



# Plug in for Great Acoustic Tone ON THE PLATFORM

By Mark Hutchins

*The warm, woody sound of an acoustic guitar makes an inspiring foundation for so many great songs. That's why many worship environments embrace the acoustic guitar nearly as much as they do the keyboard, and more and more performers are gravitating toward this beautifully simple and conveniently portable instrument as their number one choice on the platform. But, if you play the acoustic guitar in a live setting, then you know how the earthy character of an unplugged acoustic often gets lost when you plug it in. Your goal is to move your congregation with your musical message, and you want your guitar's live sound to retain as much of that warm, organic character as possible. We'll show you how to do it.*

## The right instrument for the job

Before you plug in, you need to start with an instrument that plays well and suits your style. If you play past the 12th fret, for example, you'll want to consider a guitar with a cutaway body style; this lets you take advantage of the higher frets. If fingerpicking is more your speed, take a look at auditorium- or orchestra-sized guitars. These instruments give you balanced tone across the board.

Strummers benefit from a wide range of body styles, from big-sounding dreadnoughts to more delicate parlor-sized guitars. The bottom line? You want a guitar that feels right in your hands and sounds right to your ears. We have a huge selection of acoustic guitars in stock, and your Sales Engineer can help you find the perfect model for your style.

**Taylor 814ce**

Play it acoustically or plug it in,  
for a sweet, balanced tone!

**\$2999<sup>97</sup>**

To Learn More, Go to Page 104.

## Picking up great acoustic tone

If you plan to play live, you'll want a guitar that's equipped with a pickup. Luckily, there are several available — and you can find them right here at Sweetwater. Ideally, your acoustic (or acoustic-electric, as these models are called) will at least have volume and tone controls. Some guitars come stock with a built-in tuner, a phase switch, and a 3-band equalizer, for easy onstage sound shaping. Most pickup systems use a piezo element under the bridge saddle, so it's "reading" the sound of the strings at the bridge rather than picking up the full resonance of the top (a sketchier proposition where feedback is concerned, a point we'll talk about below). Some guitar manufacturers — namely, Taylor — use a combination of sensors in different areas to maximize the guitar's natural sound. You'll even find some systems with both a piezo element and a small internal microphone. There are even modern onboard systems available that apply specific preset EQ curves, so you're good to go as soon as you plug in. When you play on the platform, your goal is to create a natural tone that doesn't sound harsh or boomy. You also want to eliminate pesky feedback.

## Feedback fighters

We usually think of feedback as that high-pitched shriek you get from a poorly placed microphone, but when it comes to acoustic guitars, the low midrange area is usually the worst offender. Since the body of the guitar itself is built to function as an acoustic "speaker," the guitar can be prone to this kind of feedback. The solution? Use your onboard EQ, a notch filter, or an equalizer pedal to pinpoint and remove the offending frequency. This way, you retain the tone you want, without the threat of more feedback issues occurring at the worst possible time. Want more insurance? A soundhole plug, or feedback buster, makes a very effective and inexpensive feedback-fighting option. You simply pop this handy rubber insert into your guitar's soundhole and go. If you amplify your acoustic, you should always have one of these on hand.

Another way to fight feedback is to choose a guitar with a thinner body profile or a laminate top, or both. Why? An acoustic-electric "thinline" guitar allows less air to move inside the body, thanks to its shallower depth. This fights feedback and also gives you a guitar that's very comfortable to play. While a solid-topped instrument's resonance make it sound great unplugged, this very quality can make it feed back more easily when you plug in. A laminate top is slightly less resonant, and it will help you cut down on feedback. That's why a thinline guitar with a laminate top is ideal for stage use.

### Tone shaping on the floor

Floor-based effects used to be the domain of the electric guitarist only. But now, you can take full advantage of a whole world of acoustic-specific pedals designed to make your guitar sound more like, well, an acoustic! Go to Sweetwater.com, and you'll find a wide range of these great boxes. What's the benefit of having these resources at your feet? You can take control of your tone, notch out feedback, and even dip into and out of interesting effects — all without interrupting your performance. Imagine adding that touch of chorus or reverb to the high point of a song, or using a preset to change the tonality of your guitar when you're shifting from playing solo to performing within the worship group. You can even optimize your guitar's plugged-in tone via pedals designed specifically for your guitar's body style!

### Sharing your sound

Ready to plug that guitar in? When it comes to amplification, you'll want to be aware of what your worship environment requires. If you normally play in a smaller setting, a dedicated acoustic guitar amp or a small-format PA system may be the best way to go. Here's a bonus: many acoustic amps also include a separate channel with a microphone input, so you effectively have a solo PA for lower-volume performances. Even if you're in a large room, you can take advantage of an acoustic amp's line-out, which runs your signal straight to the house PA system. This lets you continue to use your amp as a personal monitor. A portable PA system works great for different duties — it's small and mobile enough to use both in the main room and in the youth room. If your church hosts solo or small-ensemble coffeehouse-style events centered around acoustic guitars and vocalists, then a portable PA makes an ideal option.

If you choose to plug straight into your church's sound system, make sure to run your signal through a direct box, or DI (see pgs 132-133). This box converts your guitar's unbalanced signal into the proper balanced signal that the main PA system requires. In fact, a quality DI is an essential part of the well-equipped player's gear bag. Whenever you're plugging in, it's always a good idea to have control over your guitar's volume and to have at least some form of EQ at hand. Your live sound engineer may be able to shape your sound and tame feedback for you, but your best bet is to take control at the source. It's not only possible to get amazingly natural acoustic sound when you plug in; it's easy! Call us today, and we'll help you find what you need to make your worship performances shine!



### Wechter Guitars Nashville Special Elite Cutaway

Experience the beautiful sound of Nashville tuning! The Nashville Elite's distinctively airy, spacious tone makes it perfect for worship performances, and it absolutely shines when you play it alongside a standard-tuned guitar in your group! You'll love how this acoustic-electric plays, and it sounds amazing both unplugged or amplified. It's also available in an acoustic-only version.

**\$599<sup>97</sup>**

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### SWR Strawberry Blonde II

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