



# RING OF FIRE!

## Bow Released from Johnny Cash's Majestic Mahogany

As Interviewed by *Primitive Archer Magazine* at the Tennessee Classic

### Exactly what is Johnny Cash's Majestic Mahogany?

As the legend has it- In 1979 Johnny Cash became so concerned about the United States placing restrictions on certain exotic woods coming into the states, that he had some mahogany cut on his plantation in Jamaica and shipped via his private plane back to Nashville. The plantation itself is supposedly haunted and was partially burned and left to rot for many years before its restoration in the 1960's. Mahogany is a strong, beautiful, new world wood, famous for its resonance and resistance to decay.



Johnny Cash's Jamaica Plantation

Since this time many beautiful and wonderful sounding guitars have been made from this mahogany for such artists as Ira Dean, Eric Hamilton and others. However, John Carter Cash (Johnny and June's only child), being the avid outdoorsman that he is, wondered if his dad's mahogany might be suitable for making a bow.



John Carter Cash with alligator

### So how did Kick Ash Bows Get Involved?

Enters legendary Nashville drummer turned bowyer Boo McAfee. McAfee has toured and worked in the recording studio with many artists over the years including Donna Fargo, Bellamy Brothers, Atlanta, Eric Hamilton, Eddie Money, Hank Cochran, and Willie Nelson. During his musical days, Boo played drums for John Carter Cash as well, so when McAfee recently started a bow company called Kick Ash Bows in Portland TN he became the perfect candidate to see if Mr. Cash's mahogany might be suitable for bow wood.

"About 30 years ago, I started hearing about this 'majestic mahogany' that Mr. Cash had shipped back from Jamaica, so let us fast forward to 2021. When I received the call to test it for possibly making a bow, I was extremely excited about the challenge," says McAfee

### Up to the Challenge?

McAfee is no stranger to challenges. In 1981, he played drums longer than anyone in the world for a



Guinness World Record of 738 hours. Yes, you read it correctly, 738 hours. That's a month and 18 hours. "It was a simply personal goal that I needed to do. I thought if I picked an impossible endeavor and if I was successful at that venture then everything else would be easier by comparison." Added McAfee.

As an inventor and entrepreneur, McAfee invented the first ever machine that could detect the speed of drummer hands and feet called the Drumometer. From the Drumometer came the extreme sport called World's Fastest Drummer. In 2006, Boo and his musician wife and instructor Laura McAfee named their farm Drum-O-Farm after the Drumometer. Drum-O-Farm is lo-





cated in Portland, Tn., acts as an art and agri-tourism extension as well as the home of Kick Ash Bows.

So, with the challenge and investigation in front of him Boo started the journey of could a decent bow be made from the majestic mahogany? First, he started with multiple breakage tests to see how the wood would bend, including Tim Baker's stress test which was included in Traditional Bowyers Bible Volume One (page 100). The first limb combinations were mahogany riser with Back- 1/4" Osage, Belly 1/4" Ash, Osage gave way due to impurities we think. Second, limb combination was mahogany riser with Back- 1/8" mahogany, Core- 1/4" osage, 1/8" ash, Osage seemed to overpower the ash this time. Third and final limb combination was .040 clear glass on back, 1/8" mahogany and 1/8" ash core with 1/4" Osage belly.



Tim Baker's Stress Test



ROF in heat box

The plan was to build 3 test bows using different limb combinations; learning from each one so by the time we got to number 3 we hopefully would have enough data to make a call on whether we could produce a decent shooting and durable bow from the mahogany.

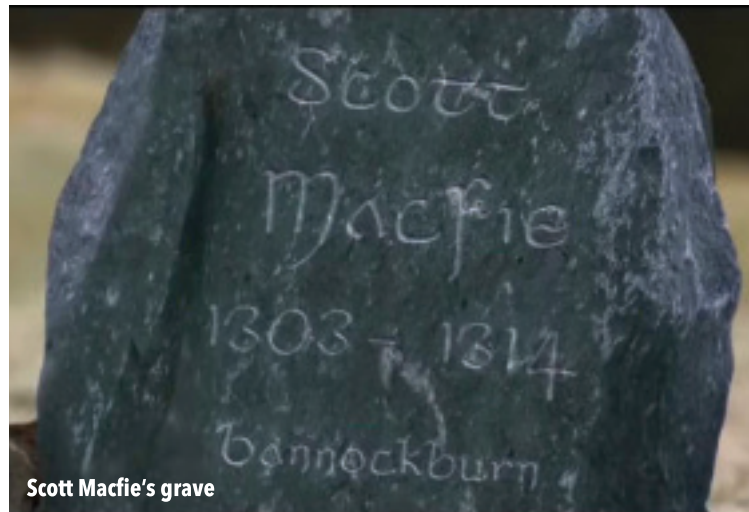
KAB- Bows was lucky enough to have valuable input and consultation from Traditional Bowyers Bible fame himself Paul Comstock along with Steve Turay, Jim Thorne, Alan Case, Colin Gair, Mike Shepherd, Chad Weaver and designer C1N.



Paul Comstock

### So how did Kick Ash Bows get started?

McAfee's heritage goes back to Colonsay, Scotland. His ancestors the Macfie's were legendary hunters and fighters equally using bows and swords. His family was recently the heart of a movie about Robert the Bruce, starring Angus McFadden, where after being shot with an arrow Robert Bruce was discovered by the Macfies, who took him in and saved his life, not once, but twice. Eleven year old, Scott Macfie, fought alongside the King and died at the battle of Bannockburn.



Scott Macfie's grave

“Given my family heritage, I guess it was destined I became a Knights Templar with an interest in longbows and how they were used in battle. When the shutdown happened due to Covid 19, I decided since I had this awesome piece of ash out at the barn, what a great time to make that longbow I have always wanted to make. I started out trying to find a bow in a piece of ash wood and literally found myself instead. I mean I simply loved it. I became like Forest Gump running, I made one bow, another and another and still going to this day” added McAfee.

KAB-Bows is presently still a small company capable of producing two bows a week and has added one more designer named C1N with hopes of double production by the end of 2021.

Ash wood has gotten a bad name the last couple of decades due to the damage done by the emerald ash borers. Before the borers hit, ash was used for all kinds of items including toboggans, hockey sticks, canoe paddles, tool handles, hardwood floors, electric guitars plus the famous Rawlings and Louisville Slugger Baseball Bats. Ash wood is in fact the source of myth and legend around the world. Yggdrasil was a great Ash tree in Norse mythology that was the center of the world!

“When each bow is finished and initial testing is complete, we have what we call ‘test day’ and invite the new owners of the bow out to KAB-Bows for a cook out and a family fun shoot!

It is all a part of our overall mission to reinstate the good name and reputation that Ash wood once held. We want the world to know that ASH IS NOT A FOUR LETTER WORD!!” said McAfee

### **Speaking of KAB-Bows Test Day and Johnny Cash**

We had built a bow for a special friend of the Cash family and on test day his family came out to KAB-Bows to shoot. One of our neighbors asked this friend “what was Johnny Cash really like”. “Well, I think I can sum him up in one quick story” said the old family friend. “One time John Carter and I were going fishing when Big John pulled up:

Johnny: “Hey, where you boys going?”

John Carter: “Going Fishing Dad,

why don’t you come and go with us?”

Johnny: “Wish I could son, but I got to go downtown to some kind of ole Lifetime Achievement Award...”

To me as well this summed-up Johnny Cash, a persona bigger than life who would have just as soon gone fishing,” added McAfee.

### **So how did the bow get the name ‘Ring of Fire’?**

We were into the project, had selected our first round of limb combinations and were finalizing the riser on March 25th ,when the rough saw blade marks starting morphing into these gorgeous distinct flames. “As we continued to sand, the flames became more prominent, like fire coming out of the wood. KAB Bows designer C1N and I even commented that Mr. Cash would be pleased with how this wood was turning out... At the time neither of us knew what the significance of the flames appearing on March the 25th meant. Until I go home that night and pulled up Facebook and there at the top it was in bold JOHNNY CASH RECORDS ‘RING OF FIRE’ March 25th, 1963, the exact same day the flames popped out in his riser wood. I could not believe what I was reading, the hair on my arms stood up! No doubt Mr. Cash wanted this bow to be called Ring of Fire!” said McAfee.

We settled on the limb combination of from back to belly clear glass which would feature the mahogany and ash core and Osage orange on the belly. Ring of Fire turned out to be 68" long 38# @ 28 and made its debut







Early flames in ROF riser



Flames up-close



Finished ROF standing

**Answers to Word Scramble on page 78**

- ONTARIO
- NEW MEADOWS
- MCCALLA
- FLY
- CHADRON
- MUSSELSHELL
- ORIFINO
- CHAPMANSBORO
- BLOOMINGTON
- LAINSBURG
- SONORA
- MILTONA
- DENTON HILL
- BROWNSVILLE
- REDGRANITE
- VERONA
- MOULTONBOROUGH
- WASAU
- CONDE
- NEW BERLIN
- POMEROY
- CHETOPA
- LANDER
- JACKSON
- FLORENCE
- LEWELLEN
- ELIZBETHTOWN
- MCCOOK
- HALLAM
- NOWTHEN
- BARTLESVILLE
- COLONA
- KAMPSVILLE



at the 24th annual Tennessee Classic. The Tennessee Classic in Chapmansboro, Tennessee, has a special place in McAfee's heart, as well for Mark Pappy Baggett and the gang at Twin Oaks Bowhunters Club who took the time to work with Boo early on and inspired him to continue learning to make bows. Ring of Fire tested really well and got good reviews by several shooters at the Classic.


**So, what's next for Mr. Cash's Majestic Mahogany and Kick Ash Bows?**

In closing Boo says "I see three more Cash bows in the future, what about 'A Bow Named Sue? Bow in Black?




Oh and my favorite, we can sandwich a string of white ash down the center of the mahogany rise and call it 'Walk the Line'..."

**Note:** 'Ring of Fire video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXt2jMXTeIo>



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