

# BAMBOO BLUESMAN



**W**e all know that Eric Clapton is a wizard on rosewood fretboards, but apparently he's also better than all right with a bit of cane in his hands, too. And no one would know better than John Niemiera of Niemiera Fly Rods, maker of hand-split, hand-planed bamboo fly rods—and now rodmaker to the six-string megastar.

It all started backstage during a New York stop on Eric's last world tour. Niemiera, himself a musician and long-time fan of the bluesman's music, presented Clapton with one of his hand-crafted rods as a token of his esteem. Clapton was so taken with the one-of-a-kind gift that

he offered his endorsement of a specialty line of high-end cane rods bearing his nickname, and thus the "Slowhand Special" was born. Now, when he's not touring the world, the British bluesman gives each of the several Niemieras he owns a workout on his home river, the Test, in southeast England.

Niemiera has returned the favor

by donating a portion of the profits from the sale of each Slowhand Special to Clapton's Crossroads Centre in Antigua, a non-profit facility that assists people recovering from chemical dependencies.

The two men have become chummy and have even shared a stream. "Eric is one of rock and blues' best," says Niemiera humbly, "but he truly is just another fly fisherman to me, who happens to fish my fly rods, and that's it."

The Special is the latest of six lines of traditionally built rods in Niemiera's catalog. For more information on the Slowhand Special or other Niemiera rods, visit [www.niemieraflyrods.com](http://www.niemieraflyrods.com) or call John at his New Jersey workshop at 732-548-8385.



**Eric "Slowhand" Clapton and his favorite rodmaker, John Niemiera (left).**