

WOODSTOCK — Bruce Ackerman’s instruments stood out by trying to fit in. Sure, Ackerman’s handcrafted guitars used wood from indigenous cherry and maple trees. But the classical guitars have a Spartan appearance, offering little by the way of design or embellishment. “They’re not for collecting,” said the longtime musician and Woodstock resident. “They’re for playing.” Conventional offerings bucked the norm at the third annual Woodstock Invitational Luthiers Showcase. Most of the three-dozen instrument-makers embraced being in America’s incubator of counterculture. Kinobe Herbert’s product had 21 strings rather than six. It is held out horizontally from the waist rather than rested against the chest.

Ad removed. [Details](#)



Saturday was opening day for the third annual Woodstock Invitational Luthiers Showcase, held at the Bearsville Theater. A luthier is a maker of stringed instruments. — DAVID DOONAN/For the Times Herald-Record

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Kinobe can count the number of fellow North American kora makers on his fingers. He’s been professionally building the West African instrument for the past seven years. The left thumb plays the bass, the right thumb plays the melody, and the two index fingers improvise, meaning no two performances sound the same.

“You pretty much create your own music,” Kinobe said.

Woody Phifer of Phoenicia produces America’s only asymmetrical guitars. The unusual shape eliminates virtually all feedback – even when the instrument is amplified.

Peter Head’s island of misfit guitars is in the far back corner of the secondary showing room, eons away from Phifer’s \$19,000 guitars. There are some things that are just too weird, even for Woodstock. Head searches second-hand shops and trash bins for lunchboxes, suitcases and jack-in-the-boxes. He buys two tuners and a bridge, and attaches the guitar strings. More often than not, he says, they’ll make a “pretty darn cool” sound.

Head has more than 100 of his cigar box guitars in his Palenville home, and he can usually fetch \$200 for them. Sales of the one-of-a-kind guitars can be slow for much of the year, but there’s always a boom during the holiday season.

“Most of my family thinks I’m pretty wacky,” Head said, “but I like it.”

mnovinson@th-record.com

Luthier’s showcase



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Guitar enthusiasts, makers, and musicians gathered at the Bearsville Theater in Woodstock for the Woodstock Luthiers Showcase. Randy Muth, center, speaks with Alan Cath, from Boston, left, and Frank Pierangelo from Mount Kisco about a guitar he manufactures. — DAVID DOONAN/ For the Times Herald-Record



If You Go

The Woodstock Invitational Luthiers Showcase continues from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday at the Bearsville Theater, 291 Tinker St. General admission tickets cost \$15.