

# IT MIGHT GET WEIRD



INSIDE THE MINDS OF SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST CREATIVE CUSTOM-GUITAR BUILDERS

## THE LOVELY BONES

The Bone Guitar

**W**E'VE ALL HEARD of a guitar with a bone nut, but how about a guitar *made* by a bone nut? That nut would be New Zealand-based artist Bruce Mahalski, who is known for his incredible animal illustrations as well as his haunting gun replica sculptures made from bones of various creatures. "I have been collecting bones since I was about eight years old," Mahalski says. "Some people might consider it ghoulish to collect bits of dead animals, but to me it isn't about death—it's about life."

When luthier Dave Gilbeard of Goldbeard Guitars saw Mahalski's sculptures, he approached him with the idea of making a guitar. "I loved Bruce's bone art," Gilbeard says. "I wanted to see a guitar in the same vein. I had a prototype acoustic six-string guitar that had reached the end of its useful life, so I offered it to Bruce."

They wanted the guitar to remain functional, but Mahalski also wanted to cover the visible surface with bones, from the spruce top and mahogany back and sides to the neck. Gilbeard removed the guitar's fretboard so Mahalski could replace it with trimmed cow rib "frets" and bones from various birds, arranged to look like a spine. The instrument is still playable but only with a slide.

The rest of the instrument is covered with bones from a virtual Noah's ark of critters, including hedgehog, weasel, rabbit, rat, magpie, hawk, gull, possum, pukeko, duck, sparrow, thrush and more. It even has part of an extinct moa's jawbone. "I laid out an undercoat of the largest bones and built up from there until every tiny gap was filled," Mahalski says. "I see what I do as painting with bones."

The Bone Guitar is currently for sale for NZD\$5,000 (about \$4,100 in U.S. funds), and Gilbeard and Mahalski plan to collaborate on at least one more bone-covered guitar. —Chris Gill

\* For more info, visit [mahalski.org](http://mahalski.org)



Numerous skulls and bones cover the guitar's exterior, including the back



Have you created a custom work of guitar art suitable for It Might Get Weird? Email us at [soundingboard@guitarworld.com](mailto:soundingboard@guitarworld.com)!