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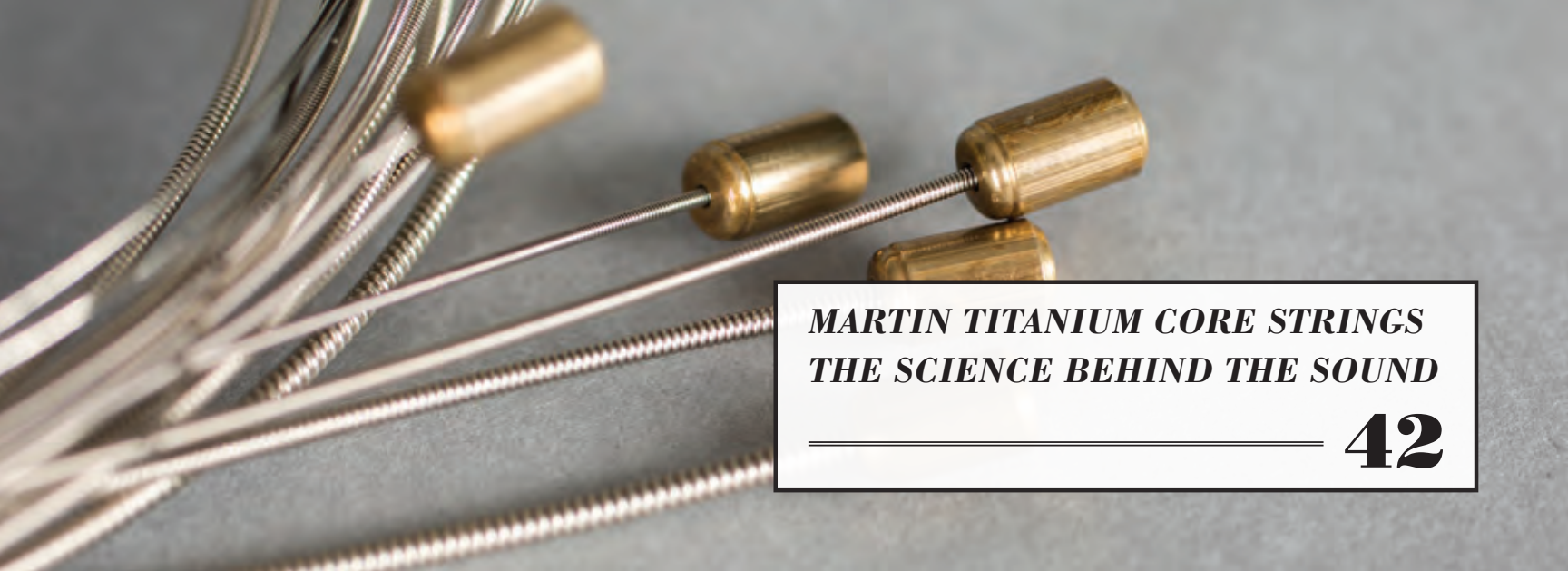
THE JOURNAL OF ACOUSTIC GUITARS

SHAPING

a

HIGHER STANDARD

VOLUME 8 | 2018



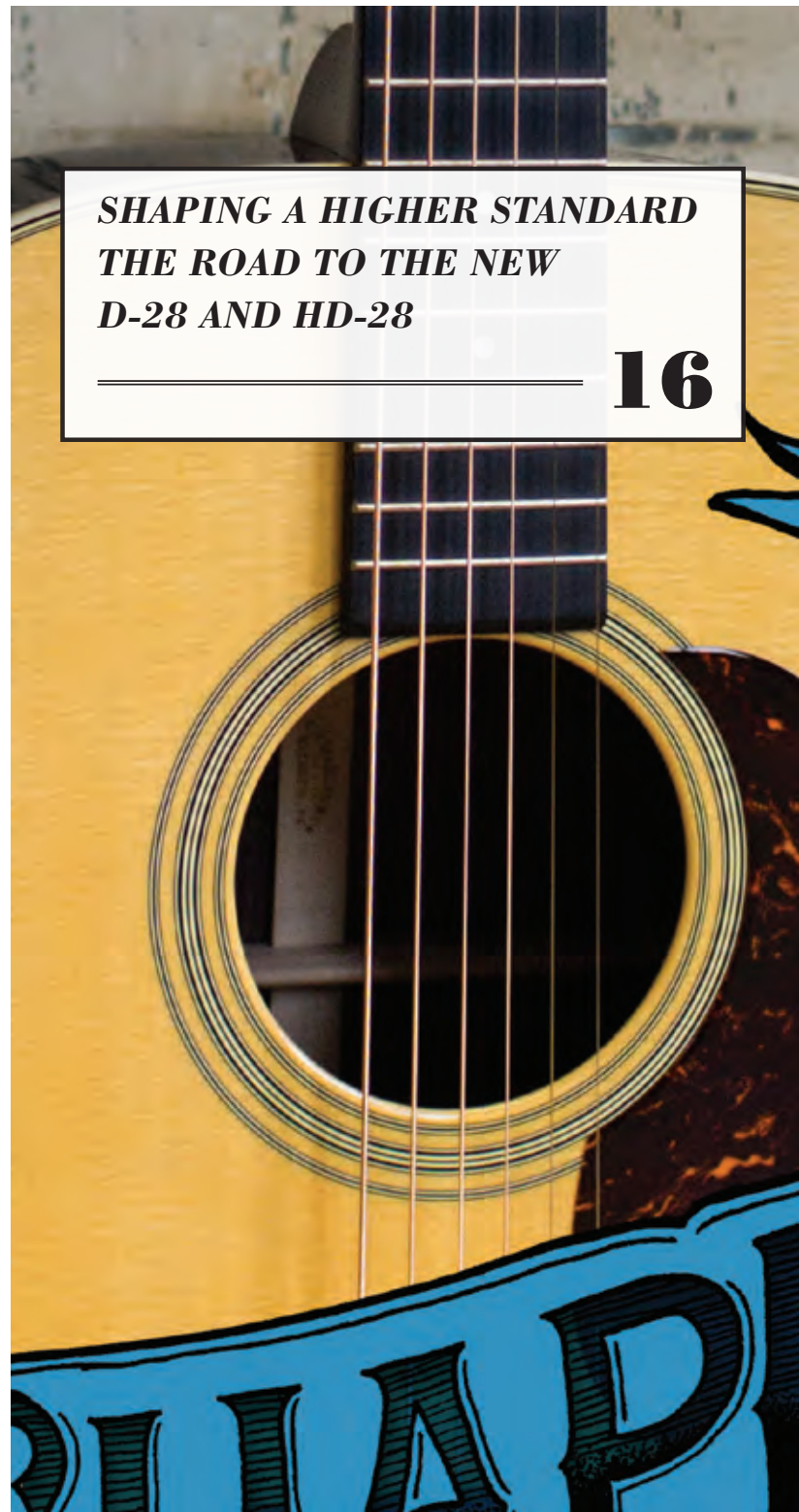
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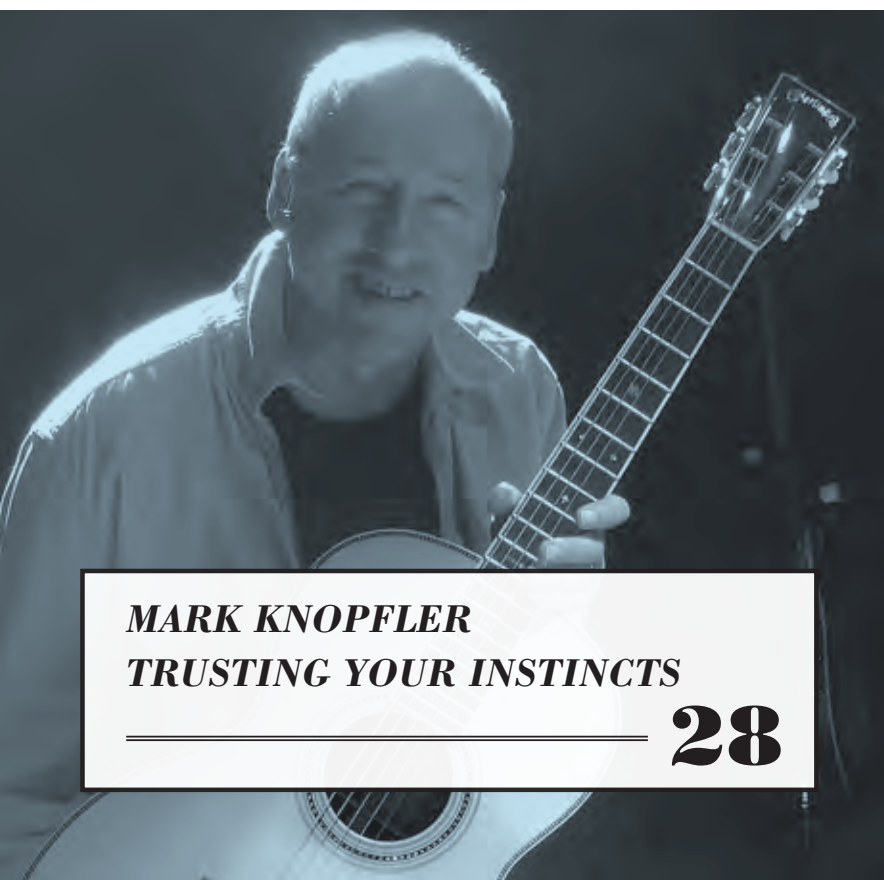
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VOLUME 8 | 2018

PUBLISHER C. F. Martin & Co., Inc.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF C. F. Martin IV

MANAGING EDITOR Kristi Bronico

CREATIVE MANAGER Mandee McEvoy

DESIGN & PRODUCTION Lehigh Mining & Navigation

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Denis Aumiller

DESIGNER & ILLUSTRATOR Laura Dubbs

ACCOUNT DIRECTOR Sarah Durkin

COPYWRITER Scott Byers

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT Pat Lundy

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Chris Thomas, Jonathan R. Walsh

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS Mitchell Nollman, Dick Boak,
Jonathan R. Walsh, David Schneider, Steve Harvey,
Kristi Bronico, Sean Campbell, Mary Barbour,
Kaitlin Vadyak, Chelsey Simpson

PHOTOGRAPHY Zachary Hartzell

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C. F. Martin & Co., Inc.

P.O. Box 329, Nazareth, Pa. 18064

P. 610.759.2837

F. 610.759.5757

MartinGuitar.com

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LINER NOTES

LETTERS FROM THE COMMUNITY

"I have three Martins, but my D-28 is my absolute best friend. This thing never lets me down when I pick it up. When I want to write, it has songs in it, and when I just want to play and hear its voice, it tells me what I want to hear." | **Brent C., Oklahoma**

"I'VE GOT PILES OF ACOUSTIC GUITARS THAT ARE JUST HANGING BY A THREAD,
BUT I ALWAYS LIKED MARTINS, AND WHEN I MADE A LITTLE BREAD,

THE FIRST THING

I DID WAS GO

OUT AND BUY

MY D-28." -BECK

"My '98 Martin 000-28EC remains my faithful companion. It fits me like an old broken-in pair of boots, and everything just intuitively falls into place whenever I pick it up." | **Dale P., Ohio**

"I own a D-16GT that I've had for 12 years. From the moment I held it in my hands and strummed a chord, it made me feel, by just playing it, I was a better player than I was and inspired me to get out and play in front of people and share the music." | **Greg S., Ontario**

"Every time I open the case of my 000-17SM and play it, I am inspired by the world-renowned tone. But on a deeper level, it inspires a feeling of pride. For me, it's the culmination of years of dedication and hard work. I look forward to playing it for the rest of my life." | **Matt M., Ontario**

"I ONLY HAD TIME FOR ONE TRIP BACK IN [TO MY BURNING HOUSE]. I GRABBED MY TWO PRIZED POSSESSIONS, A POUND OF MARIJUANA & MY MARTIN GUITAR."

-WILLIE NELSON

"I have a Martin D-35 that was purchased by my uncle in 1960. He played bluegrass for many years on stage. He is the reason I started playing guitar, and I still carry on that bluegrass playing tradition as he did."

Robert R., Virginia

"The D-18 is the most extraordinarily beautiful sounding guitar you will ever hear. Being in the guitar business my entire life, I've heard and played thousands, and nothing has ever come close. This guitar stays with me to the grave!" | **Les L., California**

"I have a Little Martin, purchased for motorcycle travel and camping. It's perfect; I have music with me wherever I go!" | **Kate M., Massachusetts**

"What inspires me about my 00L-17 Black Smoke is its authenticity of sound. I can hear every note defined when I am singing and songwriting. It brings everything to life." | **Josh A., Ontario**

"The sound resonates, the mellow tone is amazing, and the neck and action on it are perfect. I am more driven to play more complex arrangements and ventured out into the world to play live so that other people can hear and feel what I do when I pick up this DX1AE and start playing it." | **Roy R., Illinois**

"I bought a brand new D-28 in 2004, and right there in the showroom, it sang like nothing else around. With each passing year, I swear it sounds better and better." **Robert R., Ohio**

"My HD-28 forces me to be my best. I have been able to fudge through mistakes on other guitars, but the HD won't let me. I feel compelled to 'make things right.' I find that my overall playing has improved when playing other guitars now." | **Scott E., Maine**

"I own a Martin DX1 and J-40. The Martin sound is superior to any acoustic guitar I have ever owned or played; every guitarist should own one. Get the best you can afford, and play it often. Show it love, and it will return it to you." **Jerry S., Pennsylvania**

"My grandfather bought me a custom X Series guitar five years ago. My great grandmother's Dreadnought was left to me in her will. The last song we ever played together was with these two guitars, just hours before she passed. Martin is a family to us. If you've got a guitar, you'll never be alone." | **Alice B., Georgia**

"The simple all mahogany 000-15 guitar is one I will always be thrilled to pick up and play!" | **Michael P., Alabama**

"To my Martin D-28: Bless you! My fascinating, ever-faithful friend: for every smile and tear you've caused in me; for all the selfless pride and solemn joy I've felt as you sat trembling on my knee; for every heartbeat you deciphered in my ear, through whispers only lonely souls can hear." | **Terry R., Minnesota**

"My D-15 is a constant reminder that I am more than a person who just wakes up every day and goes to work. With this piece of wood, I have a voice and something to say." | **Jess J., Michigan**

"My 000X1 has proven to be the road warrior I had been searching for." | **Gary C., North Carolina**

"THE FLAT TOP IS DEFINED BY THE DREADNOUGHT—MORE LEVEL, BIGGER BASS, AND CUTTING TOP.

IT'S THE WEAPON OF CHOICE FOR ALL SITUATIONS, IN THE STUDIO OR ONSTAGE."

-MARK KNOPFLER

TAKE IT FROM THE TOP

A WORD FROM CHRIS



REIMAGINE (ca. 1934)

**TO IMAGINE AGAIN OR ANEW;
ESPECIALLY: TO FORM A NEW CONCEPTION OF.**

Dear Martin Enthusiast,

What struck me about the definition of reimagine was the date. 1934 was one of the last times my family's business decided to upgrade what is now our most popular guitar. The transition from 12- to 14-fret necks began in 1929 with the OM guitars. In 1934, we began to offer the Dreadnought with a 14-fret neck. While it took a few years for the change to take hold, I think it is fair to say that, today, the 14-fret Martin Dreadnought is the standard by which all other acoustic guitars are judged.

Today we are undertaking a complete refresh of our entire standard rosewood line. This movement began a few years ago when we realized we could consolidate the many variations of the D-18 into one upgraded model.

In 2017, we began to focus on the rosewood models. The first step was to upgrade the post-war D-28. This endeavor has been well received. One question that was often asked: "What about scalloped bracing?" I kept saying: "Stay tuned."

I challenged my coworkers to help me with the significant task of modernizing guitars whose origins go back to the 1930s (and earlier).

As you might imagine, the discussions were quite animated. We have been making Style 28, 35, 41, 42, and 45 guitars for quite a while. Fortunately, we all knew we were working toward a common goal: How can we modernize traditional Martin Guitar models while continuing to honor our rich history and heritage?

I hope you will take some time and visit your local Authorized Martin Dealer to check out our "new" Standard Series guitars.

Thanks for listening,



C. F. Martin IV
Chairman & CEO
C. F. Martin & Co., Inc.



NEW ENGLAND
BOSTON

NEW ENGLAND

MITCHELL
NOLLMAN

VP OF SALES
MARKETING

Rolling
STONES

Tokyo
NASHVILLE



MARTIN
GUITARS
& Strings

Q & A

WITH MITCHELL NOLLMAN
VP OF SALES & MARKETING

What was your first experience with the Martin brand before you started working for the company?

During summers growing up, I worked as a camp counselor. We ended each day with music, and someone played a Martin guitar and sang songs every single day. I always aspired to own one. About a year before I joined the company, I went to a Martin Experience Event with my bandmates, thinking, "I can always use some strings." I heard this guitar, a D-18 custom, and just had to buy it. It's still one of my favorite guitars in my collection.

How did it feel when you first walked through the doors at the Martin Guitar Factory to discuss the possibility of working for this iconic brand?

When I came for my interview, I thought I had come to guitar heaven. Here was this legendary place with a Martin headstock on the sidewalk and this museum and guitars to play and a store. I just thought, "Wow, would it be great to work here!" I got a private tour from Joel Zingone and saw where they made my custom D-18, and I was hooked. The smell of the wood, the people crafting these incredible instruments, and then meeting the team here made me want this opportunity. When I started and announced the change on my LinkedIn profile, I had about 50 private notes from friends and colleagues who own Martin guitars, some with their make and serial numbers. I was so humbled by the power of what we do and how many people we get to impact at such a deep level.

D-18
CUSTOM

Now that you've been with Martin a while, what is your favorite thing about coming to work?

That's a really tough one. I love the smell of the wood. The passion around here is infectious. I've been humbled by the team here, who encourages me to do my best every day. This is the first manufacturing company for which I've worked where you can see the craftsmanship and passion in each instrument we make. The people here really care about what they do and want to make these inspirational instruments to make musicians even better. That purpose-driven culture is something I've never seen.

As a musician and a performer, how has music and/or guitar playing impacted your life?

When I was in high school, I was in marching band on the drum line and sang in the chorus. I learned guitar first in college and started taking lessons at my local store in Framingham, Massachusetts.

My senior year in high school, I did a variety show where I sang a James Taylor song for the first time live and had a fantastic experience. I was in a band in college, but it fizzled as work and life were my priority. I decided to start a band at age 50 and began playing west of Boston a few times a month, which was an absolute thrill.

Today, learning a new song or just hearing that Martin tone (I now have four Martins) is my favorite way to relax and unwind.

Of all the amazing guitars that you pass by in the factory each day, which one would you take home right now if you could?

I can't pick just one. I love the new StreetMaster™ guitar for the edge and tone. There's an attitude to it; it's light and just great to play. The new D-28 is also a must-have, because it sounds amazing and has so much history in it even though it's brand new. Finally, I'd love to design a custom and have the experience of choosing the wood and all the trim and watch how it gets made through the process. Just show me a Martin guitar, and I will probably want it. You could follow me around the plant and watch me get excited about everything I see.

Who are the biggest musical influences in your life?

Bruce, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, and Eagles, and all the '70s one-hit wonders with a chord progression below the 5th fret. I love everything from classical to big band, jazz, classic rock, and country. I find such inspiration in music and songs, especially when you can feel the music and lyrics in your heart. There is still nothing like seeing someone play live—whether they are famous or not—who just has that spirit and talent and passion all combined. It's just great to be a part of music.

You're originally from Boston. How do you like the Lehigh Valley, and what do you miss most about your hometown?

I love the Lehigh Valley. The people and food are great. I am really liking the pace and environment here. My new wife, Sharon, and I moved here from Boston and are adjusting to the new place and our new home. Boston was home to us both for a lifetime, and we'll be Patriots, Sox, Celtics, and Bruins fans forever. But the Iron Pigs and the Phantoms, our local minor league teams, are lots of fun. There are great walking and biking trails, and the music scene is terrific. The restaurants are really impressive. We seem to get some great chefs, who would rather work in the Lehigh Valley than in Manhattan.

For me, my family and friends are what I miss most. My son, Matt, and daughter, Emma, are still living in Boston as are my parents, who I still talk to several times a week. And my sister, Marci, and her family are there as well. Plus a lifetime of friends are back in Boston too. And Sharon's friends and family too. Plus New England has the ocean, mountains, farms, and more, all within a short drive, which make it a great area to live. There's no substitute for home, but we are enjoying this adventure a great deal.

You get to travel quite a bit in your role at Martin. What is the coolest place you've been so far?

They are all great—from Anaheim to Nashville, Tokyo to NYC, and everywhere in between. I love taking in the local flavor of different places and spending time getting to know dealers and distributors in their home markets. It's always great to be able to see a special music store and see the people who make them that way.

What advice would you give beginner guitar players that you wish you knew when you first started out?

If you keep playing, your fingers will stop hurting. And practice those scales; they'll come in handy. Learning any instrument can be a challenge, but if you can stay with it and learn, you can get a lifetime of pleasure from it. What else can you enjoy equally when you are happy or sad, or energized or tired? Being inspired by making music and forming connections with others make your life better. And playing a great sounding guitar makes all the difference.

Being at the helm of Sales and Marketing for a brand with 185 years of history, what is the thing you are most excited about when looking to the future?

Martin is everything I imagined and more. The people are awesome. We have a purpose—to inspire musicians worldwide. And a company to keep growing for future generations. I'm just thrilled to be a part of this incredible legacy and hope that I can help make a difference to those who choose to use our guitars and strings.

"I HEARD THIS GUITAR, A

**D-18
CUSTOM,**

AND JUST HAD TO BUY IT. IT'S STILL ONE OF MY FAVORITE GUITARS IN MY COLLECTION."



NORTH STREET ARCHIVES

All photos courtesy of
C. F. Martin Archives

MARTIN ARCHIVES

MARTIN GUITAR | THE STANDARD

It really was the cowboy era that saw the viral burgeoning of country music and the widespread use of Martin acoustic guitars, as depicted in these photos from the Martin Archives. Virtually every little town across America had at least one cowboy band, complete with fancy suits—some cities had dozens. Martin became, and remains, the standard instrument used by virtually everyone that was or is serious about playing the acoustic guitar.



FIGHTING BILL FARGO

This photo from the C. F. Martin Archives promoted the 1941 Universal Pictures film *Fighting Bill Fargo*. It's hard to imagine breaking out in song in the middle of a bunch of gunslingers, but Nell O'Day seems comfortable doing just that. She is flanked by Eddie Dean on guitar and brother Jimmie Dean on bass (members of the Eddie Dean Trio), though they didn't get any credit in the film. At least they didn't get shot in the film, and Eddie got to play his pre-war Martin.

BILL BOYD

Bill Boyd, the “Cowboy Rambler,” was a Hollywood actor with many key non-cowboy roles until his career was ruined when a newspaper mistakenly ran his photograph in connection with the arrest of a different “William Boyd” on gambling and liquor charges. With his reputation unfairly tarnished, he suffered near destitution for several years until being cast as Hopalong Cassidy. Under this name, there was no mistaking his enduring popularity and fame, as the audiences associated him with the other famed Martin guitar players Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. He is captured here in this archive photograph with his customized 000-42.



FARON YOUNG

Often referred to as the “Hillbilly Heartthrob,” Faron Young was a popular honky-tonk singer and guitarist with many chart-topping hits under his holster. His active career stretched from 1950 through the 1980s, after which he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. This photo was most likely taken in the mid-1950s, with his long-saddled D-28 and his fancy “Nudie” suit.

JOHNNIE AND JACK

Johnnie and Jack (aka Johnnie Wright and Jack Anglin) were a popular country music duo and Grand Ole Opry act that had their own hits, but they also backed other country stars like Kitty Wells, who Johnnie later married. After Jack died in a car accident in 1963, Johnnie went on to record the hit “Hello Vietnam” in 1965. Two pristine Martin D-28s (one with a pickguard on steroids) provided the rhythm for virtually all of their music.



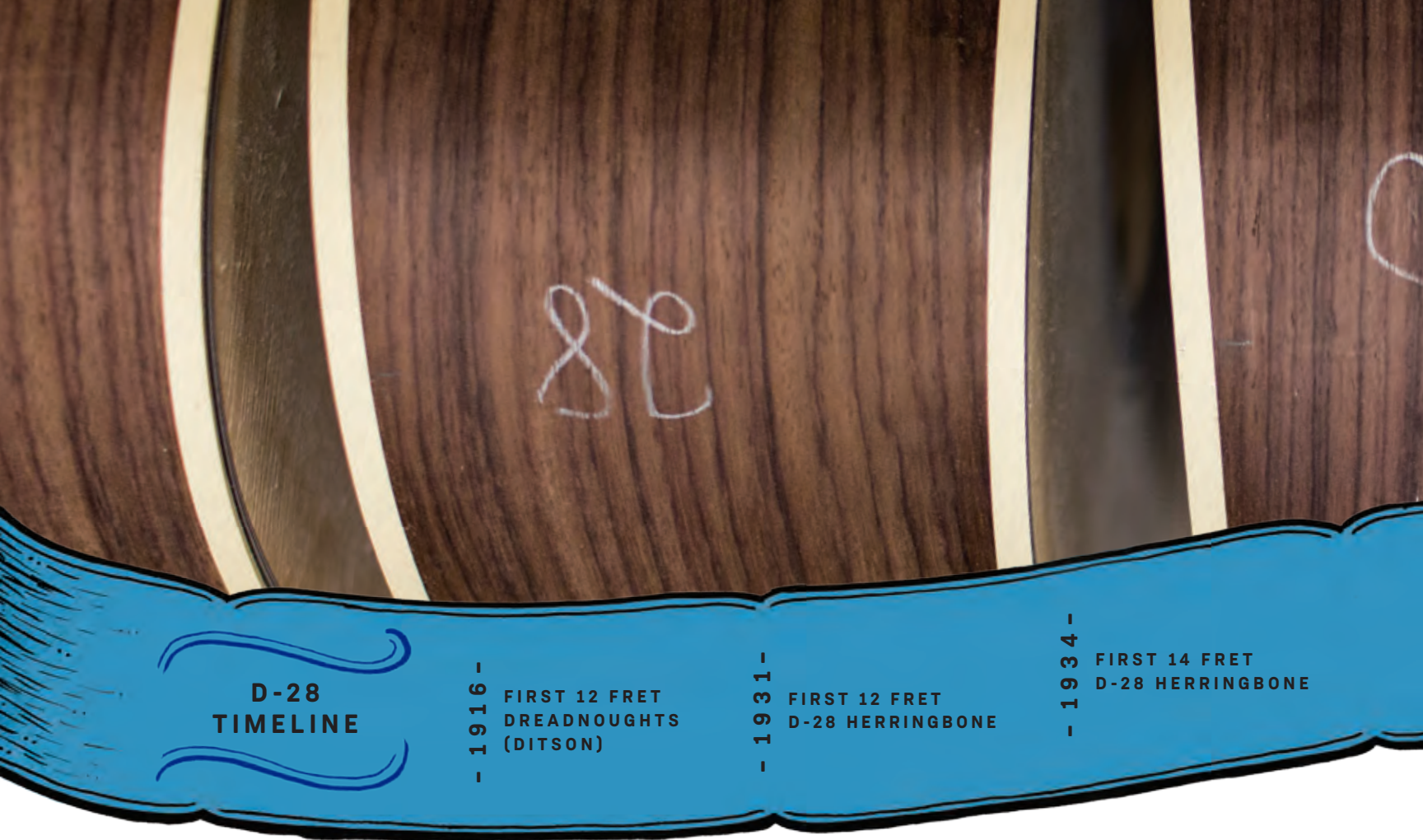




THE ROAD TO THE NEW D-28 AND HD-28

BY JONATHAN R. WALSH

From a distance, the sound emanating from the Anaheim Convention Center on January 24, 2012, resembled the ocean. As people came closer, though, they would be able to pick, from the din, the sound of what was perhaps an extremely unrehearsed world music band, or a very large, very eccentric traveling carnival. Marimbas, timbales, and cajóns intermingled with flutes, electric guitar, and the polyrhythmic chatter of drums upon drums; synthesizers and seven-string basses competing with something called a Wretch Machine.



D-28 TIMELINE

- 1916 -

FIRST 12 FRET
DREADNOUGHTS
(DITSON)

- 1931 -

FIRST 12 FRET
D-28 HERRINGBONE

- 1934 -

FIRST 14 FRET
D-28 HERRINGBONE

This was the trade show of the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM), held every winter in Anaheim and every summer in Nashville, where guitar makers, drum manufacturers, pro audio companies, and anyone else who builds music-related products travel to show off their bestsellers and debut new ideas. In 2012, although it was late January, the weather in Anaheim was sunny and in the 70s. Across from the raucous shredding of one of the louder booths, Martin Guitar was involved in something big: They had just released their updated D-18 to great critical success. A reimagining of one of the oldest models in the Martin line, the 2012 D-18 married new innovations in guitar craftsmanship with features from decades gone by—perhaps most notably the return to louder, more delicate scalloped bracing beloved by collectors and players everywhere. Sales of the new D-18 leapt as an old standby became a new favorite.

Jump ahead to the summer of 2017, and back in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, the weather was once again warm and sunny. The success of four years prior had faded to a current of nervous energy that washed across the Martin factory in a way not common for a company with over a century of experience to stand upon. The 2017 Summer NAMM Show was coming up in Nashville and there, amid the rattling of snares, subsonic scales, and dobros, E-bows, banjos, and flat-tops bleeding together in glorious cacophony, Martin would begin to reintroduce a new and revamped version of the most important guitars in their entire line, and arguably in their 184-year history: the entire Standard Series, starting with the iconic D-28. Here is the story behind that journey.

Dealers are some of the busiest attendees at any trade show, but NAMM is also where everyday players get to meet the men and women responsible for making the instruments they love so dearly. It was at a recent NAMM show that Chris Martin IV, Chairman and CEO of Martin Guitar, was approached by one such fan. “He says, ‘Mr. Martin, can I tell you something about your company?’ And I say, ‘Sure, go ahead.’ He says, ‘You know, at Martin Guitar, you have one foot in the past’—and I’m hoping he’s not going to leave it at that—and then he says, ‘But you have one foot planted firmly in the future.’ And I think, Wow, I need to remember that one.”

It is a small exchange, one of hundreds of conversations that Martin has with players, dealers, artists, and other guitar makers every year. But it sums up one of the key problems Martin faced in its quest to update the D-28 and the rest of the Standard Series: how to ensure a 75-year-old concept would have a vibrant next chapter.



- 1947 -
FIRST 14 FRET D-28
(NO HERRINGBONE/
NO SCALLOPED
TOP BRACING)

- 1959 -
FIRST 14
FRET D-28E

- 1960s -
CHANGED SPELLING
OF DREADNAUGHT
TO DREADNOUGHT

- 1976 -
FIRST
MODERN
HD-28

- 2017 -
REIMAGINED
D-28

By the time Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Elvis Presley recorded the songs that would launch rock and roll around the world in the mid-1950s, Martin's flagship guitar, the D-28, was already over two decades old. When folk and bluegrass hit their strides in 1963—the year Flatt and Scruggs released *At Carnegie Hall* and Bob Dylan's *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* hit stores—it was a guitar whose admirers already had strong feelings about the shape, materials, sound, and feel of their favorite instrument. By the 1970s, the D-28 was a guitar whose details—a rosewood back and sides, spruce top, X-bracing, 14-fret neck, and dreadnought body shape—were already well loved.

By 1970, though, it was also an instrument that had already seen many changes. Most famous was the switch away from scalloped braces in 1945, along with a move from herringbone to plain white binding a couple of years later. There are a number of competing theories as to the reason for this, but the move to straight bracing would prove to be a defining one for the D-28. While the legend of the “pre-war” herringbone Martin D-28 has only grown over the years, so has the number of classic records made on the straight-braced D-28 we know today. Many of those classic players—Lester Flatt, Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan—were best known for their post-war, straight-braced sound, along with legends like Paul McCartney; John Lennon; Joni Mitchell; Jimmy Page; Del McCoury; Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young; and countless others.

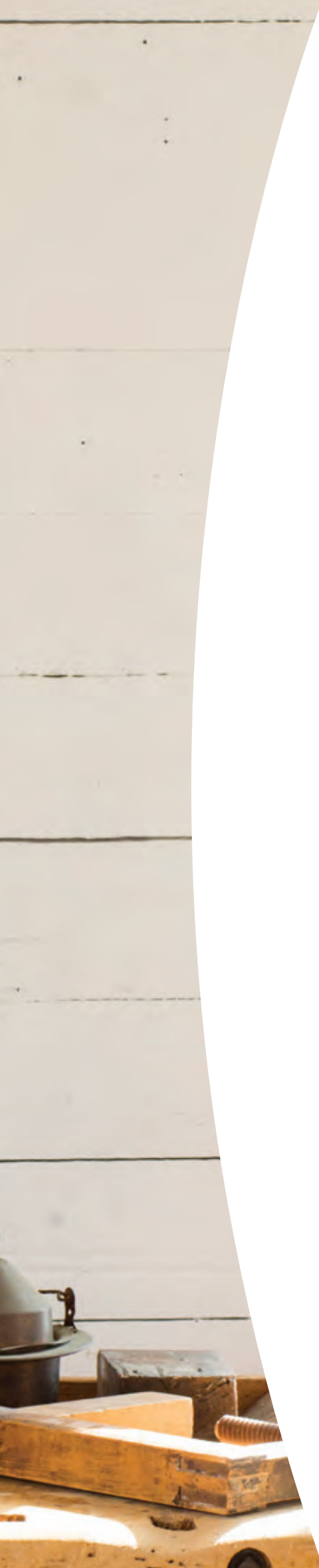
As players took their straight-braced guitars into the studio and onto stages in the 1960s and '70s, word spread about the “holy grail” of guitars—the 1930s and early '40s herringbone D-28s. In what would become a hallmark for the company, Martin listened closely to what players wanted and, in 1976, reintroduced the D-28 with scalloped bracing and herringbone, dubbing it the HD-28.

This isn't the first or last time Martin would add a new model, rather than changing an existing one, to accommodate changing player needs in their famous Standard line. Years later, the company was so concerned about changing the guitars they'd founded their reputation upon that, rather than updating the shape of the HD-28's notoriously chunky neck to reflect changes in technology and playing styles—which risked alienating traditional bluegrass players—Martin created a second, identical HD-28 with the only difference between them being a slimmer neck profile, dubbed the HD-28P (for “profile”). Only when they received feedback from players that the new neck was a hit did they make the change permanent. The habit of creating new models rather than updating old ones—and of listening to players to find out what works and what doesn't—would influence how Martin's guitar line developed for years to come.

“THE NEW D-28 LOOKS, PLAYS, AND SOUNDS BETTER THAN THE PREVIOUS VERSION. IT STILL KEEPS THE ESSENCE OF WHAT WAS GOOD ABOUT THE PREVIOUS D-28, BUT IS AESTHETICALLY MORE PLEASING, AND IT WILL APPEAL TO MANY MORE PEOPLE. THIS NEW D-28 IS BETTER IN EVERY WAY THAN THE PREVIOUS VERSION.”

-GEORGE GRUHN, GRUHN GUITARS





Martin's Standard Series of instruments includes some of the most widely played—and imitated—guitars in music. Other guitars at higher price points (like the Authentic line) and lower (like the Road Series) offer vintage construction or a more economical neck joint, but the rosewood and detailing of the Standard line's 28 and 21 series, the mahogany and tortoiseshell binding of the 18 series, the three-piece back of the 35, the mother-of-pearl and ornate appointments of the 40s models—all these features—have defined what we picture when we think of acoustic guitars today.

While the Standards all share two elements crucial to the sound and quality of higher-end Martins—hand-fitted dovetail neck joints and X-bracing—the styles within the Standard line are available in a variety of body sizes (00, 000, OM, Dreadnought, and others) and electronics setups (from purely acoustic to powerful preamp packages).

A closer look reveals subtler variations that ripple across the Standard line. Most apparent at first glance is the slight variation in the tint of the top wood: Some models look paler, with a clear gloss finish, while others have tint that brings out the grain of the wood while giving it a honeyed hue. Some guitars feature sealed tuning machines, while others have the lighter, open-backed tuners associated with vintage instruments. Some are fitted with Martin's popular high performance neck, while others have a slightly narrower nut width and chunkier neck radius.

The reason for this range of subtle differences, says Fred Greene, Martin's Senior Director of Product Management, is because, in a way, "these products represent the DNA of the entire organization." Like DNA, the Standard line reflects the history of what came before, in this case the "vision and purpose of the company across so many different eras," as Greene puts it. Martin's Standard line has not only responded to the expanding and changing needs of its players—as popular music moved from parlor music to big band to bluegrass to pop country, rock, and beyond—but also the unique visions of the six generations of Martin family who have helmed the company and the designers and builders with whom they've worked.

At Winter NAMM 2018, Martin will complete their revamp of the full Standard line—an important effort to prune any branches of the family tree that have grown, perhaps, a little off the center line. As such, Greene says, Martin is involved in a multi-year effort to take features and models that "were maybe representative of a different time at the organization and get all of them in line with where the company is today, what our vision is, where our tradition and history lie at this moment."



This began in 2012 with the reimagined D-18, and since then, Martin has pushed these changes through the rest of the 18 series of mahogany guitars. At the time, a proliferation of variations on the D-18 had spread throughout the Martin catalogue: At one end of the price spectrum was the D-18 Standard, running through a D18-V (vintage), D-18GE (Golden Era), and D-18 Marquis, up to the D-18 Authentic at the other. The decision was made, says Martin, to “take the D-18 Standard and all the models that fell between it and the Authentic and combine the best of them into one,” leaving a revamped D-18 and a vintage-spec’d D-18 Authentic.

Those “best” features included forward-shifted scalloped bracing, aging toner, and vintage open-gear’d tuners, which give the new D-18 the feel of guitars from years past. These were combined with an updated bridge design that allowed for modern electronics and Martin’s high performance neck shape, which offer the best in playability and construction from Martin’s present. In short, says Greene, they distilled features added across 75 years down to “the essence of what makes a D-18 a D-18—what everybody loves about it.”

When it came to deciding which of the decades’ worth of design updates would survive into the future, Martin had two advantages. The first was a close relationship with its community of players, dealers, and artists. “People are not shy about telling you what they really want, and that’s a great thing,” says Tim Teel, Martin’s Director of Instrument Design. “We can sense through having conversations with folks, by gleaning information from what people are saying online, and from what they buy, what players prefer. All of that combined led us to doing this change.”

The real ace up Martin’s sleeve, though, was a repair shop tasked with honoring the lifetime warranty that comes with every Martin guitar that has left the factory since 1833. Few manufacturers have the opportunity to pull apart and examine their products from years past in the way Martin does, much less over a century of experience doing it.

**“THEY’RE INSTRUMENTS THAT EVOLVE OVER TIME.
THEY’RE SPECIAL, AND WE’RE NOT LOOKING TO CHANGE WHAT THEY ARE,
BUT THEY HAVE TO CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE PLAYERS.”**

-FRED GREENE

As Skip Beltz, Martin’s Director of Product Management, puts it: “You’re getting guitars back from the ’40s, ’50s, ’60s, ’70s, and now you can evaluate all of those things. Rather than do guesswork, we can pull from the documentation in our archives and say, ‘Alright, this is how this guitar was built in the ’50s, and now it’s back at the factory—how did it hold up?’” Only those features that survived the test of time—a very long time—in terms of stability, playability, and tone made the cut when revamping the Standard line.

Part of the reason for these updates is technical. As Beltz points out, technological changes like the introduction of truss rods in the 1980s and of CNC machining and robotics in the 1990s and 2000s have meant guitars being built to significantly different specifications than they were a half century ago.

“Once we installed the one-way truss rod in 1985, we started refining elements of our action and our setup, and over time, we got that much better—we had adjustment at the neck, which meant that we don’t right away pull the neck out of the body to make the tweaks necessary to make the guitar playable. So this 30-year transition of improving all aspects of how we build the guitars from a consistency standpoint led us here.”

A bigger part of the changes happening to the Standard line is hidden in its name. For decades, Martin has been the benchmark to which other acoustic guitars are held; its Standard line, the touchstone. As music continues its long churn into the future, the weight of the past does not fall so heavily on younger players.

“We understand that the way people play, and the style of music people play, are changing. And how the instrument is used in more modern music requires a different feel,” says Greene. As history progresses, Martin prefers not to rest on its laurels. It would be easy to let the name and reputation alone sell the guitars of the Standard line.

“Those guitars are so classic and they’ve been imitated so often, they almost become ubiquitous. It’s almost like you don’t realize how special it is because it’s such a part of the culture,” says Greene. “You almost don’t even notice how unique and groundbreaking it is. Sometimes you have to put a couple of flourishes on there and remind people what makes these guitars truly genius—and they are genius.”

Now, Martin is taking the approach they’ve proven with the 18 series and applying them to the rest of the Standard Series, which started with 2017’s refresh of the iconic D-28. The question that ran through Martin’s design and manufacturing teams in revamping the most recognizable guitar in their lineup was: Would a reimagined, vintage-inflected D-28 have the scalloped bracing it did when it was first designed, or the straight bracing it has worn throughout most of its history?

It’s an existential issue, and touches on a core question about Martin’s flagship model: Which parts of such a long history get carried forward, and which are left in the past? Over the 75 years it has been around, the D-28 has been both a slope-shouldered Dreadnought and a square-shouldered one; it’s had a 12-fret neck and a 14-fret neck; it’s had scalloped and straight bracing; it’s had herringbone and plain white binding. So which D-28, then, is the true D-28?

The answer, according to Greene, is all of them: “They’re instruments that evolve over time. They’re special, and we’re not looking to change what they are, but they have to continue to move forward with the players.” But just as important, he says, “We don’t want to move in a direction that leaves people behind.”

Ultimately, it was decided to keep both the HD-28 and the D-28 in the Standard line, a decision guided by Chris Martin. Both instruments have a hallowed place in music history and both, Martin predicts, will have a place with budding musicians for years to come.

“C. F. MARTIN’S LATEST UPGRADE TO THE ICONIC D-28 HAS ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL’S LONG HISTORY BUT ALSO OFFERS A UNIQUE, NEW ROSEWOOD DREADNOUGHT TONE. IT’S NOT A REISSUE, NOR IS IT A WHOLE NEW DESIGN, BUT IT’S PURE D-28.”

**-RICHARD JOHNSTON,
GRYPHON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS**

The updated D-28 remains true to the design that shaped the sound of rock, folk, bluegrass, and country records for decades: Like the other revamped models in the Standard line, it features a vintage finish, an updated neck and bridge, and open-gear tuners. Instead of herringbone binding, the plain white of previous versions has been changed to an antique white that touches off the other appointments to give the new D-28 a timeless look that feels equally at home in 2018 as it would in 1965. The new D-28’s straight bracing has been shifted forward, which opens up the sound and, as Beltz says, “Because it’s not scalloped, it maintains a better balance across the mids and the trebles.” He adds, “The forward shifting makes it a little bit louder, and you hear some different overtones, but it still keeps the top stiff enough where it holds the sound together really nicely.”

The rest of the Standard Series will feature the same updates that Martin has applied elsewhere, with herringbone denoting scalloped bracing. This means the new HD-28 will remain what Chris Martin calls the “turbocharged” big brother to the D-28. As a step up from the Standard D-28, the HD-28 will also feature deluxe appointments, including a set of Schaller GrandTune® tuners. The cost of these alone may cut into any profit Martin might see from the HD-28’s higher price point but, as Chris Martin told his staff, “The most important thing is that we get this right.”

“The D-28 hasn’t changed since I’ve been here, and I’ve been here 25 years,” says Beltz. With the changes to the Standard line and especially updates to its iconic D-28 and HD-28, Martin is reaching down and making important choices about its own DNA. “I should, by all respects, be scared to death of changing anything very dramatically,” says Greene. “But, honestly, I feel very proud and confident in choices that the team made regarding these instruments, that these are improved—they’re better.”

Part of the reason is that, in a way, the tone that made Martin famous doesn’t come from any one choice in wood or bracing or neck shape. Martin’s DNA is spread throughout the very walls of the factory itself: “Our guitars sound the way they sound because we’ve been practicing making them for over 180 years. They sound the way they sound because the people who are making them were taught by the people who made those guitars years ago, here in this building. And they’re all descendants of the original builders of the D-28 and the D-18—the people that invented them. They are literal relatives, and they are descendants in terms of the skill that was handed down. That can’t be replaced. That can’t be created someplace else,” says Greene. “Oddly enough, no matter what we do here at Martin, no matter how much I change things, all of our guitars always end up sounding like a Martin.”

Dealers and players have already responded positively to the new Standard line, and it’s a sentiment the craftsmen and women in the factory share. “Honestly, it’s a joy and a privilege to be part of it. You’re allowed to have input into a very iconic brand and instrument that not too many people have a chance to do,” says Teel.

While his name was brought up again and again by employees discussing the Standard Series, and while his influence on the D-28 and HD-28 is unmistakable, Chris Martin is quick to pass the credit back to Greene, Teel, Beltz, and the rest of the manufacturing team. “I endorsed these changes, I encouraged them,” he says, “but it wasn’t my idea.”

On a recent visit to the Martin Museum, Chris was explaining the changes to the D-28 from 1931 through to the present. Walking over to a 1955 D-28 he’d pulled from its display case, he put his finger to the headstock. “People look at the label and they see ‘C. F. Martin,’” he said. “But really it’s the ‘and Company’ that counts.”



NEW STANDARD SERIES



HD-28

D-41 SUNBURST

GPC-28E



00-28

D-35 AMBERTONE

Reimagined, refined, and remarkable. Martin's Standard Series offers a model for every style of player, from hobbyist to megastar.

Experience the finely tuned instruments that will shape your sound to an even higher standard of tone, look, and playability. Choose from a selection of exciting new models, with additional options including sunburst, ambertone, and state-of-the-art electronics by Fishman® and LR Baggs. Mindful evolution has kept Martin at the top of the class for 185 years, remaining the standard by which all others are measured.

Join the family, and take the legacy into your hands.

MARK
KNOPFLER
TRUSTING
— *your* —
INSTINCTS
BY David Schneider



It is notoriously difficult to use words to describe sounds. This is one of the reasons why onomatopoeia is such a useful invention. Without it, we would have no way to communicate the strange noise coming out from our car engine to the mechanic. Instead, we tap into the hidden recesses of our throats to say, somewhat sheepishly, “Well, a few weeks ago it started randomly making this kind of...‘blarguflubbfft’ sound, and now it’s doing it more often. Please help.” Unfortunately and somewhat ironically, the powers of sonic approximation that are so effective in diagnosing auto repairs are substantially more fraught in the rehearsal space, recording studio, and guitar shop. Just take the word “warm” as an example: A lot of people use it to describe the sound of a quality acoustic guitar recorded to tape, and a lot of people would agree that it is a good and useful word for that purpose, but odds are high that, if asked, ten people would give you ten different definitions of “warm.” And the same goes for other concepts of a guitar—what it means depends on who you ask.



So, when discussing the tone and playability of the brand that has set the standard for acoustic instruments everywhere, who better to ask than the player who has set the standard for creativity, tastefulness, and talent for guitarists for the past 40 years? Since forming Dire Straits in 1977, four-time GRAMMY-winner Mark Knopfler has sold over 120 million records across a range of genres. He's scored films like *The Princess Bride* and *Wag the Dog*, played with other luminaries from B.B. King to Eric Clapton and Bob Dylan to George Jones, and has not one but three honorary doctorates in music. He also founded the venerable British Grove Studios and partnered with Martin to create two signature guitars: the HD-40MK and the 000-40MK. Of course, Knopfler's knowledge of Martin guitars isn't limited to his signature models. Knopfler also owns a 1935 D-18—"probably the guitar I play more than anything, and [it] taught me a lot about the merits of mahogany," he says—as well as "a lovely guitar that the company is making now called the OM-18 Authentic, which is, I think, just an exceptional instrument. It gives that lovely dry sound—there's just something special about it." Knopfler also owns two Little Martins, and not just for traveling or messing around: "I actually use them a lot in the studio," he says. And when it comes to traveling, Knopfler notes that "I always try to get a guitar in the hotel room, and it's always a joy to discover that it's a Martin because you'll be OK for a week. It's just the standards are really extraordinary, I think."

While Knopfler notes that the time spent with his collection now allows him to "feel a bit more like an old hand," he also points out that "I came to it pretty late, like I do most things" because "I always wanted a Martin, of course, but I couldn't afford one." The success of Dire Straits naturally expanded his options, and quickly. Knopfler emerged as one of the preeminent guitarists of big-synth and big-hair 1980s, and he could have embraced whichever guitar he fancied most. It's no surprise that his reasons for choosing Martin were as studied and mature as his playing. "Both in terms of tone and playability, and in terms of the build standard as well, for such a large company, the standards have been exceptional with Martin. That's, I think, what makes them so distinctive because those kinds of standards are hard enough to achieve for a small-scale luthier, but that makes their achievement all the more admirable." This impression was further solidified when Knopfler started discussing the idea of a signature Dreadnought in the early 2000s. "When I first struck up a relationship with Dick Boak in Martin's Artist Relations, it was no surprise to learn that he was a luthier himself. It seems that there's a philosophy and feeling of authenticity that runs right through the entire company." That relationship led to the production of the HD-40MK in 2002, which was designed to be more of a strumming guitar for those of us who can't pull off Knopfler's famous fingerstyle playing, but Knopfler recalls being "amazed that I could fingerpick it and strum it—it all worked." Sometimes, playability is a feeling of amazement that has to be experienced to be understood.

Knopfler has noted how the iconic Dire Straits song "Sultans of Swing" transformed once he started playing it on a Fender Stratocaster after originally composing it on an acoustic guitar because of differences in tone. For some, owning a well-equipped recording studio and an enviable collection of Martins could lead to endless experimentation and an anxiety-of-choice. While Knopfler embraces all the happy accidents that can happen in the studio, he doesn't stress over the idea of infinite combinations. "I might try a couple of guitars. I usually have an instinct about what is the guitar to use." When it comes time to record, Knopfler similarly relies on his time-honed instincts. "I think that you have to listen to the little voice that's telling you about the sound. I seem to be fortunate in that I always seem to know what I prefer, if there's a choice." So what is it about Martin guitars that has made them his choice live and in the studio for decades? "Basically, their philosophy is very similar to mine, which is that I think they are combining the best of the old with the best of the new."



Mark Knopfler with his 000-40MK



Mark Knopfler with Martin's Dick Boak

— — — — —
“BASICALLY, THEIR
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BEST OF THE NEW.”

—MARK KNOPFLER

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MARTIN'S INFLUENCE ON BRITISH MUSIC

BY STEVE HARVEY

Over the years, many thousands of words have been written about the intrinsic role that Martin guitars have played in the evolution, popularity, and development of American popular music. This inspiring story was encapsulated in 2016's award-winning documentary *The Ballad of the Dreadnought*. Perhaps less well documented is the part that Martin instruments have played in British music, and how the brand was first introduced to the U.K.

To set the scene, it's important to understand how different the public's involvement with music was in the mid-1850s, when the company was still in its infancy. At the time, British popular music was very much a communal experience. Technology had not yet facilitated the recording of music, let alone listening to it at home. In 1852, a music hall opened in Lambeth, South London, which catered to the entertainment of new urban societies, adapting existing forms of music to produce popular songs and acts. While music itself evolved over the next few decades, it wasn't until the 1930s that the influence of American jazz led to the creation of British dance bands. The music of these groups slowly began to dominate social occasions and the radio airwaves.





**“I BOUGHT MY
FIRST MARTIN
FROM A WINDOW
STALL IN
WALTHAMSTOW
FOR SIX POUNDS.
I HAVE BEEN
USING A MARTIN
GUITAR EVER
SINCE!”**

LONNIE DONEGAN

According to most sources, the introduction of Martin guitars to the U.K. came from two key players, Lonnie Johnson and Ivor Mairants, more or less at the same time.

Born in New Orleans in 1899, Johnson was one of the most accomplished guitarists of his day. Often pictured playing a 00-21, he was a jazz guitar pioneer, and his recordings of the early 1930s became popular in the U.K. The recordings featured Eddie Lang, also known as Blind Willie Dunn.

At the same time, Mairants—a Polish-born immigrant who had become proficient on banjo and guitar—was turning professional. During the era of dance bands, his considerable abilities as a player were much in demand. He was featured on both banjo and guitar in bands led by stars of the era, such as Bert Ambrose, Gerald Walcan Bright (known better as Geraldo), Roy Fox, Lew Stone, and Ted Heath, and he worked at a prodigious rate.

However, it was as an educator and advocate that Mairants was most influential. He wrote for many of the music publications of his day, including the now-famed *Melody Maker*—and here’s one of the earliest Martin links. Mairants provided note-for-note transcriptions of Eddie Lang’s solos for the magazine, helping to raise awareness of Lang and his Martin-playing boss, Johnson.

In 1956, Mairants also had tremendous success with the publication of another Martin player’s music, *The Josh White Guitar Method*. Whether by accident or design, Mairants was instrumental in drawing U.K. guitarists’ attention to blues and folk music as played by Martin players. In fact, the late John Renbourn, famed for his solo work as well as his recordings with Bert Jansch and folk group Pentangle, cited *The Josh White Guitar Method* as a critical influence on his playing.

Note that becoming a Martin owner at this time wasn’t as easy as it is today. The ’50s were difficult years for retailers of U.S.-made instruments. Severe import restrictions, following the near-bankrupting of the U.K.’s postwar economy, meant that American-made guitars were pretty much off limits. This was one of the reasons for the massive growth of European instruments from that time.

However, by the late 1950s, these restrictions had begun to ease, and in 1958, Mairants opened his own retail store, offering an impressive array of American instruments. Of course, these included guitars from Martin, which had now begun to expand its range following the restraint of postwar consolidation. Mairants quickly became the principal source of C. F. Martin instruments in the U.K.

Another notable Martin player, even before this early point in the company's history, was Lonnie Donegan. Born in Glasgow in 1931, Donegan's father was a professional violinist who played with the Scottish National Orchestra. As a child, Donegan listened mostly to swing jazz, and by the time he became a teenager, he became interested in the guitar. By the end of the 1940s, he was playing guitar around London and visiting small jazz clubs.

While in Ken Colyer's Jazzmen with Chris Barber, Donegan played with two other band members during the intervals to provide what the advertising posters called a "skiffle" break. In 1954, he recorded a song that became pivotal in British music history—a fast-paced version of Leadbelly's "Rock Island Line" on a 000-28. "I identified 'Martin' from all the early photographs I saw of blues singers," said Donegan. "I bought my first Martin from a window stall in Walthamstow for six pounds. I have been using a Martin guitar ever since!"

It's difficult to underestimate the impact that this record had on the music scene at the time. The recording, and Donegan's unique style, encouraged amateurs nationwide, his career rocketing at about the same time Elvis Presley's career was taking off in the U.S. He was a musical phenomenon. As the leader of the skiffle craze (a high-octane fusion of American and British folk and blues), between 1956 and 1962, he notched up an incredible 26 hits and in so doing, inspired the formation of hundreds of skiffle bands.

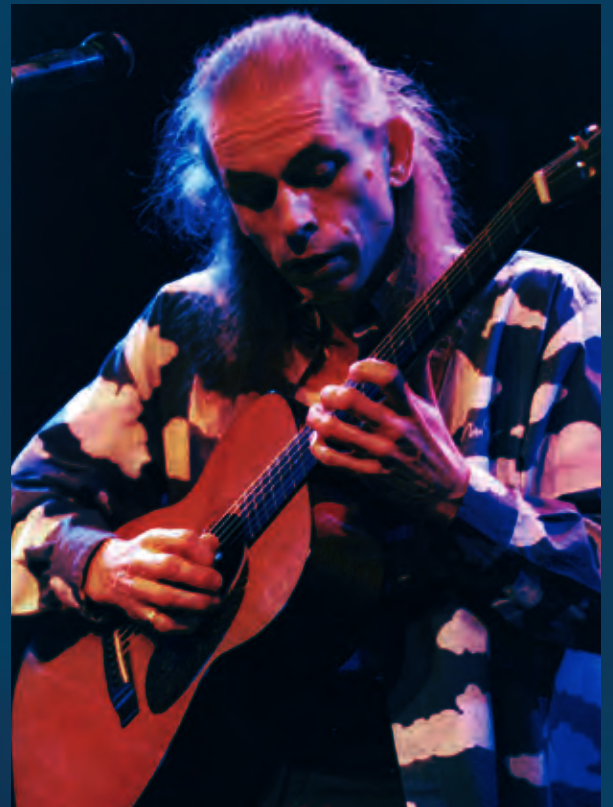


JOSH WHITE WITH WIFE CAROL CARR CIRCA 1946

PHOTOGRAPHER CARL VAN VECHTEN



Martin Carthy & Dave Swarbrick



Steve Howe

All photos courtesy of
C. F. Martin Archives

In this way, Donegan was directly responsible for the 1960s pop explosion, which ironically, made his own music obsolete. One of the many groups that followed in his wake was the Quarrymen, formed in 1957 by John Lennon. Indeed, Donegan's music was at the top of the U.K. charts in 1957 when Lennon first met his songwriting partner Paul McCartney.

The mid-1960s was a particularly fruitful time for British music. While the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were dominating the charts, Martin-playing pioneers helped to create a distinctive form of fingerstyle playing known as "folk baroque," which fused various styles of American music with British folk. Key figures were Martin Carthy and Davy Graham, both of whom played Martin guitars.

Carthy was born in 1941 and is regularly cited as one of the most prolific and influential figures in British traditional music. His music, written and performed on a 000-18, often in altered tunings such as CGCDGA, made its way back across the Atlantic and served to inspire contemporaries such as Bob Dylan and Paul Simon. Carthy is on record stating that hearing "Rock Island Line" for the first time moved him to pick up his father's old guitar.

Davy Graham, born a year before Carthy, is also credited with fueling the British folk revival, armed only with an OM-28. He believed that there was a strong connection between Oriental music and Irish folk music. By way of proof, Graham wrote and performed a special arrangement of the Irish melody "She Moves Through the Fair"—again, on an OM-28. At the age of 19, Graham wrote what is probably his most famous composition, "Anji," named after his then-girlfriend. The tune spread through generations of aspiring guitarists, who often changed the spelling to "Angi" as time passed. One of Graham's lasting legacies is the DADGAD tuning, which he popularized in the 1960s.

The fingerstyle music and influences pioneered by Carthy and Graham found their way into the more mainstream music of the 1960s. It's well known that Lennon and McCartney purchased D-28s in London and used them to write and record *The White Album*. Moving into the 1970s, Steve Howe, guitar wizard and mainstay of prog-rock bands Yes and Asia, was a Martin devotee from an early age. As a young man, Howe had seen the first Elvis Presley album with its cover photo of the man himself playing a leather-clad Martin Dreadnought.



Eddie Lang



John Renbourn

Later, Howe noticed the aforementioned Lonnie Donegan playing a Martin too. “In 1968,” states Howe, “I saw Paul Simon playing a Martin at the Royal Albert Hall, and that was the end of it. That made me say, ‘All right, I’m going out and getting a Martin.’ Once I could afford it, I got one the next day.” Howe’s Martin collection includes an 0-28 from around 1875 and a 1953 00-18, which led to a signature collaboration with Martin in 1999, and again in 2013.

Moving on to the late ’70s punk scene, Elvis Costello became one of the most versatile and accomplished songwriters and performers of his time. Throughout his career, his affection for Martins has been consistent. The same can be said of Paul McCartney, Led Zeppelin’s Jimmy Page, and David Gilmour of Pink Floyd. In truth, there are likely very few makes of guitar that this trio has not played, but for writing, recording, and performance, they keep coming back to Martin guitars. Another prominent fan of the brand during this period was Ian Anderson of the folk-rock outfit Jethro Tull, whose preference was for vintage small-bodied Martins.

Acoustic music experienced a worldwide resurgence in 1992, when a certain Eric Clapton swapped his Fender Stratocaster for a 1939 000-42 and sat down to perform for MTV’s *Unplugged*. Virtually overnight, acoustic music—and brands such as Martin—became cool again, spawning a new generation of acoustic enthusiasts and players.

Nowadays, key figures in the British music scene continue to use Martin guitars. Whether you prefer strident, radio-friendly songs by Oasis, the uplifting rock of Coldplay, the haunting melodies written by Ben Howard, or the neo-folk of Mumford & Sons, Martin guitars continue to play an important role in the mainstream. At the time of writing, the most popular singer-songwriter on the planet, Ed Sheeran, has played to 80,000 people at London’s Wembley Stadium—with nothing more than a loop pedal and a Martin guitar. The future is bright for Martin in this country, and long may it continue.

The writer gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Jerry Zolten, Dick Boak, Gary Cooper, and Joel McIver in the writing of this article.





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BALANCED TONE ACROSS ALL
6 STRINGS.

Martin has been shaping the sound of acoustic music for nearly two centuries, and continues to innovate by offering a wide array of shapes and sizes to create the perfect tone for any player (or listener). Originally offering only smaller bodies, Martin gradually created larger sizes as musical styles changed and the demand for louder instruments increased.

This diagram illustrates the evolution of acoustic guitar sizes from the smaller Concert (0) to the larger, iconic Dreadnought size. The chart covers most of the historic sizes offered by Martin that have inspired the world's top musicians of all genres, from folk to pop since the 1830s.

When choosing a guitar, consider the size for volume as well as how comfortable it is to hold and strum. There are many factors that come into play when choosing your perfect guitar, and size is one of them. If you sing, be sure it pairs well with your voice and is not too overwhelming or quiet. There is no substitute for playing several guitars side by side to compare tone and feel, looking for the one that inspires you the most.



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WITH ADDED BASS.



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RICH, PROJECTIVE TONE WITH
DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE
TREBLE AND BASS.



DREADNOUGHT (D)

LOUD, PROJECTIVE TONE WITH
STRONG BASS.



MOST BODY SIZES AVAILABLE AS CUTAWAY WITH ELECTRONICS

Many companies in the music business are so focused on the next big thing that they lose track of what is important: tone and playability from a product that can be counted on to perform in any situation. The sweet spot falls when a design is both innovative and exceptional.

Over 20 years ago, C. F. Martin & Co. revolutionized the guitar string industry when they introduced the strengthened core wire of Martin SP Acoustic strings. In 2010, they influenced the market with longer-lasting, treated SP Lifespans. Now, they're pushing the envelope again with Titanium Core strings—a new high-end string that is great for players of all stripes. The feel, reliability, and tone of Titanium Core strings could inspire guitarists to experiment outside of their comfort zone or simply discover new tones that have been hiding inside their guitars. Titanium technology is space-age, but these strings aren't just the next big thing.

MARTIN TITANIUM CORE STRINGS





M

BY SEAN CAMPBELL

RINGS

THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE SOUND





Titanium has been the metal of choice for jet engines and spacecraft alike for its strength—it is the strongest elemental metal by weight. It also has a powerful resistance to corrosion. The same properties that make it the material of choice for aerospace engineers also make titanium a boon for guitarists. Once a guitar is strung and tuned with Titanium Core strings, it can be put away for days, weeks, or months, and when the instrument is picked up again, it will sound just as clear, rich, and bright as the day it was put away. That means less time spent tuning or changing dead strings, whether you're onstage, sitting around a campfire, or playing on the couch at home. Designing great strings, it turns out, isn't so far from rocket science.

"You want your guitar to be ready to play when you're ready to play it," says Jerry Lawlor, Director of Sales for Martin Strings. "You don't have to stretch and retune it like traditional steel core wire. These strings are pretty much plug and play."

Another key advantage of using titanium core wire is in how it interacts with the nickel wrap wire Martin has paired it with: Like titanium, nickel is naturally corrosion resistant, resulting in the ultimate long-lasting string. Other metal combinations, like bronze and steel, will eventually start to "share" their electrons, which can corrode the materials and make the string weaker, add mass to the outside of the string, and can gunk it up, changing its tone. This isn't a problem with Titanium Core strings, which retain their tone without much change over extremely long periods of time.

Trying a new material also offered Martin opportunities to improve overall string design: Titanium allows for a core that is round instead of hexagonal, like most other strings, which creates a better connection with the wrap. "They are a longer-lasting string that gives you nearly perfect intonation right from the get-go," says Lawlor.

The gauging is also a little different than traditional strings—thickness is tailored to the string tension of the set, rather than each individual string. The result is a set of 12s that will feel a little like 11s and sound a little more robust, like 13s—all while being very easy on the hands. The titanium also allowed the designers to crimp the strings at the ends with a swage anchor (instead of the traditional ball end). This securely seats and protects the string, reducing breakage.





The unwrapped treble strings are stainless steel, and they are cryogenically treated to improve sound. Each string has been frozen to minus 375 degrees Fahrenheit. This changes the alignment of the molecules in the metal to add more brilliance to the sound.

One of the first things a player will notice is how titanium feels: Players who slide their fingers up and down the strings and bend notes are going to notice they have a smooth feel, similar to polished glass. There is also less stiffness in the Titanium Core strings compared to other metal combinations, which, combined with the round core wire, means that they require less effort to fret or bend.

Years of research went into the design. The Titanium Core project has been in development for almost two years alone, with both a mechanical engineer and chemical engineer working on the project to refine the science behind their unique sound.

In a nutshell, Titanium Core strings have a broken-in tone that has a liveliness to it. They're going to have a little less brilliance than phosphor bronze strings, so there aren't going to be a lot of unwanted overtones that you can get with brass alloy strings.

Albert Germick has been working in research and development with Martin for the past 13 years. He's worked on a number of string projects and knows how important the properties of the materials are for the sound. He says there is a warmer sound to the Titanium Core strings.

"There's a sweetness to the tone that you don't get out of conventional strings," he says. "They're kind of like the D-45 of guitar strings. Not everyone is going to buy one, but everybody is going to want one."

Germick says that the titanium takes some of the "sizzle" out of the notes and emphasizes the natural tonal properties of the guitar.

"If you are playing on a Dreadnought guitar, it really balances the mids and the highs," says Germick. "On maple, it softens the twang. On a small-body mahogany, you'll notice the most response out of it. Nickel wrap allows the characteristics of the wood to play through. The titanium core allows the intonation to sound true."

Titanium strings are ideal for blues players or anyone who enjoys a lot of fingerstyle playing. Craig Thatcher, one of Martin's signature musicians, says he likes the Titanium Core strings because they allow him to play a very clean lead. But they work great for players across all styles, and might even encourage something new, thanks to greater ease in sliding and bending.

"I think that these strings are going to inspire musicians to try different playing styles and techniques that they may not have thought of before," says Germick, "and the sound of the string will influence players as well. It's like playing a 1957 Les Paul or a 1937 D-18—it's going to inspire you to play differently just because the tone is that much better."

Every player can benefit from stronger, more corrosion-resistant strings, whether that means a cleaner, consistent tone onstage for players or a stable of guitars that always sound their best for collectors. When the sound and design all come together, the result is a product that is uniquely Martin and is centered around the quality that players expect from the iconic brand.

"They look different. They feel different. They sound different. They're likely to inspire a different mindset and move you to do something different," Lawlor says. "These Martin Titanium Core strings offer the ultimate player's experience. With their comfort and response, they are something that every Martin enthusiast—every guitar enthusiast—should experience at least once."

"THERE'S A SWEETNESS TO THE TONE THAT YOU DON'T GET OUT OF CONVENTIONAL STRINGS..."

-BERT GERMICK

FROM THE WORKBENCH

WE ARE FAMILY



DAWN EPRIGHT

After some urging from her father, Dawn Epright applied to work at Martin Guitar, and the rest is history! She is a self-declared guitar enthusiast, who has worked at the company for six years. Currently, she works in Final Assembly. Dawn wants people to know that Martin Guitar is all about passion and family. She describes her fellow coworkers as rock stars who put their whole heart and soul into every guitar.



MARY MOSSER

For the last 15 years, Mary Mosser has worked in various departments throughout the Martin factory before settling in to her current position in the Final Assembly Department. Mary enjoys the fast-paced environment that helps keep her mind sharp. She is proud to tell others that she plays a part in crafting Martin guitars. Mary also believes that music, especially guitar playing, is what the world truly needs right now.



PETER DAVENPORT

Peter Davenport is the Assistant Manager of the Final Assembly and Final Inspection Departments, which include processes like neck fit and bridge glue. During his five-year tenure, Peter has also worked in stringing and the machine room. From watching the final product on its way to a Martin dealer to meeting factory visitors and seeing the joy Martin guitars bring them, Peter is proud of the work he does at Martin Guitar. As for his advice to fellow guitar players, Peter urges you to keep practicing and find the guitar that suits you best.



DILLON REICHEL

Dillon Reichel has been a proud Martin Guitar employee for six years. Dillon is currently a stringer in Final Inspection. Previously, he worked in Final Assembly, Neck Fitting, and Tuner Installation. Walking into the Martin factory every morning is a whirlwind for him, filled with fine acoustic guitars, excited visitors, and, of course, his amazing coworkers. If Dillon could put guitar playing into one word, he would use *determination*. “Don’t give up; keep on strumming!”

DONNA HUNTER

Senior Graphic Designer Donna Hunter is a 15-year Martin Guitar employee. She set up an interview after seeing an ad in the local newspaper and fell in love with the company as soon as she walked through the lobby doors. Where else can you strum a guitar and call it work? After experiencing two life-changing events, she says the outpouring of support and love from her coworkers was unlike anything she could have ever imagined. Donna will forever call Martin Guitar her second home and family.



JOHN McELROY

For three years, John McElroy has served as Martin Guitar’s In-House General Counsel. He considers the combining of his profession with his passion for guitars an opportunity of a lifetime. John enjoys working with his talented coworkers in Nazareth, Pa., and Navojoa, Mexico. The most rewarding feeling he gets from playing guitar is when he nails the guitar part of a song he loves listening to.

MARTIN OLMOS

Martin Olmos has been a Martin employee for 18 years. He is currently the Manager of Martin Strings Production. Working for a top-level company, belonging to a good team, and the feeling of mutual commitment between him and Martin Guitar make Martin excited to come to work every day. If he had to describe Martin Guitar in one word, it would be *family*. When Martin describes his coworkers in Nazareth and Navojoa, he says they always respect each other, and all have the same commitment to maintaining and improving Martin Guitar.





BRANDY CLARK

COUNTRY MUSIC'S NEWEST OLD SOUL

BY MARY BARBOUR

Brandy Clark might play a mean steel-string and pen soulful songs about cheatin' and drinkin', but she is a far cry from your average country singer. By the time she was nominated for Best New Artist at the 2015 GRAMMY Awards, Clark had already written a slew of hit songs for musicians like Sheryl Crow, Reba McEntire, LeAnn Rimes, Kacey Musgraves, and Darius Rucker, to name a few. Her music is equal parts heartbreak and humor, and she has a knack for writing about honest, sometimes unpretty, subjects in a way that captures a wide audience of intimate listeners. She's been stealing hearts on the Nashville music scene for years, but her unique style of bare and brazen songwriting has transcended the country music label and landed her on an international tour later this year. We got a chance to catch up with this Martin Ambassador during a break from her nationwide tour to talk about songwriting, guitars, and staying true to what moves you.



Photo by David McClister



Photo by David McClister

Martin: How did you get your start in music?

Brandy Clark: I started playing guitar when I was about nine years old. My grandparents lived next door to us, and I remember a guy used to come over to their house and play now and then. He could play so well that I would sit there listening for hours—I just felt mesmerized. I was lucky because my parents were very supportive of anything me and my brother were interested in, so when I told them I wanted to play, they were super encouraging and helped me find a guitar and start. I've been playing ever since.



“I KNEW I NEEDED TO END UP IN NASHVILLE.”

M: Who were your biggest influences?

BC: I definitely started out with the classic country artists—Patsy Cline, Merle Haggard, and Dolly Parton were some of my earliest favorites. And I loved the Judds. I got the guitar tabs for “Have Mercy” and learned to play that—I loved it so much. The old classics are definitely still my staples, but as I got older, I got a little more adventurous—I listened to a lot of Carpenters, Elton John, and more artists outside of country.

I was drawn to country music from the time I was little—my parents and grandmother used to play a lot of it in the house, and it just stuck with me. I grew up in Washington State, and there was a small country music scene happening at the time, but it wasn’t big enough to make sense to stay. I knew I needed to end up in Nashville.

M: You’re being added to the country music feature at the Nashville Airport’s baggage claim. How does that feel?

BC: I’m absolutely thrilled about it. I can’t wait for it to happen. It’s flattering to be up on the wall with artists that I admire and respect so much—Sturgill Simpson, Dierks Bentley, Hunter Hayes, Jason Isbell, and so many others. Plus, it’s here in Nashville, and that means so much to me.

M: What are your thoughts on the sound of country music today compared to when you were starting out?

BC: I have such a nostalgic view of how country music sounded when I first started out. Those artists are what got me into music in the first place—it’s why I started playing and why I moved to Nashville. I always tend to lean more toward traditional sounding country, and there is still a lot of it out there today. Real traditional artists are still breaking through and getting a lot of attention, like Miranda Lambert, Kacey Musgraves, and Chris Stapleton. Jason Isbell was just nominated for Album of the Year at the CMAs, which is a big sign that traditional country is still alive and kicking.

There are some great old-school country artists today that are breaking through on radio too. William Michael Morgan and Midland—they give sort of a hat-tip to Gary Stewart-style country music, which I love. Same with George Strait.

M: What do you look for in a guitar?

BC: For me, it's completely about how the guitar works with my body. I play so much that larger body guitars will actually start to hurt after a while. The Martin OMJM is the perfect size—it's so comfortable to work with, it's easy to play, and I just truly love the sound. I write a lot on that guitar. I've written hit songs on it (and some non-hit songs!)—it's small and lightweight and perfect for writing.

M: What drew you to the OMJM?

BC: The OMJM John Mayer model was my first Martin guitar—it's the one I'm still playing. I was teaching guitar and writing songs, and I needed a guitar with a smaller body that I could play for hours without hurting my shoulder and back. The problem is that most small guitars have a small sound. One day, I was at a music store, and I liked the look of the OMJM, and when I played it, I couldn't believe how big and lush the sound was. I got one for myself right away. Now I have a Jeff Tweedy model too, and I'm having my own custom Martin guitar made.

M: How big of a role does acoustic guitar play in your songwriting?

BC: Huge! I would say I write on acoustic about 90% of the time. Occasionally, I'll write on piano if I have one close by, but it's almost all on acoustic. If I'm sitting down to write and I'm the one who is driving things musically, it's on acoustic guitar.

M: What is your experience when writing for others versus writing for yourself?

BC: When I'm writing with another artist, it's really about wanting to help them say what they want to say. It's not my message; I'm just helping them get it out there.

M: What are your sights set on for the future?

BC: I'm starting to think about my next record. I'm always writing and always thinking about where my heart is at, what kind of record I want to make, what makes sense to do next. I usually start with a song that sort of feels like the centerpiece for the record and then move outward from there. My first two records, *12 Stories* and *Big Day in a Small Town*, both started with a concept. I don't always stick to it, but it starts there and that's where the music comes from and how it all sticks together.

When I finished making *Big Day in a Small Town*, I stepped back and thought, "Now that's a record." Everything on the album takes place in the same small town. It's a loose theme, but it tethers everything together and that felt so satisfying to me. So for my next record? I want to keep evolving so I come up with a lot of different ideas, and I think to myself, "Can I do this?" And it might be kind of a stretch, or I'll worry that it'll alienate my core audience, so I try to strike a balance between moving forward and staying true to myself and my own instincts.

Right now, I'm gravitating toward relationship themes—the songs and writing I'm feeling most drawn to are pretty focused on relationships. So maybe it will be a breakup album. I've also always wanted to make a drinking record, so who knows.

2016's *Big Day in a Small Town* garnered two 2017 GRAMMY nominations for Best Country Album and also Best Country Solo Performance for "Love Can Go to Hell." Last summer, Brandy released her first ever live album, *Live from Los Angeles*, recorded in the summer of 2017 at the iconic Hotel Café in Los Angeles.



M: What advice would you give aspiring singer-songwriters?

BC: Write what you know, and write what moves you. Don't get into chasing trends. If something doesn't move you, it's not going to move anyone else. And don't overthink things. Write whatever comes to you, get it down, and step away from it for a little while. Sometimes I'll go back and listen to songs in my catalogue years later and I'll think, "Wow, this is a really great song, and I have NO recollection of writing it." I just put it down anyway even though I didn't like it much at the time. Chances are, you might go back later and absolutely love it or at least find something in it worth working on. Write them down, and let them go for six months. Time really does reveal everything.



Photo by David McClister

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FEATURED ITEMS



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Attention Do-It-Yourselfers and Luthiers!

All you need to build your own high-end acoustic guitar.

Check out our selection of acoustic guitar kits in our 1833 Shop.

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NECK REST | \$34.99 ITEM#: 18A0076

Use our neck rest to protect your guitar during maintenance.
Key features include:

- A soft microfiber top that gently nestles the neck and prevents scratches.
- Smooth polyester pellet fill that will not poke through the material.
- Heavier pellets at the bottom that add additional weight and stability.



POLISH | \$16.99 ITEM#: 18A0073

Premium guitar polish and cleaner in one, saving time and money. Use the same product at home that Martin Guitar craftsmen and women use to keep Martin guitars in pristine condition.

- Do not use polish on a satin finished instrument.



POLISH CLOTH | \$4.99 ITEM#: 18A0091

Create the desired shine without scratches using the Martin Polishing Cloth. Use with Martin Polish for the perfect finish.



**PIN PACK | \$35.00
ITEM#: 18APP50**

These ebony and pearl bridge and end pins are sure to hold your guitar string in place while not affecting your tone.

THE FUTURE OF WOOD

BY CHELSEY SIMPSON



Mike Dickinson spends roughly 12 weeks of the year on the road, which is at least part of the future he imagined for himself while growing up in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, just two blocks from the Martin Guitar headquarters.

"I didn't want to be one of those guys who grows up in a small town and never leaves," he says. "I wanted to be out, traveling the world."

Dickinson is a guitarist and bass player who, as a young man in the 1980s, hoped to ride the success of his heavy metal band, Nightmare (later renamed Psychedelic Asylum), all the way to the top. Today, he isn't playing to sold-out crowds at Madison Square Garden or Wembley Arena, he is meeting music at its source in the jungles of Guatemala, Tanzania, and Cameroon.







Now a longtime employee of Martin, Dickinson travels the world as an exotic, alternative, and sustainable wood sourcing specialist. This position didn't even exist 30 years ago when he was first hatching his rock-and-roll dreams.

"If you went back to the '70s and '80s and asked someone, 'Hey, do you want to cut down the Amazon rainforest and ruin the earth's atmosphere?' nobody would have voluntarily said 'yes,'" Dickinson says. But for decades, the dire plight of the world's forests wasn't common knowledge, even at companies like Martin that depended on the availability of exotic hardwoods. Deforestation itself was only part of the issue. Demand for rare woods across the globe gave rise to illegal activity, threatened indigenous communities, destroyed sacred artifacts, and perpetuated unsafe working conditions.

"As the world became a smaller place and we heard more and more stories about what was going on, Chris Martin, our Chairman and CEO, and the other executives decided that Martin needed to pay more attention to where our wood was coming from," Dickinson says. Toward that end, Linda Davis-Wallen, a sourcing specialist for Martin, first connected the company with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) and the Rainforest Alliance in 1997. But sourcing wood sustainably, ethically, and legally isn't a straightforward task. According to Davis-Wallen, the company sources wood from countries on six continents and as many as 30 different vendors at any given time. There are international treaties to keep in mind—such as CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora—as well as a constellation of unique laws and regulations pertaining to every community where Martin does business. In some locations, lawlessness reigns, which is an even greater challenge. Despite the barriers, Martin's dedication to responsible sourcing has only grown over the past 20 years, and the company has developed a multifaceted approach to sustainability that involves everything from on-the-ground reconnaissance to outreach and education at rock concerts.

Finding sustainable, FSC-certified wood sources is no small task. Paperwork and phone calls can only tell you so much, which is why Mike Dickinson gets on a plane about six times a year and flies halfway around the world.

"I travel to all of the countries and all of the forests where our wood comes from," Dickinson says.



“THIS FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN HELPS PRESERVE THE
PEACE, INCREASES TOURISM, AND ULTIMATELY

SAVES TREES

BY SELECTIVELY CUTTING THEM DOWN.”

These aren’t perfunctory expeditions. Once on the ground, he meets with the people in charge of the forest and uses GPS data to find the specific trees that are destined to bear the shape of Martin’s famous Dreadnought. Then he visits the mills and follows the wood to the port, where he watches as it is packed on a ship before catching his own flight home.

Even with all of this legwork and research, it is extremely difficult to produce a guitar with 100 percent FSC®-certified wood. Some woods, like spruce, are hard to certify, not because they are inherently less sustainable, but because they are harvested primarily by small landowners, and those individual landowners usually don’t bother with certification paperwork.

“Close to 80 percent of the wood we use has some level of FSC certification when it comes in the door, but we are only making a couple dozen FSC-certified guitars,” Dickinson says. “We’re in it because we believe in the core values of FSC, not as an advertising gimmick.”

FSC certification itself is far more than a bureaucratic exercise—its impact can be felt in places like the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala, where the forest is managed by the local population and trees are selectively harvested, providing income for communities while preserving the forest as a whole. Whereas outlawing logging altogether might give rise to a black market, this forest management plan helps preserve the peace, increases tourism, and ultimately saves trees by selectively cutting them down.







Currently Martin produces nearly 140,000 guitars every year, but if you took all the wood from all of those guitars and glued it together, you would have only about 10 spruce trees, according to Dickinson.

“The percentage of wood used by the music industry is very small,” Davis-Wallen says, “however, it is also the very highest end of quality. It is very easy for a furniture or window manufacturer to, say, turn away from a wood like mahogany and go for a wood that looks exactly like it but is cheaper. Whereas, in our industry, mahogany is extremely traditional and sought after.”

Davis-Wallen, who has been with Martin for 44 years, has a handwritten record book from the 1800s that shows what her predecessors were purchasing more than 100 years ago. Very little has changed.

“We are using the very same materials that we’ve been using since Martin started,” says Frank Untermeyer, Martin’s Director of Supply Chain. “Today we are building guitars with mahogany and rosewood bodies and spruce tops, with ebony fingerboards and ebony bridges,” just as they did back then. “They are very traditional.”

In addition to purchasing responsibly, Martin is also working with a growing list of alternative products. Sycamore, cherry, and poplar are on the list of alternative woods, as are Richlite® and HPL (High Pressure Laminate), which are engineered wood-based alternatives. Composed of resin-infused paper, Richlite makes an excellent replacement for ebony on fingerboards and bridges.

The development of alternative woods puts Martin in a tricky position. With 185 years of experience, Martin is the oldest guitar manufacturer in the country and the torchbearer of tradition. Now, after more than a century and a half of telling the public that the very best guitars are made of Brazilian rosewood, Martin has to convince its customers to give alternative woods a try.

“When you develop a tone in a guitar and set a standard, that is what people aspire to have in their instrument, so it is difficult to lead people in a different direction,” Untermeyer says.

Luckily for Martin, unlike other wood products like furniture and flooring, guitars have rock stars on their side, and a number of musicians are ready and willing to go to bat for the future of the world’s forests. One of these ambassadors is Adam Gardner, cofounder, guitarist, and vocalist for the band Guster and also the cofounder of REVERB, a nonprofit organization dedicated to turning music tours into a force for environmental good.

Since 2004, REVERB has been working with musicians to green their tours in a host of different ways, from biodiesel buses to local food sourcing and partnerships with community-based nonprofits. But in 2012, an organization called the Environmental Investigation Agency reached out to REVERB to ask if they were aware of the illegal logging crisis and how it related to the music industry. It was a huge wake-up call for Gardner.



“Here we had gone to all this trouble to reduce our waste and increase our impact and support environmental causes, and meanwhile the very instruments that we were playing could have been ripped out of a rainforest by international criminals using child or slave labor,” Gardner says.

Gardner and the REVERB team kicked into high gear, recruiting fellow musicians to sign a pledge in support of responsible wood sourcing (to date, it has nearly three dozen supporters, including the likes of Mick Jagger, Willie Nelson, and Bonnie Raitt) and lobbying Congress in support of the Lacey Act, which prohibits the import of illegally logged wood. REVERB has also educated and engaged thousands of music fans at concerts across the country about the issue. REVERB found a natural partner in Martin—Gardner praised the company in his testimony to Congress in 2012, and Martin has donated guitars to REVERB, which they raffle off at concerts to raise money and awareness. Additionally, Martin has partnered with artists such as James Valentine, Jeff Tweedy, and Sting to build their own FSC®-certified custom guitars that date back to the mid-1990s.

“What I love about Martin is that they are going beyond the law,” Gardner says. “They aren’t just letting the laws dictate what they are doing; they’re letting their ethics dictate what they are doing.”

Gardner’s message to consumers is to be more aware, not just in their instrument purchases but with furniture and every other wood product they buy: Look for FSC and Rainforest Alliance Certification™; demand sustainable, alternative woods; and know that there are certain woods, like rosewood, that are difficult to source responsibly.

Martin’s sentiments are similar—the company has a lot riding on the hope that the tonewoods they’ve built their business around will still be around in another 185 years and that consumers will embrace alternative woods as well.

“We are a six-generation family business,” Davis-Wallen says. “We are going to try to do everything that we can to continue to go on, but we need help from consumers.”

So far, the path to sustainability has been circuitous. In order to preserve a company built on tradition, you have to defy it. In order to save a forest, you have to cut down a few trees. If you want people to make more mindful furniture purchases, you have to talk to them about guitars. And if you’re Mike Dickinson, you have to stay home in order to leave.

“It’s one of those things where you get what you want in the exact opposite place where you thought you were going to find it,” he says. “I wanted to travel the world, so I left Nazareth, only to find out that to travel the world I had to work in Nazareth.”

He celebrated 27 years with Martin in September.



IN MEMORIAM

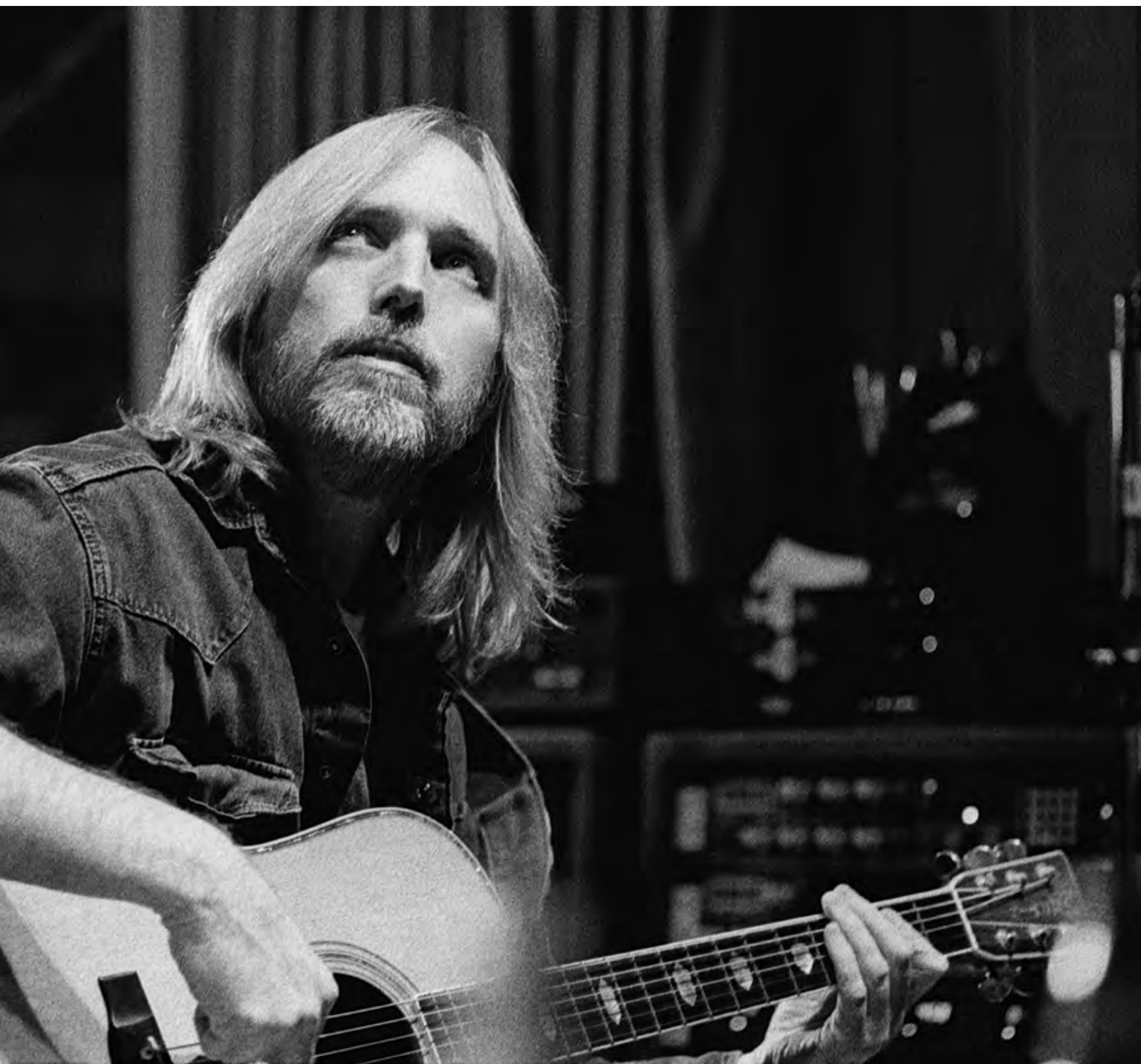
THE UNFORGETTABLE

INTO THE GREAT WIDE OPEN TOM PETTY 1950–2017

Tom Petty will always be remembered as a master songwriter, musical collaborator, record producer, TV and film actor, and inspiration to all of us who have ever loved his music. From “Breakdown” to “The Last DJ” and beyond, Tom’s career spans four decades. Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers have long since been the soundtrack to generations of teenagers growing up in an ever-changing world, where Tom’s music has been a constant for comfort, encouragement, and joy. Tom was known for his easygoing style and his good-hearted nature, and was honored as MusiCares Person of the Year for his many contributions to music through philanthropy. His talent and drive garnered him an ASCAP Founders Award, Gershwin’s Lifetime Musical Achievement Award, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, a Billboard Century Award, an induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame and into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with his band the Heartbreakers. As one of the top-selling musical artists of all time, his music remains as relevant and celebrated today as it will for lifetimes to come. Our hearts may be broken, but they will always be filled with the sound of Tom Petty songs.

Photo by Robert Sebree





SOMETHING OLD



DICK BOAK



CHRIS MARTIN & DICK BOAK

Famed guitar and bass maker Roger Sadowsky of Sadowsky Guitars took this photo of a slightly skeptical Chris Martin and perhaps a self-amused Dick Boak at an early 1980s luthiers gathering in Boston.



WHO'S YOUR TAILOR?

Chris Martin and Dick Boak in their leisure suits at the 1989 Summer NAMM Show in Chicago, promoting the new Martin B-40 acoustic bass.

NO SHIRTS, NO SERVICE

Throughout the 1980s, Dick Boak and Chris Martin attended many dozens of bluegrass festivals with the Martin Custom Shop van, displaying instruments and selling T-shirts. They must have sold all of the shirts on this trip, including the ones on their own backs!



LIVE AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL

Dick Boak, Chris Martin, Eric Clapton, and Susan Ellis (Dick's wife) backstage at London's Albert Hall in 1995 for the presentation of the 000-42EC prototype to Eric. This instantly successful collaboration laid the groundwork for more than a dozen signature edition projects with Clapton. It also solidified a template of charitable royalties for most of the Limited Edition artist models that followed.



SAILING TO NAZARETH

Chris Martin shows the yet-to-be-lacquered HD-40MK prototype body and neck to Mark Knopfler in May of 2001. While touring the East Coast in support of his CD *Sailing to Philadelphia*, Mark chartered a helicopter with bandmates Richard Bennett and Glenn Worf, landing on the infield of the Nazareth Speedway, where they were met by Dick Boak in the Martin van. After testing out pace cars on the track, Knopfler spent the day at Martin, approving his model specifications and touring the factory.



C. F. Martin & Co., Inc.
510 Sycamore St., Nazareth, PA 18064
MartinGuitar.com
MartinGuitar.com/Blog



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