



9 June 2016



SENT TO LSU AGCENTER/LOUISIANA FOREST PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CENTER - FOREST SECTOR / FORESTY PRODUCTS INTEREST GROUP

Are Guitars Today's Blood Diamonds?

LOS ANGELES CA - As the summer tour and festival season ramps up, concertgoers may encounter requests to pledge support for a campaign to halt illegal logging of endangered woods and promote sustainable alternatives. Several high-profile artists have joined with REVERB and the Environmental Investigation Agency, the nonprofit organizations behind the *No More Blood Wood* campaign, to raise awareness about the relationship between wooden instruments and demand-driven logging practices now decimating ancient rainforests.

Maroon 5, Dave Matthews Band, Linkin Park, Sara Bareilles, Michael Franti, Jack Johnson, KT Tunstall, Jason Mraz, Guster, Bonnie Raitt and Bob Weir are among many performers using their voices and influence to encourage fans, legislators and instrument-makers to support the U.S. Lacey Act, which prohibits the import of and trade in illegally sourced timber and wood products. They've also pledged to verify wood sources before purchasing new instruments. Artists from Mick Jagger, Willie Nelson, Sting and Lenny Kravitz to Lana Del Rey, Lilly Allen and Brandi Carlile have also signed the pledge.

Several musicians have not only signed, but participated in letter-writing campaigns to instrument manufacturers, an educational video (Getting in Tune: Musicians for Legal and Sustainable Wood) or other activities. DMB's Stefan Lessard and Guster's Adam Gardner, who cofounded REVERB with his environmentalist wife, Lauren Sullivan, have published newspaper op-ed pieces. Gardner also testified before Congress in protest of 2012 efforts to weaken the Lacey Act.

REVERB began educating concertgoers about the issue with 2013's Last Summer on Earth tour; since then, millions of fans have been invited to sign postcards asking their Congressional representatives to support continued enforcement against the illegal timber and wood products trade.

In late 2015, Gardner and Sullivan traveled with Maroon 5's James Valentine and Jesse Carmichael and members of the Environmental Investigation Agency, a nonprofit advocacy group, to the Guatemalan rainforest to document the effects of illegal logging and success of sustainable alternatives.

Their 20-minute film, *Instruments of Change: Lessons from the Rainforest*, premiered May 17 at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles, followed by a Facebook-livestreamed Q&A. The film also premiered in Guatemala City before policy makers and civil society.

The message needs to reach even more ears in order to halt the devastating effects of illegal logging on delicate ecosystems, wildlife and biodiversity, as well as local populations who depend on forest resources. Irreversible species loss and human lives sacrificed to corrupt and unethical business practices are just some of the consequences of illegal timber harvests.

According to climate scientists, deforestation and illegal logging result in more greenhouse gas emissions than all the world's air, road, rail and shipping traffic combined.



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"This issue is very similar to blood diamonds," says Gardner. "It's about knowing that what you buy has deep impacts far afield from the store you bought it from."

"It's the demand for these woods that drives this whole industry," says Valentine. "I don't think consumers are aware of the problem, and change could happen if consumers start to ask where their wood is coming from for any wood product, not just instruments."

REVERB and EIA have worked together since 2012 to encourage musicians, fans, instrument manufacturers and lawmakers to support legal and sustainably sourced timber and call for action against those who trade in stolen timber.

During that post-screening Q&A at the Grammy Museum, Gardner was asked why the group felt the need to trek into the heart of the Central American rainforest.

"We thought, 'How do we more deeply engage artists and the public in this?'" he explained. "'Well, let's have fans see and learn along with these high profile artists' eyes.'"

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