

Changing the Bow World Through Superior Cool

Rock violinist Mark Wood wants to spice up the orchestra world, one bat-winged bow at a time

By Christopher Roberts



Mark Wood adds a little rock 'n' roll to his Turbow.

“Nobody wants to read about a bow!” proclaims violinist, educator, and manufacturer of electric stringed instruments Mark Wood, who—between gigs with the performance ensembles Mark Wood Experience, the Mark Wood Rock Orchestra, and his instrument company Wood Violins—has become the only board member of American String Teachers Association to regularly wear leather pants.

“Bows are boring—I’d much rather read about Jimi Hendrix’s guitar picks,” he says.

But Wood is now in the business of designing and selling his own line of bows—not guitar picks used by a rock ‘n’ roll legend. And since he’s serious about stopping the exodus of young string players to the cooler, hipper world of electric guitars, bass, keyboards, and drums—by one count, some 85 percent of child string players between the ages of eight and 11 will stop playing their instruments

by the age of 13—he’s doing the string world a favor by turning his attention to bows.

But only bows with bat-wing-shaped frogs.

Or skulls.

Heavy metal invading the orchestral world? Maybe, but Wood is less interested in invading the classical world than in shaking up the bow-making world with what he claims is its “first breakthrough in 400 years.”

In Wood’s opinion, most violin bows are little more than “sticks with a piece of horsehair.” He doesn’t see the aesthetic appeal. “They’re perfect structurally, but there



CLASSICAL websites

MONICA HUGGETT
www.monicahuggett.com

...another satisfied customer

get yours at
ClassicalWebsites.com

Websites for musicians, by musicians



Katahdin Studio Furniture

Handcrafted furniture for
the music enthusiast



www.katahdin-online.com
Tel & Fax 888-783-2969
41 Chestnut Street
Lewiston, ME 04240

PIONEER VALLEY



LUTHIER SUPPLY
COMPANY, INC.

Serving the trade since 1995

Purveyors of Fine Bow Hair

SPECIAL SELECT
PLATINUM "LIVE"
FIDDLERS' HAIR

Remarkably consistent, high-quality bow hair; Hand selected and dressed in our own facility.

221 PINE STREET, SUITE 408
FLORENCE, MA 01062 USA
877.253.4837 TOLL FREE
413.586.1800 INTERNATIONAL
413.585.8902 FAX

PIONEERVALLEYLUTHIER.COM

needs to be not just a physical feel, but an emotional feel."

Enter the Turbow, a bow with attitude, in your choice of red Texalium or carbon fiber with a frog in the shape of a bat's wing. Wood's designer-bow series will feature designs on the stick, starting with skulls, and colored hair.

Wood is his own most effective pitchman, signing and giving away a Turbow bow at each and every gig—more Hendrix than Itzhak Perlman, which is the whole idea. "Can you imagine Perlman signing a bow and giving it away at a show? No—it's insane," the provocative violinist says.

"But by not doing that, he's not connecting with his fans. He's creating while remaining aloof."

Players can saw away on one of Wood's seven-string Viper electric violins and use the same bow for a classical gig with their acoustic violins.

Not that Wood is out to change everything on his own.

He recruited Glasser Bows, inventors of the first fiberglass bow, to craft the Turbow, and worked with Andrew Glasser for more than a year to perfect the bow's weight and playability.

The result means players can saw away on one of Wood's seven-string Viper electric violins without needing to exert extra pressure on the bass strings—and can still use the same attitude-infused bow for a classical gig with their acoustic violins.

And even risk dropping the bow without fear of it shattering.

"I can even play better now," he boasts, naming a recent stadium gig with pop idol Billy Joel in front of 50,000 people, where he was "as comfortable and as confident as I've ever been" as evidence.

Really?

"Absolutely," he says, "wouldn't you play better with skulls on your bow?"

Learn more about the Turbow at markwoodmusic.com.