



SWEET SOUNDS OF SUCCESS

HIGH NOTES
Above: Alex and Tere at work in their studio; Below: 4-string, short scale bass (ideal for women)

THROUGH LIFE'S HIGH AND LOW NOTES, AN ENTREPRENEURIAL COUPLE KEEPS THEIR BUSINESS OF HAND-CRAFTED GUITARS A PITCH PERFECT DREAM COME TRUE. BY SANDRA SHRADER

Sometimes doing something that comes naturally doesn't mean it comes easily.

Just ask boutique guitar maker Alex Watson and his wife and business partner Tere Quevedo. The owners of Idyllwild-based Watson Guitars have experienced firsthand how life can sometimes put up temporary roadblocks on the road to personal destiny.

"I built my first guitar when I was fifteen and living with my family on a game preserve

of thousands of acres in the north highlands of Scotland," Alex, 51, recently said by telephone, adding that his father was mechanically-gifted and musically-inclined and his mother was an artist.

"I didn't really think about whether or not I could build a guitar. I thought of it as just pieces of wood and metal bits," he recalled, with a laugh. "I just went into my father's garage and made that first guitar. I guess that mechanics, art and music are all in my DNA."

Tere, who manages the financial, legal and marketing side of the business, is still amazed

at her husband's ability to envision a beautiful stringed instrument in a piece of raw wood. "He has a great gift," she said, with a note of admiration ringing in her voice. "But he mixes that with humility."

It's a humility that was born from some blue times and a long stretch of years in between making guitars.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WATSON GUITARS

After school, Alex went into manufacturing engineering for two decades, arriving in the United States in 1985. But fallout from financial setbacks in the aircraft industry a few years later left him without a job. Inspired by the “artistic side” he inherited from his mother, Alex decided to go into graphic arts and web design. About the same time, he went through a difficult divorce from an earlier marriage in 1994.

“All Alex had left after the divorce was a Chevy Blazer and two bass guitars which he later had to sell,” explained Tere. She and Alex first met while working in different departments at DreamWorks Studios in the early ‘90s.) “And I was going through a divorce myself with two kids....But [when] Alex came into our lives; he was such a positive male influence on my kids.”

It was during another slow period in 1994 that Alex set out once again to build a guitar, though it had been years since his teenage dabbling.

“I made a bass guitar by hand, with chisels and hammers,” he recalled. “I just wanted to see if I could do it. And it actually sounded pretty good.”

When he finally got around to showing his handcrafted guitar to Tere, she was flabbergasted.

“I was astounded when Alex showed me the guitar he had made. I wondered what else could this guy do that I didn’t know about!” she laughed. “That’s when I realized that he should be doing this in his life, not working in some office cubicle.”

The two, who married in 1997, discussed a plan for Alex to build guitars full-time, but decided to wait and work at their jobs until Tere’s daughter and son (whom Alex legally adopted in 1998) were old enough to be on their own.

By 2005, all the planning and dreaming became a reality when Watson Guitars was launched. The couple went on to sell their townhouse in Laguna Hills

that year, pocketing enough cash to fund the company. Alex and Tere relocated to Idyllwild in 2006 following the purchase of a house and work studio garage in the mountain community.

Fast forward two years later and Watson Guitars is catching quite an industry buzz, which is pretty unusual for a boutique guitar maker, according to Alex. One of the company’s bass guitars received a positive write-up in the August issue of *Bass Player Magazine*, and attention from female bass players has sparked a new line of guitars specifically for women and smaller men.

And for Alex and Tere, that upturn is music to their ears.

“My legacy is my children, of course. But Alex’s legacy, his gift to the world, is the 200 to 250 guitars he’s going to make in his lifetime.” UTS



For more information on Alex’s guitars, visit watsonguitars.net.

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