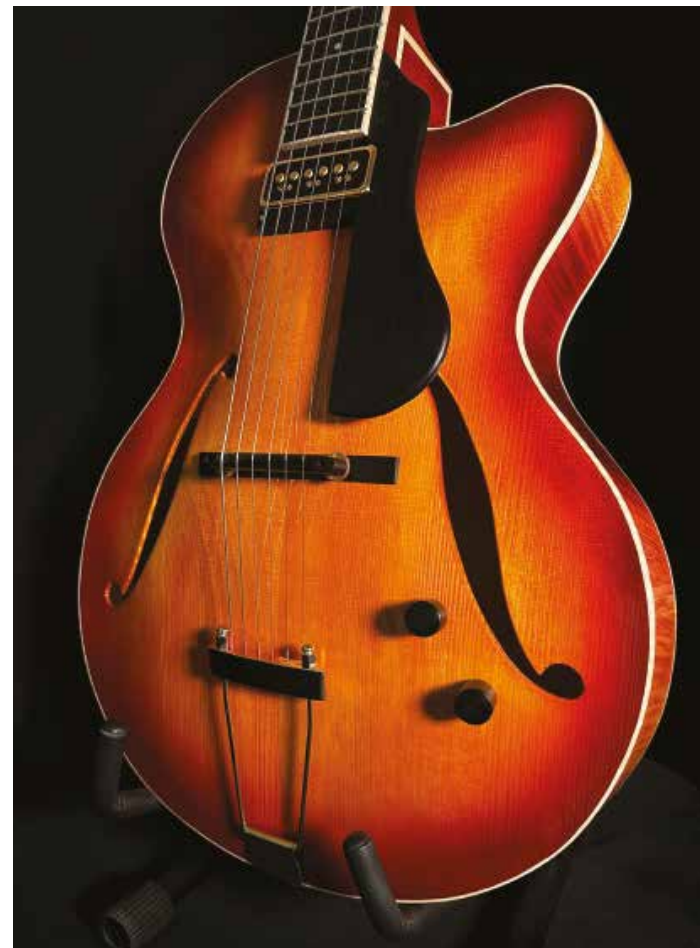
BY CAROLINE KELLY

Established in 2015, Fibonacci Guitars is the home of bespoke archtop guitars, with all materials sourced and parts built in the UK. More specifically, from the company's base in London. But Graham Esson's relationship with the music industry goes back much further. A musician himself, Graham was the marketing director for a large Korean OEM manufacturer, which involved introducing their brand to the global market and establishing distribution networks in the UK and Europe. 'I worked there for eight years and set up the European distribution side of things, acting as a conduit to the market,' he says.

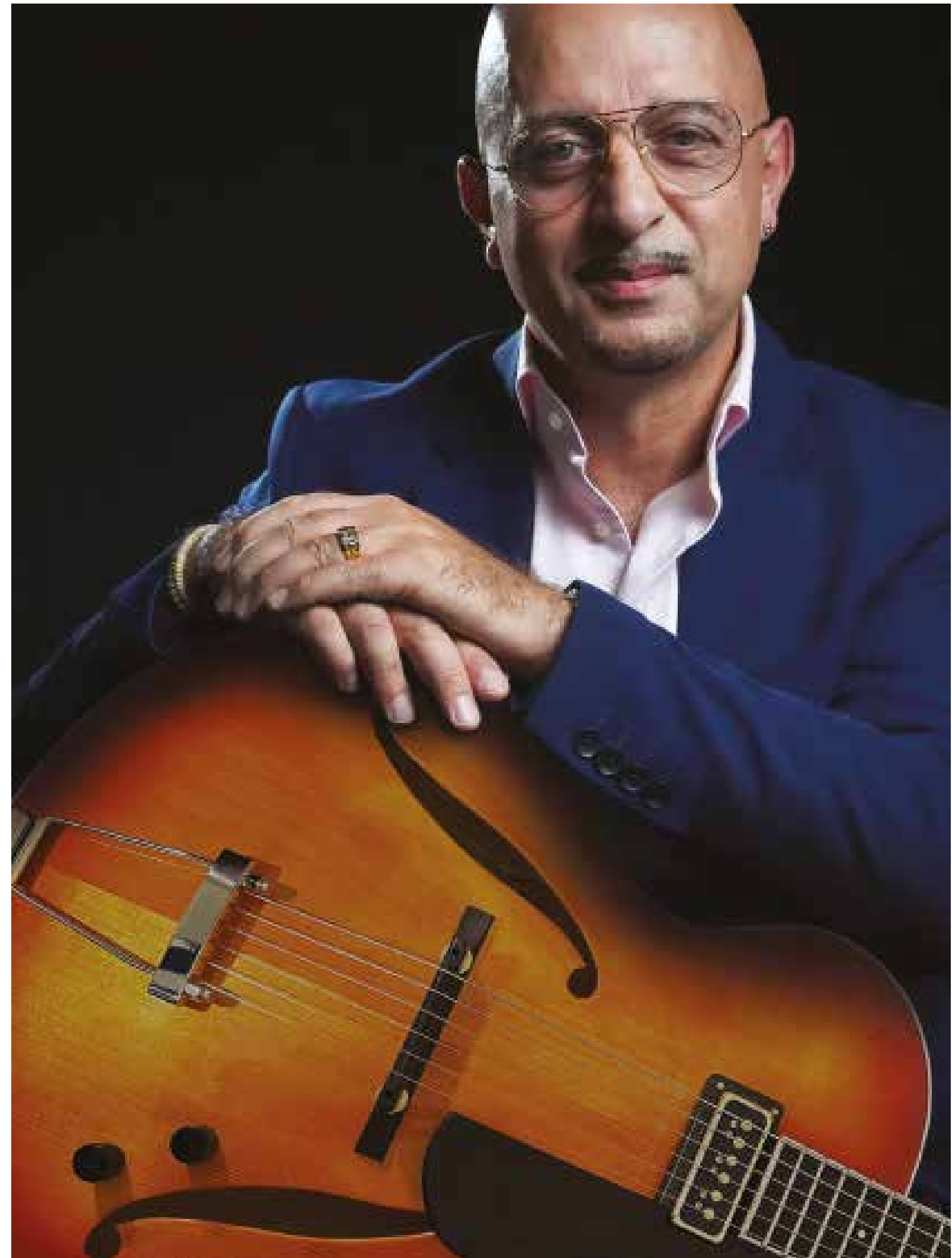
The work wasn't always straightforward, persuading potential customers to trust in an unknown Korean brand. But his perseverance paid off and gave Graham the confidence to take the next step in his career: 'I just thought, we have the knowledge and expertise so

let's do this ourselves and establish our own brand,' he says. With a distribution network already set up, the pieces of the puzzle slowly began to fall into place. Fibonacci Guitars was born and along with the new name came a deliberate move away from mass manufacturing and towards creating beautifully bespoke pieces.

And why Fibonacci? The company is named after Leonardo Fibonacci, an Italian mathematician from the Middle Ages and creator of the Fibonacci sequence, closely associated with the Golden Ratio. As Graham says: 'Musical scales are mathematics really. I had this idea in mind and thought, let's create the brand around it.' The gamble has paid off and Fibonacci Guitars has grown from strength to strength, even weathering a global pandemic. Graham explains: 'In fact sales went up during the pandemic. People were stuck at home, some of whom had always wanted to learn the guitar.'



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TBC





BESPOKE MANUFACTURING

The work has evolved since Fibonacci Guitars was born. Graham describes how originally the team bought in guitar carcasses, to complete the lacquer work, fretting, hardware, electrics and final setups in the UK, to a specification. But buying in the carcasses from halfway around the world proved problematic as the quality of materials wasn't always up to the company's high expectations. It was at this point that Graham made the decision to bring all manufacturing in-house, to establish Fibonacci Guitars as a manufacturing brand. Being the only company in the UK who produce a comprehensive range of carved archtop guitars, Fibonacci Guitars is proud to keep its sales volume of instruments low, to retain full control over the entire production process from design to finish.

Research and development is an ongoing strategy that keeps Fibonacci at the cutting edge of guitar design. Situated next to the company's independent recording studio, each new guitar prototype is tested thoroughly by different players before ever going into production. The company offers three ranges of archtop guitar: a standard range, artisan masterbuild range and finally an artist signature range designed in collaboration with world-class players like award-winning British jazz guitarists Martin Taylor and Nigel Price. Each range of Fibonacci Guitars is designed to offer the player something different.

Behind the design, production and testing of each guitar is a small but dedicated team made up of three full-time and two part-time employees. This tight-knit group allows Graham to keep sales volume small, focusing on quality rather than quantity. Fibonacci

Guitars works with a close circle of entrusted craftsmen and women in and around the London area, such as a bespoke pickup builder Jon Dickinson, and Mark Stow at OX4 pickups, and with tonewoods coming in from Touchstone and Keystone. But some more selective tonewoods come in from the Carpathian mountains in Romania.

Graham says: 'The priority is to keep the business small and manageable, which is why we have a six-month build schedule with around 30 guitars on back order for customers at any one time. Everything we produce is 100% made in the UK and we are fortunate enough to ship all over the world.'

While many small businesses have a loyal band of followers, fans of Fibonacci Guitars are a breed apart, following not just the instruments but the musicians who play them. You'll catch Graham and his creations at guitar festivals and trade events like the London International Guitar Show and see his guitars in the hands of talented musicians on tour around the world.

Driven by his love of music, particularly jazz and his persistent eye for detail, Graham and Fibonacci Guitars are a cut above and deserved recipients of the Guild of Mastercraftsmen logo.

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