

The Guitar Deck

by Andrew Henley



You may recognize this guitar—it's a depiction of Fender's famous Stratocaster, executed both in the shape of the deck and in the layout of the multi-colored decking. Drawn by architect John Patrick Picard, the design for this lake-side deck remodel was inspired by the owner's love of rock-n-roll music and by one of his favorite guitars—a Stratocaster, of course. Our goal for this example of "Duck" (or novelty) architecture was to highlight as many of the details on his guitar as possible, including the distinctive shape of its body, the neck, frets, and strings, the pickups, and even the change of colors in the body.

Of course, our main objective on any deck project is to build a safe and comfortable space for the owner to relax and entertain friends and family. But with the guitar deck, creating an artful conversa-

tion piece that highlighted the owner's interests became the true driving force behind the partnership that developed between the architect, my lead carpenter Ken Baldwin and the rest of the crew, and myself.

Foundation and Framing

The deck was replacing an existing elevated deck, and we were able to reuse the three steel columns that had been supporting it, as well as a stainless steel spiral staircase that provided outside access to the deck. After dismantling the old decking and framing and carefully setting the staircase aside, we removed enough of the stone pavers from the patio below the deck to dig a pair of holes for two new footings. We dug down below frostline (48 inches in my area), then placed a pair of 24-inch-

diameter tube forms in the ground and filled them with concrete. When the concrete cured, we anchored 4-inch-diameter steel columns to the footings, welded custom-fabricated brackets to the tops of the columns to match the existing supports, and began framing.

Because of the relatively long spans between columns, we chose to support the joists with pressure-treated glulams rather than sawn built-up beams. At the house, the glulams connect to the house framing at the same locations as the original deck framing, through beam pockets in the stone veneer cladding. Essentially, the frame is freestanding, except at those two connection points.

To accommodate the irregular shape of the guitar, we dropped the glulams on the expanded part of the deck. That way, we could cantilever the joists and



The steel columns, stainless steel spiral staircase, and custom-fabricated handrails from the original deck (above left) were repurposed on the new deck, which needed additional steel columns and PT glulam beams (above right).



Custom-fabricated brackets were welded to the steel columns to support dropped beams (above left). Cantilevered joists were then installed to create the shape of the guitar body (above center). Extensive blocking was also needed to execute the elaborate inlay required to create the guitar design (above right).

install blocking as needed to conform to the shape of the guitar's body. Since the decking would be laid out to supply the details of the guitar, we had to follow a pretty intricate blocking detail, and we installed more blocking as needed in the field as we installed the decking.

We used four different colors in the Trex Earth Tones line of decking to create the design. We used vintage lantern and rope swing to create the body, tree house for the neck and pickups, and gravel path for the parts of the lakeside deck outside the guitar design.

In addition to reusing the spiral stairs and the columns, we tried to repurpose as many of the original deck's other components as possible to maintain the aesthetics already established by the house. For example, we re-installed the spiral stairs in the same location, avoiding costly changes to the patio below. We also reused the existing custom-fabricated railing, adding new sections as needed to enclose the expanded deck. We also refinished the stairs and all of the existing and new railing components to match.

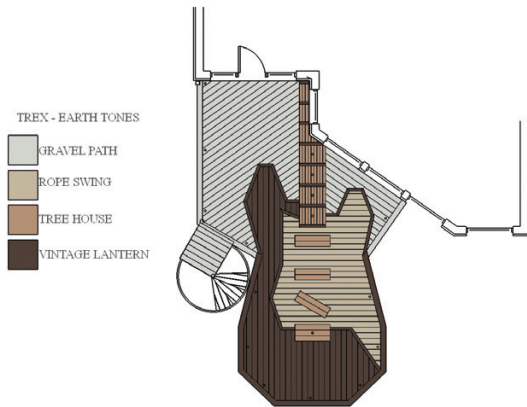
Lighting

We used three types of lighting in the design of the deck: uplighting, downlighting, and round lights recessed into the deck boards.

The uplighting is placed in the deck boards where the deck connects to the house so it points upward toward the large windows. The goal for this light is to wash the exterior of the house with light, highlighting the home but also limiting the amount of the interior that can be seen at night from the lake.

We used a similar technique on the

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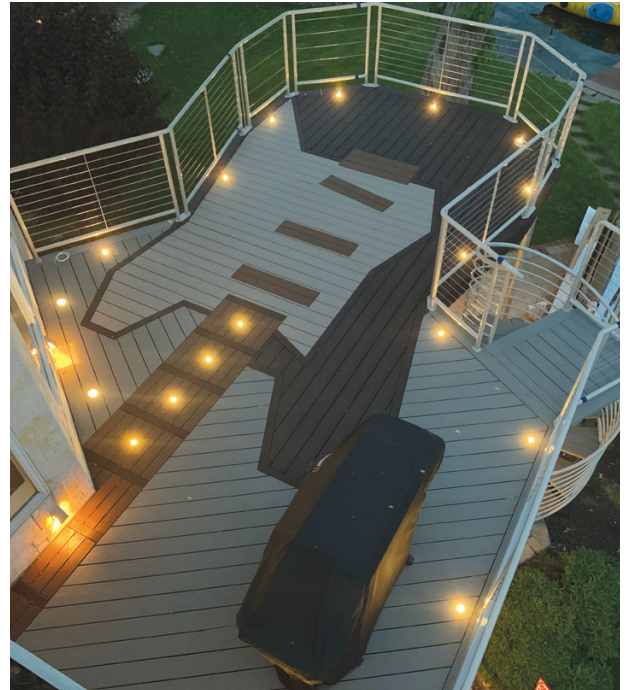


Four different shades of decking were used to create the design of the guitar.

underside of the deck, with downlighting pointed at the stone wall, windows, and door beneath the deck.

We used round recessed lighting fixtures to outline the edge of the deck, as well as to add the detail of the dot inlays on the neck of the guitar. ❖

Andrew Henley owns Hen-House Decks in Uniontown, Ohio.



The design is highlighted by recessed lights installed around the deck's perimeter and in the guitar's fret board.