



Feature No. 29: Hering Instruments



Each cultural era has its influential symbols and its major icons. The defining image of a green generation may well be Brazilian musician Gilberto Gil playing a sleek, environmentally-friendly Walker guitar in front of a packed audience, heralding the future of sustainable instruments.

“Yes, that was a good moment for us,” says Alberto Bertolazzi, Hering Instruments CEO, talking about one of the bigger changes in the musical instruments industry he’s experienced. Bertolazzi’s pride comes from the fact that, while sold under the Walker brand, Gil’s guitar is one of the first to be made of Hering crafted parts, each sourced from the exotic high-quality woods to be found in the Amazon.

These sustainably manufactured guitars are now being supplied to some of the world’s largest guitar and bass companies. They are unique for their fusion of craftsmanship, marketability and a light environmental footprint. Hering has added an undeniable Brazilian touch to the instruments by sourcing their material entirely from sustainably harvested Amazonian species. This Forest Stewardship Council certified wood is derived from 1.8 million hectares of “managed” forest in the state of Acre where it is meticulously decided which trees may be utilized based on their age, location and the rate of extraction.

Aside from the clear environmental benefits, and the hundreds of new jobs Hering will create in rural Brazil, the company has strategically positioned itself at the forefront of the estimated \$30 billion annual global market for musical instruments. While some competitors have produced sustainable parts in the past, high costs and low levels of productivity have kept their share of the market small. As Hering hits its initial target of 12,000 components per month in the coming years, it will catalyze the widespread use and long-term investment in FSC-certified instruments needed to sustain the sector, as the constancy of production will allow major manufacturers to rely on a steady supply.

The tenacious ambition that led Alberto to become a winner of the 2006 New Ventures Brazil Investor Forum becomes apparent when he discusses this recent shift, because Alberto talks about more than the outlook for Hering, he talks about being a part of a larger trend. Alberto points to green magazine covers and radical auto sector innovations, and he wonders why the music industry has not caught on. Hering’s strategy is to start with guitars as a popular and recognizable cultural icon – and make a significant media impact. In addition to seeking celebrity endorsements, Hering has created an “Amazonas” series of guitars for Walker that are decorated by well known painters including Gustavo Rosa and Antonio Peticov. The combination of aesthetics and sustainability is not just symbolic - it is the start of a movement toward zero footprint production that is intended to encompass the entire musical instruments industry.

When Hering announced at the 2004 Expomusic fair that it would launch a line of sustainable products, the company embarked on a project that was destined to help bring about the mainstreaming of green products and business. Through the work of Alberto Bertolazzi, the defining symbol of a cultural movement in sustainability could be more than a hybrid car or another Whole Foods, but the sound of a guitar riff ripping through sold out crowds, announcing a green future.

Written by Derek Newberry, World Resources Institute ©2007 – The Rising Ventures Series features articles, announcements and profiles of investors and entrepreneurs related to the theme of innovative small and medium businesses (SMEs) in emerging markets that deliver social and/or environmental benefits. These businesses have been identified through the New Ventures (www.new-ventures.org) and Development through Enterprise (www.nextbillion.net) projects. To view other Features in the Series, visit <http://www.new-ventures.org/risingventures>.