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Dear Martin Enthusiast,

I think a good place to see how innovation has helped the Martin Guitar company survive and prosper for 186 years is to take a stroll through our museum here in Nazareth. While C. F. Sr. started his career mimicking the Stauffer style of design and construction, he quickly pivoted to blending traditional woodworking techniques like the dovetail with what was essentially an American copy of traditional Spanish classical guitars. Speaking of Stauffer style guitars, I think one of the most interesting features of an early guitar theme C. F. Sr. built is the adjustable neck guitar, built around 1834.

The development of the now universal X-brace was, we believe, developed over time as a way to create enough structure to hold the top together and produce a very pleasant tone while replacing the traditional fan bracing to accommodate a bridge with bridge pins.

As the business grew, C. F. Jr. helped his father expand and grow production through the use of tooling and fixturing designed to produce consistently high-quality guitars in greater volume.

While Nazareth wasn’t exactly the cradle of the Industrial Revolution, like Bethlehem and Bethlehem Steel, we installed a fuel-driven engine power plant that ran the various pieces of equipment in the machine room where we made component parts.

Frank Henry Martin got us into the mandolin and ukulele business early in his career. While Martin mandolins were the best in those days, it is the Martin uke that is still considered the gold standard of ukes for quality and tone.

C. F. III, my grandfather, and Herbert Keller, my great uncle, joined the business right around the time that we rather quickly stopped using gut strings and started using metal strings. This dramatic pivot occurred at a time when touring musicians were looking for louder guitars that could project to the back of the concert hall so everyone felt like they got their money’s worth.

This was really the beginning of the western guitar. From that point on, everything we have done has been a refinement of that wonderful steel-string sound that is so popular around the world.

Perry Bechtel, a well-renowned vaudeville banjo player, wanted to switch to the guitar but was frustrated by the wide neck, flat fingerboard, 12-fret guitar available at the time. He asked us to build him a guitar with a faster neck, like a banjo, with more access. We decided to borrow the narrow-radiused 14-fret necks that were being used on archtop guitars and installed it on a squat 000 size guitar. He loved it.

Pretty soon more Martin models became available with the 14-fret neck. Today the vast majority of flat-top acoustic guitars built around the world have 14-fret necks.

What can I say about the Dreadnought guitar that hasn’t already been said? Even though it got off to a slow start, it is now the most copied steel-string guitar in the world.
My father joined the business the year I was born. He and my grandfather caught the folk boom in its infancy and rode it all the way through the folk-rock boom of the late Sixties and Seventies.

The D-35 was developed to utilize Brazilian rosewood that wasn’t acceptable for a two-piece back. Even 50 years ago, we knew how precious those exotic timbers were and made the most use of them.

Let’s talk about pickups. Even in the Sixties, my father realized that there was the desire to amplify acoustic guitars. After a false start with some traditional flat-top Martins with DeArmond electric pickups, he partnered with a colorful electrical engineer from the Bay Area in California and developed the first piezoelectric pickup for acoustic guitars. The system was combined with a glued-on pickup and an outboard preamp. Expensive, but... it was the first. Thanks, Dad.

During my career, I am proud to say that we continue to innovate, sometimes with partners. The Backpacker®, the X Series, the first high-tensile strength core strings, and our ongoing journey to make even better pickups are some of the things I’m glad I am involved with.

What is next? Check out our new acoustic-electric model that we are introducing at the Winter NAMM Show in 2020. The journey continues.

Thanks for listening,

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

MAX MARTIN | 2010–2019

The Martin family lost a loyal friend last year when their dog Max crossed the Rainbow Bridge after a long battle with cancer. Max was just three months old when he left Western Pennsylvania to join the Martin family.

Max was known, by all who met him, to be gentle and sweet and so well behaved that he frequently accompanied Chris Martin to the office and could be found quietly hanging out with the marketing team while they worked. He even barged in on a few meetings-in-progress after learning how to open the conference room door, giving all of us a good laugh.

Max’s favorite thing to do was snuggle on the couch with his best buddy, Emelda (the Martin family cat), and he loved to greet visitors at the door with one of his favorite toys in his mouth. Among his favorites were a stuffed armadillo, tarantula, and Lambchop. Max also loved going for walks and chasing squirrels and deer around the family property.
I just recently had my guitar stolen from church during a weekend break-in, and after some grieving time, I was able to purchase a D-18 Modern Deluxe with the help of some friends. She’s a beauty. To me, there’s a significant sound difference between a Standard and a Modern Deluxe. The way y’all do the VTS makes the Modern Deluxe sound like butter. And the PLEK/playability you have set up makes her play like a dream. The sound is rich and smooth. Mahogany is definitely becoming my favorite wood on guitars, and this D-18 Modern Deluxe is just affirming my love for Martin over other guitar manufacturers. The guitar complements the tone of my own voice while I sing too!

APRIL B. | WASHINGTON
“This is shockingly light ... and light acoustic guitars are more resonant ... I love that you’ve got the classic ingredients, but you’ve also got some modern jazz in there that makes it ... like an old friend, right out of the gate ... really comfortable all the way up the neck ... intonation seems dead on. So, good on ya, Martin, for taking a classic design and putting some modern touches on it and not losing the vibe of what you had. Because sometimes you get sort of a subtraction by addition, but I don’t think that’s the case here. I think they actually kinda nailed it.”

**PREMIER GUITAR MAGAZINE**
ON THE OM-28 MODERN DELUXE

“I just got my D-28 Modern Deluxe, and it sounds incredible! It rings so clear and true! Martin Rules!!!!!”

**RICHARD M. | RHODE ISLAND**

“The sound is incredibly crisp and warm. Part of what contributes to the guitar’s natural volume is a rich midrange to low end, especially noticeable when I play open chords—it’s a steamroller! Despite its classy trim appearance, the guitar feels like a wild animal with unbridled energy when you’re playing it. Strike the sixth string—especially in dropped-D tuning—and it carries so impressively, even as you continue to pick the other strings. You almost have to mute it manually to get it quiet.”

**ACOUSTIC GUITAR MAGAZINE**
ON THE OM-28 MODERN DELUXE

“**I’M LOVING THE MODERN DELUXE! CAN’T PUT IT DOWN!**”

CARL VERHEYEN FROM SUPERTRAMP
ON THE D-28 MODERN DELUXE

“The D-28 Modern Deluxe is the finest instrument I believe Martin has ever made. Perfect tone and balance, rich bass, and sparkling highs. Great intonation, super lightweight. Cosmetics are stunning, and the instrument just feels perfect on so many levels. Perfect instrument and shape. It is the instrument to aspire to.”

**RICKIE R. | ARKANSAS**
The best guitarists, many a musician will tell you, are not the ones with the fastest fingers, or deepest knowledge of music theory, or even the ones with the newest, most booming and resonant Martin D-28 Modern Deluxes from their local shops. The best guitarists are those who know how to listen.

The best guitarists are the ones who can take their years of experience and practice, then use them to pick up on what a song needs, and play that perfect part. Who are sensitive to what the players around them are doing, and build on those ideas to make something bigger and better. Turns out, it’s the same when it comes to building guitars. Creating better instruments is not about luthiers sitting solitary in their shops, staring at piles of top-braces and soundboards, waiting for inspiration to strike. It’s about taking a lifetime—or in the case of Martin Guitar, several lifetimes—of experience, and then, simply, listening.

Images courtesy of C. F. Martin Archives
"Innovation" is a buzzword that gets a lot of play in business magazines and advertising copy, but at its core it describes newness, novelty. Martin Guitar has never placed too much stock in buzzwords or business-speak, and their impact on guitarmaking has created anything but novelties. If a word had to be attached to their name, perhaps it wouldn’t be “innovation,” but a much rarer quarry: “improvement.” Change is easy. Better—especially after more than 180 years—is darn difficult.

The story of Martin Guitar, however, is the story of constant, tireless improvement: sometimes gradual and minute—like changes to bridge pins and tweaks to neck shapes—or radical and game-changing, like X-bracing and carbon fiber bridge plates. They may be improvements Martin made well before the rest of the guitarmaking world caught on—like belly bridges and FSC®-certified sustainable woods—or that they adopted only after an idea had proven itself worthy of the family of players Martin builds its instruments to please.

But in an industry that thrives on the next big thing—the MIDI-adaptable output jacks, the self-winding string tuners, the headless necks, and LCD displays—how do you decide between a good idea and a novelty? How do you know when it’s time to change an instrument or a process that’s been proven by a century of guitar players? How do you tell the difference between an idea that’s a genuine improvement and an innovation simply for the sake of novelty? How do you choose what to keep and what to throw away?

On a rainy day in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, I had the chance to talk about those choices with the man most responsible for making them over the past 33 years at America’s preeminent manufacturer of acoustic guitars: Christian Frederick “Chris” Martin IV, Chairman and CEO of C. F. Martin & Co.® Over the course of six generations, his family has maintained and expanded a legacy nearly two centuries old, making tough decisions that sometimes meant letting go of decades-old practices to stay vibrant, or letting bandwagons pass by to remain true to Martin Guitar’s core values.

Over the course of an hour spent strolling through the Martin Museum housed within the factory, which features detailed displays of instruments and artifacts from every period of the company’s 186-year history, I talked with Chris Martin about the choices made by the six generations of the Martin family—choices that made this company into a uniquely American institution, and that are keeping it at the top of the game today.
“Well, the first thing it’s important to get right, obviously, is that C. F. Martin Sr. invented the guitar.” Chris Martin is joking, of course, though sometimes it can be hard to tell. His way of speaking is warm and wry, and that twinkle of the eye that says someone might be making a joke is always there with him. And Martin has a disarming way of switching gears from focused passion on his business to poking fun at it, sometimes within the same sentence. But it is his easy laugh that gives the joke away. No, he says, what he’s really learned from looking at his family’s involvement with the guitar is that innovation is only part of the reason for their success. The key, he will go on to tell me, is to keep your eyes, ears, and mind open. To listen. And sometimes, he adds, to “beg, borrow, and steal.”

We’re paused in front of a glass case that separates visitors to the Martin Guitar Museum from one of the earliest guitars built by Martin’s great-great-great-grandfather, Christian Frederick Martin Sr., after his move to New York City in 1833. The guitar is elegant but not gaudy, with a decorative bridge and appointments that offset the sturdy functionality of German craftsmanship.

The son of a carpenter, C. F. Martin Sr. borrowed ideas from the disparate worlds of German carpentry and fine lutherie to create something new in some of his earliest designs. The dovetail neck joint, for instance, a hallmark of Martin Guitar’s finest instruments to this day, owes its lineage to C. F. Martin Sr.’s willingness to borrow a good idea and put it to work.

“I have to believe that C. F. Sr. learned how to put dovetails together from his father, making fine furniture,” says Martin. “It’s an integral part of a furniture joint, and he was very familiar with its elegance, its relative simplicity, its functionality. And we’ve been running with the dovetail ever since.”

It’s a similar story with Martin Guitar’s oft-fabled X-bracing. It’s tempting to imagine the elder Martin sitting at his workbench and noticing two shadows crossed on the wall—“Aha! An ‘X’!” But the truth, I learn, is rooted more in craftsmanship, experience, and a willingness to get a little crazy. An issue had arisen in installing more modern, ball-end style bridges onto guitars built with fan-bracing prevalent at the time. Back then, Martin tells me, “Particularly toward the end of the process, there was a lot of eyeballing.” What would happen, he says, is that bridges would be placed on assembled bodies to ensure proper squaring and scale length, and then, when it came time to drill holes for the strings to fit through, the drill would cut straight through a brace. The result would mean removing the top, making time-consuming repairs, and slowing down production. C. F. Martin Sr.’s solution to this costly problem would turn out to be the improvement that would transform guitarmaking forever. “Instead of having individual braces, why don’t I just take two long ones, crisscross them, and eliminate the need for that transverse brace—because that kind of ‘X’ secures the top,” as Chris Martin tells it. “Lo and behold. It wasn’t like one night he went to bed and said, ‘Tomorrow I’m going to make X-bracing.’ Evolution. It was an evolution.”
The elder Martin led the company for 40 years, carrying his craft across the Atlantic, honing his business sense in New York City, the most crowded city on Earth at the time, and then setting up for production in the rolling hills of Eastern Pennsylvania, an area pleasingly like his birthplace in Germany. His son would only lead the company for a short while after the passing of his father in 1873 at age 77, though C. F. Martin Jr. had been an active force in the company since his father suffered a stroke in 1850, and an official partner since 1867—one of the original members of the “and company” that makes up the “C. F. Martin & Co.” we know today.

Under C. F. Jr.’s watch, Martin Guitar purchased its first property in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, (perhaps sparing the Band from having to pen a far less poetic “pulled into Cherry Hill, Pa.,” as the opening line to their classic hit “The Weight”) and introduced their largest-sized guitar yet, the 00. But, for many at the time, these developments mattered little. For them, a Martin guitar without C. F. Martin Sr. was barely a Martin at all.

Such was the fear that Martin Guitar’s now-famed craftsmanship would die with C. F. Sr. According to Martin Guitars: A History, his passing “set off a flurry of rumors that ‘real Martins’ were no longer being made.” History would go on to show, however, that most of Martin’s best instruments were yet to come. But this illustrates that though he was at the helm for less than two decades, C. F. Jr. wrestled with one of the same fundamental dilemmas his father would have faced: the conflicting drives to maintain a technologically state-of-the-art factory capable of more production and a wide profit margin, or the handcrafted artisanship C. F. Sr. had kept at the heart of Martin Guitar for nearly half a century.

Ultimately, C. F. Jr. continued to strike a delicate balance in the way his father had. As Chris Martin puts it, “I think the story in Nazareth was beginning to find that sweet spot between handcraftsmanship and cautiously embracing modern production. Approaching it very cautiously, but not ignoring it. And that’s kind of our mantra today—if it works, we shouldn’t ignore it.” Among the trends C. F. Jr. did not ignore were steam power, which he introduced to the factory in 1887, and the continued standardization of guitar models that had started under his father.
Throughout its first two generations, Martin Guitar had displayed a preternatural ability to listen. Players of the company’s early years like Madame de Goñi, Charles de Janon, and Justin Holland helped point the way toward improvements to some of the earliest Martin models, and guitar dealers like C. A. Zoebisch & Sons helped Martin keep a finger on the pulse of what the playing public wanted. But it wasn’t until Martin entered its third generation of family ownership under Frank Henry Martin in 1888 that the rest of America learned to listen nearly as well, thanks to the brightening spark of radio.

Frank Henry Martin led his family’s company for nearly 60 years—longer than his father and grandfather combined. It was a period that carried Martin Guitar into the 20th century and, moreover, represented a shift toward the risk-taking and dynamism that was mirrored in the music of the era. It was also a period that represented an identity crisis of sorts for the company: As Frank Henry continued to focus on the quality that made Martin Guitar famous, other manufacturers were pushing out guitars faster and more cheaply than anything Martin was able—or willing—to do. Rather than following the trend toward rote mass production, Frank Henry kept his ears, his eyes, and his mind open.

It was this skill that helped him to pick up on the popularity of the mandolin, whose music had begun to sweep the nation. Under Frank Henry, mandolins became such an important part of Martin’s lineup that, by 1915, the company was selling nearly twice as many mandolins as it was guitars [source: Martin Guitars: A History, p. 63].
Crucially, they also gave Martin ample opportunity to experiment with steel strings. As Chris Martin tells it, “By the late 1800s, you could buy steel strings for fretted instruments, but the quality was just too inconsistent—players didn’t embrace them. But when the banjo and the mandolin came along, production picked up and the string makers were able to make strings more consistently. This gave us a chance to, in a way, fool around with metal strings.”

Radio helped open the door for what might have been the first full-blown fad in American music: the explosion of Hawaiian music in the early 20th century. In 1898, the American government successfully annexed the Republic of Hawaii as a U.S. territory [source: Osborne, “The Main Reason for Hawaiian Annexation in July 1898,” Oregon Historical Quarterly, 1970, Vol. 71, No. 2, p. 161], and the earliest recordings of Hawaiian music were made by 1906 [source: Lipsitz, Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), p. 228]. Within a decade, the sound was sweeping the American mainland—along with demand for the instruments needed to play it.

The Martin Guitar company had taken a stab at making ukuleles before, with little success. “Frank Henry Martin made a couple of ukulele prototypes because he saw what was happening in Hawaii. We had a dealer in Honolulu selling our guitars, and so we sent these prototypes to them. And he sends them back with a nice note saying, ‘Mr. Martin, we love your guitars, but you don’t have a clue how to make ukuleles,’” Martin recounts with a laugh. “Thing was, Frank Henry made them like guitars—he overbuilt them; he put spruce tops; he put rosewood backs and sides. Then, later,” Martin continues, “after Hawaiian music becomes pop music, he says, ‘Okay, let’s try this again.’ He bought some Hawaiian ukes and took them apart and said, ‘Ah! They need to be very delicately made.’”

Frank Henry’s ability to sense this trend, adjust manufacturing at Martin, and maintain quality while responding to the new demand had a profound impact on the company. By 1920—spurred on by exciting new forms of music, increasing access to them via the radio, and Martin’s ability to listen to what American musicians wanted—production had reached 1,336 guitars, over 1,500 mandolins, and, four years after first hitting stores, a whopping 3,150 ukuleles [source: MG: AH, 63].

It was also under Frank Henry’s watch that Martin responded to players’ requests for guitars with greater fret access, thinner necks, steel strings, and larger and larger bodies. A partnership with the Ditson company offered the craftspeople at Martin a lower-risk way to test out new ideas the market
wanted, and to improve upon the guitars pioneered by C. F. Martin Sr. nearly a century before.

It was in 1916 that Frank Henry’s willingness to take chances in support of what players wanted was married perfectly with the partnerships that helped him take those risks. Following the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exhibition (which, with 18 million visitors, was a major turning point in the popularity of Hawaiian music), one of the most talked-about performers from the event’s “Hawaiian Pavilion” took his band on a tour of the United States. Traveling to venues across the United States, Mekia “Major” Kealakai’s Royal Hawaiian Sextette was a smash hit, with crowds thronging to witness the band’s exciting, steel-stringed sound. Finding a guitar loud enough to reach these growing mainland audiences soon became a problem for the Major. To solve it, Kealakai reached out to America’s preeminent guitar manufacturer to talk about something new, something different—and something bigger. Guided by Frank Henry’s leadership, the craftspeople at Martin Guitar devised a steel-string instrument large enough to suit the needs of the Royal Sextette’s sound—and the largest guitar Martin had ever produced.

Referred to as an “extra large” Style 17 in Martin’s shipping records, the massive custom guitars Martin made for Major Kealakai were on the bench when representatives from the Ditson company came by to discuss collaborations on future designs. Exactly what transpired next no one is sure, but the result would eventually be “marketed as a ‘bass’ guitar—not because it had four strings, but because of its powerful rumbling bass sound,” according to Chris Martin—before being dubbed the Dreadnought in 1916.

During his tenure, Frank Henry helped to develop the Dreadnought—along with much of the rest of the Martin line—into something like the instruments we are most familiar with today: 14 frets, geared tuners, steel strings, and squared shoulders. But more importantly, he also developed the guitar company into something new: an institution that continued to strike the balance between craftsmanship and powerhouse production and enshrined Frank Henry’s personal motto: Non multa sed multum—“Not many, but much.” At the same time, he developed Martin Guitar into a truly modern music company—one that shaped, and was shaped by, music itself.
As the century sped toward its midpoint, C. F. “Fred” Martin III found himself faced with new challenges created by his father’s successes. By the time he took over in 1948, Martin Guitar’s North Street factory was humming along at capacity to the point that meeting demand was becoming a problem.

“When someone walks into a music store with several hundred dollars and asks for a Martin guitar,” Fred famously lamented, “he wants it then, not three years later!” It was time, Fred realized, to continue to listen to what the guitar-playing public was saying: Martin needed to be able to make more guitars. Encouraged by his son, Frank Herbert Martin, who joined the company in 1955, the decision was made to build a bigger, better factory. So was born the Sycamore Street location, which Martin Guitar has occupied to the present day.

The new factory opened in 1964 and could not have come at a better time. American music had embraced the acoustic guitar in a new way. The Kingston Trio’s self-titled debut had landed in 1958, introducing much of America to the generations-old sound of folk music—albeit updated to a modern pop sensibility—with a Martin guitar as the essential key to that sound. Not unlike the Hawaiian-music craze that had swept the nation before, America was not only discovering new music to play on the acoustic guitar, but new ways to use the guitar itself. Far removed from its past as a parlor instrument, under Fred and Frank Herbert Martin’s watch, the Martin guitar became a tool of political expression, a singer-songwriter’s most trusted ally, a new kind of icon in American society.

Unlike the Hawaiian-music craze, however, this was a sound rooted in America’s rural past, in old-time tradition. Just as it had in generations past, Martin Guitar kept its ear to the rail of American music and listened for ways to move forward.

“There wasn’t a tremendous amount of ‘innovation’ during the folk boom,” says Chris Martin. “It was more, ‘Let’s just see what these musicians want.’” What they wanted was a connection to the past, a return to roots. During Fred and Frank Herbert Martin’s time, Martin introduced guitars that harkened back to that earlier era. One guitar, a small-bodied 0-16 NY “New York” model, recalled Martin Guitar’s earliest days on Broadway in New York City, while also offering a nod to the Greenwich Village folk scene. After he had officially taken over as president of Martin Guitar in 1970, Frank Herbert successfully homed in on another connection to the past that acoustic players had been craving: herringbone. By the mid-1970s, hushed talk of the mystical qualities of “pre-war” Martin guitars, with their scalloped bracing and herringbone trim, had
become scripture among guitar aficionados. Martin responded by introducing the HD-28—a modernized version of those pre-war classics—in 1976. It remains a part of the Martin line to this day and helped to make many of those pre-war features once again standard.

Throughout this era, if C. F. Martin III represented a steadying hand on the wheel of the Martin business, his son was the foot on the accelerator. Frank Herbert worked to vastly expand the scope of what Martin Guitar could be: He hired Martin’s first true dedicated sales staff, launched the Custom Shop in 1979, and acquired new businesses to bring under the Martin umbrella. As it grew to include Vega® banjos, Fibes drums, and a Swedish guitar firm, C. F. Martin & Co. expanded to become “The Martin Organisation.” It was a rare period in Martin’s history where the company set out in search of pure growth rather than the insightful improvements that had come to define it, and most of these new ventures did not lead far.

One acquisition, however, would shape the company in a fundamental way: Under Frank Herbert, Martin Guitar came to own the Darco® Strings company in 1970. With Darco came the expertise and equipment to begin manufacturing strings in-house. In hindsight, it was a brilliant move: Strings shape a guitar’s sound more than anything else beyond the instrument itself, and now Martin could begin to bring the creativity and dedication to quality that made its guitars so unique to strings as well.
By the time he stepped into the role of chief executive at Martin Guitar in 1986, Chris Martin’s family had shepherded the company through 153 years of change. Highs and lows, booms and depressions, a civil war and two world wars, peaceful years and years of protest. During that time, music had branched out in countless directions: The golden age of jazz had come and gone, rock and roll had seen the hope of Woodstock and the heartache of Altamont. Synth-rock and disco-inflected pop tunes were topping the charts that year, and to many people the acoustic guitar seemed perhaps as quaint as the parlor gatherings originally associated with the instrument over a century before. Where else was left for the acoustic guitar to go?

Luckily, Chris Martin kept listening. Like his forebears, he knew the key to Martin’s success. In a 1904 catalog, his great-grandfather wrote that the way to build great guitars “is not a secret. It takes care and patience.” Similarly, speaking in Martin Guitars: A History nearly a century later, Chris Martin would say, “Our people give 110%. That’s our secret weapon.” The key to improving year in and year out, to making guitars consistently better than what had come before, lay in the making of them. In knowing what people want, what the music calls for, and doing it better than anyone else.

Under Chris Martin’s watch, Martin Guitar has both deepened its connection to its roots and led the way forward into the 21st century. A commitment to environmental responsibility has allowed Martin to source the sustainable tonewoods and materials that will allow Martin Guitar’s commitment to sound and playability to continue forward for generations. The thoughtful embrace of Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machining has meant increasing consistency and worker comfort without sacrificing the handcrafted quality C. F. Martin Sr. pioneered.

A crucial arena in Martin’s lineup that offered Chris Martin the chance to work with bold, cutting-edge technologies was the Martin Strings line. Unlike their guitars, without 186 years of heritage to shepherd and preserve, the Martin Strings team has been able to work further outside the box in pursuit of the perfect complement to the timeless sound of traditional Martin tonewoods. Under Chris Martin, Martin Strings pulled from ideas as far afield as automotive production to refine their products: Wire from radial tires offered the starting point for the Martin SP® Core line. From there, Martin has pioneered the use of space-age materials like titanium in their Titanium Core strings and vintage alloys in their Retros®. But no string has captured Martin’s unique reverence for tradition and embrace of innovation more than their latest creation, Martin Authentic Acoustic strings. Tin-plated across all six strings and crafted using Martin’s finest wrap wire, they marry playability and tone in a way no other string does. And all of these strings are manufactured to only the most exacting standards at Martin’s Navojoa, Mexico, factory.
Chris Martin also oversaw the evolution of those facilities in Navojoa in that uniquely Martin way: always improving. Starting with strings in the early 1990s, with their exacting tolerances and demand for consistency, the Navojoa factory cultivated a commitment to quality akin to Martin’s earliest days at Cherry Hill and North Street.

“Today they make solid wood guitars—but you can’t start there,” says Chris Martin. “After strings, the next step was teaching our colleagues in Navojoa how to make an HPL guitar,” referring to the durable and sustainable material Martin uses on their most affordable models. “Then we developed their finishing: starting with matte finishes, then a gloss top, and finally full gloss.” Over 30 years, Chris Martin replicated the work of his great-great-grandfather: passing on expertise in a way that struck a balance between quality and affordability. Today, perhaps for the first time ever, guitar players at all income levels can buy a guitar with the Martin name on the headstock and know they’re getting Martin quality.

At the same time he was leading the company’s expansion into new materials and guitar designs, he was refining the Martin product line to stay true to the company’s past. In 2018, Martin launched their Reimagined Standard Series, which took the best elements of each guitar in the Martin lineup from over the course of their long histories and thoughtfully combined them into timeless marriages of new and old. The herringbone and scalloped bracing players had been asking for now become standard across many Martin instruments. Another development introduced earlier in 2015 was the Vintage Tone System® (VTS). Embracing the technique of torrefaction and developing it into an art, Martin began “aging” the woods in some of their higher-end guitars to give them the blossoming tone of vintage guitars without sacrificing stability.

Perhaps nowhere is Martin’s connection between the future and the past—and his dedication to Martin Guitar’s tradition of creativity—as evident as it is in the Modern Deluxe Series introduced in 2019. What players wanted was louder, lighter, and more playable. In this series, the company has combined their bold use of new materials and techniques with the most hallowed parts of its heritage. At first glance, Modern Deluxe guitars appear to be more artfully wrought versions of Martin’s most famous designs: VTS Sitka spruce tops, East Indian rosewood backs and sides, European flamed maple binding, bold herringbone inlay, a dovetail neck joint, natural protein glue, scalloped VTS bracing. But these instruments are loaded with subtle details that pack a huge punch: Liquidmetal® bridge pins and carbon fiber bridge plates enhance volume and sustain without adding weight; a titanium truss rod offers strength at featherweight. A new, slightly asymmetrical neck shape keeps playing effortless, so we can keep on playing. The Modern Deluxe is Chris Martin’s influence on the company written across a single series: linking Martin Guitar’s past to its future. It is the Martin guitar, but better.

As a society that seems to live always on the cutting edge of technology—today’s smartest smartwatch is tomorrow’s discarded iPod—it sometimes feels like we’re obsessed with novelty. But, talking with Chris Martin, and seeing the way his family has moved the acoustic guitar forward over six generations, I feel like guitar players might crave something else: to be heard, to be listened to, to be respected. And, really, so many of history’s so-called innovators were, in fact, simply great listeners. They were able to read the tea leaves, keep their ear to the rail, and predict which way the wind was going to blow. They were able to provide what people needed, often before they realized it was what they’d been asking for. Touring the Martin Museum, I see how Martin Guitar has done that time and time again throughout their nearly two centuries of music history. Year after year, building the guitars that players like me didn’t know we’d been waiting for; year after year, maintaining the same quality that C. F. Martin Sr. had made the standard in 1833. I can’t wait to see what they do next.

“OUR PEOPLE GIVE 110%. THAT’S OUR SECRET WEAPON.”  C. F. Martin IV
AVAILABLE SPRING 2020

To learn more, visit: MartinGuitar.com/S2020
Martin collaborated with the hit TV show American Chopper and Paul Jr. Designs to build a three-wheeled vehicle and an automotive-inspired custom guitar that were featured in two television episodes broadcast in March 2019. Limited to only seven instruments, this 14-fret Dreadnought guitar features design elements such as aluminum riveted panels (a first for Martin) and custom inlay in wood and copper. It includes an Engelmann spruce top, which produces complex tones, paired with Guatemalan rosewood back and sides to add deep basses and crisp trebles. The model features European flamed maple binding, nickel open-gear tuners, skeletonized butterbean knobs, and a stainless-steel label. It is strung with Titanium Core strings.
ALL WOOD APPOINTMENTS

This deluxe 000 cutaway features Engelmann spruce and cocobolo with koa appointments throughout. Unique features also include the koa trimmed sound port and three-piece slotted neck with a cocobolo center strip.
This custom Dreadnought features a premium Sitka spruce top and elegant cocobolo back and sides. The unique back presents both straight and cascading grain along with contrasting sapwood at the centerline.

COCOBOLO
MARIO ANDRETTI 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Martin joined the world in celebrating the 50th anniversary of Mario Andretti’s 1969 Indianapolis 500 victory with this custom Dreadnought visualizing his win. It includes a 50th anniversary medallion affixed near the tuning pegs that was created by BIXLER, America’s First Jeweler™. Mario’s achievements are legendary: He was the only race car driver who has ever won the Daytona 500, the Indianapolis 500, and the Formula One World Championship. Mario is our very own local hero from Nazareth, Pa., and we proudly call him our neighbor and friend. Martin made two commemorative instruments—one was gifted to Mario at the 2019 Indy 500, and one lives in the Martin Museum.

TO SEE MORE PHOTOS OF THESE GUITARS, VISIT MARTINGUITAR.COM/JOURNAL.
he white handkerchief tied around Kenneth Pattengale’s iconic 1954 Martin 0-15 conjures visions right out of the Coen Brothers’ movie *Inside Llewyn Davis*. You can almost see Pattengale and his Milk Carton Kids collaborator Joey Ryan angelically illuminated through the dark and smoky haze as they sing their plaintive harmonies in the old Gaslight folk club.

But, as you look closer, you realize that’s not a relic he’s playing. It’s the Kenneth Pattengale Special: a reimagination of Pattengale’s 0-15 that is also Martin Guitar’s newest addition to their signature line. Adorned with a Vintage Tone System® (VTS) Adirondack spruce top and an attractive price tag, this single 0 mahogany body is built with all the passion and precision that comes from the lessons of a long journey.

“It’s like any other story where there’s far-reaching ambition and a calling to persist through it. It feels like, at every turn, just one little thing out of place can derail the whole thing,” said Pattengale. “Just like my and Joey’s career in general and the idea of being abandoned in the modern-day equivalent of the Wild West: one false move and you fall off the cliff and it’s all over.”
Milk Carton Kids

Photography by Megan Baker
But how did we get here? Like most epics, it’s best to start at the beginning.
Pattengale and Ryan joined forces in Eagle Rock, California, in 2011 and found their unique blend of close harmonies and heartfelt ballads quickly catapulted them to the national stage. Inspired by an early lyric, their name is a metaphor for being able to escape things like the awkwardness of youth.
“But what people don’t know about the milk carton kids campaign is that it actually only lasted two years, and they never found any of the kids. So when we found out how short-lived and unsuccessful of a campaign it was, [we] knew it was a perfect name for a band,” said Ryan with the dark wit for which the band is known.

In 2014, Ryan and Pattengale visited Nazareth for the first time.
“We got to know Martin early on because we were looking for friends and advocates who could help us with tour support,” said Pattengale. “Martin very quickly revealed themselves to be real supporters of true artistic causes.”
After this initial connection, a different relationship between the Milk Carton Kids and Martin Guitars developed: around the creation of a new signature guitar based on Pattengale’s own vintage 0-15.
“We found trusted advocates when we visited the factory in Pennsylvania while on tour. The idea came up naturally to myself and VP of Product Development Fred Greene,” said Pattengale.
The first step was for Pattengale to pick out his favorite things and see what the guitar would sound like. “In the beginning, I set out to make this guitar with certain values, and then, maybe mistakenly, Fred Greene gave me the keys to the castle up in Nazareth,” said Pattengale.
To insure the project’s success, Greene chose Gruhn Guitars in Nashville to exclusively offer the instrument. Greene knew George Gruhn would be perfect for the venture.

“George understands this kind of guitar and the kind of artist Kenneth is. His store is known worldwide, and when George supports a project, it has gravitas in the marketplace,” said Greene. “I thought Kenneth deserved a dealer of George’s stature to serve the project well.”

As Pattengale endeavored to create a modern guitar with a strong connection to the past, he welcomed this pairing.

“George, for all intents and purposes, defines the vintage guitar market in human history,” said Pattengale. Gruhn is no stranger to creating custom instruments. Even before his long history with Martin Guitars, he even tried his hand, with Randy Wood and Tut Taylor, at making banjos and mandolins at the height of the bluegrass movement in 1970.

It was the early ’80s when Gruhn started placing custom orders with Martin Guitar.

“The model specs that I really want in many cases differ from the standard line. If it was nothing [but] simply adding a little bit of slightly different inlay or a different trim on an otherwise standard guitar, it would be boring to me,” said Gruhn. “There has to be a reason to do it.”

Gruhn recognized Pattengale’s vision when he saw the Milk Carton Kids perform at the Polk Theater in Nashville in the fall of 2015.
could see more of what he’s really trying to do with it, [and it] gave me a greater appreciation and understanding. He’s doing almost a similar type sound to what Dave Rawlings is doing,” said Gruhn, referencing the 1935 Epiphone Olympic archtop that Rawlings plays. “It has an extremely good treble response rate, and it works magnificently with somebody else playing the rhythm.”

By making this connection, Gruhn saw a parallel to the Milk Carton Kids’ music.

“Kenneth is more of a lead player,” said Gruhn. “He handles that lead and a lot of arpeggios, whereas [Ryan] strums bass and does rhythm. They work really well together.”

Time passed. The process continued. And then the unexpected happened.

After touring in support of their 2015 album, Monterey, Pattengale’s world shook. As he was recovering from both a cancer scare and the breakup of a seven-year relationship, the Milk Carton Kids broke with the past by adding a full band with All the Things That I Did and All the Things That I Didn’t Do in October 2017. What motivated this change?

“We had too much money and had to get rid of all of it,” deadpanned Ryan about the band’s evolution. “[It was] a general sense of stasis and knowing we had exhausted at least some burst of initial creativity that lasted six years.”

Ryan went on to explain how they were originally inspired by the limitations of having only two guitars and two voices, but “all of a sudden that thing was now feeling a little bit constricting, and [we] wanted to have more options.”

Pattengale and Ryan were then in the unfamiliar position of employing a group of musicians and felt the pinch of diversification.

“The clock was definitely running. The money was being burned as we were all in the studio trying to figure out what might work and what might not work,” said Pattengale. “It was just another lesson that, nevermind preparedness, but have an essential, strong idea. Establishing a beacon to follow is really important, especially considering the ever-expanding ambitions.”

This augmentation was strikingly similar to the path the germinal prototype had taken. Although it initially struck a chord of creativity in him, Pattengale realized they needed to let the guitar mature naturally. For the next two years, Pattengale and Gruhn spent countless hours in Gruhn’s Nashville shop refining a concept that was both anchored in the past and looking to the future.

“Kenneth wanted specs as close as possible to his single 0-15. He wanted it to be affordable, where his fans could actually aspire to own one and play it,” said Gruhn. “And so it was a struggle getting it done to the specs he wanted at a price that he felt his fans would buy. I feel that we’ve finally come up with this.”

Pattengale also appreciated the old-world craftsmanship for which Martin Guitar is revered.

“It occurred to me that my Martin 0-15 represented a model made during the ’50s that encapsulates some values that maybe we’ve lost in modern commerce,” said Pattengale. “It’s as finely built a guitar as the most expensive Martin guitar that was made in 1955, [but] it was essentially a student model. When you get rid of all the trim, the binding, and inlays, there’s no crazy accouterment added to the guitar. What you’re left with is a really well-built, world-class guitar with no fat to spare.”

One difference between a typical 0-15 and the Kenneth Pattengale Special is the use of a dark-stained VTS spruce (instead of mahogany) top to give the appearance and sound of a vintage model.
“It has a very Depression-era look to it. The original 15s, in many cases, were meant to be low-dollar guitars. America was struggling, and so they had a very austere vibe to them,” said Greene. “We wanted to give that visual but get a little bit more performance out of the guitar. The spruce top gives you that.”

This approach is one that Gruhn knows well. Although Gruhn has spent his life in the vintage guitar business, he is also a strong believer in modern guitar-building methods.

“Martins have a good balance at this point with computer numerical controlled (CNC) equipment and handwork,” said Gruhn. “Some things, hands do best. Some things, CNC does better.”

For Gruhn, it was also about finding the perfect fit of player to instrument.

“He wants a guitar that sounds like his mahogany-topped Martin. And it happens the torrefied Adirondack does a great job of that. It has good brightness, but it’s not the tonal signature of a non-torrefied top,” said Gruhn. “The Pattengale guitar suits his style eminently well.”

Now that the pair had divined the essence of the Pattengale Special, they realized it might have an untapped place in the market.

“There was a light bulb moment that made us think, ‘Wow, we might possibly sell thousands of these and not hundreds,’ ” said Pattengale. Sporting a traditional hand-fit dovetail and Standard Series bracing, this guitar has specs that harken back to the Golden Era of guitar construction.

“The target was to make it as inexpensive as possible. And the philosophy behind it is very much motivated and tied to the idea of the 1955 Martin 0-15 that I play, which is spectacular,” said Pattengale, trailing off. “Sorry, I have a helicopter passing.”

At this moment, a classic Milk Carton Kids moment happened as Pattengale paused the interview.

Joey: Is it your helicopter?
Kenneth: No, not my helicopter.
Joey: Just wanted to know if we came into some cash flow I wasn’t aware of.
Kenneth: No, the guitar is only 2,150 bucks.

And, in this glimpse, we see the root character of this project. Much like the Milk Carton Kids perform with equal parts honesty and humor, Pattengale has poured his heart and mind into this signature instrument. And, as the Pattengale Special is inseparably intertwined with the man, a new classic has been forged.
This historic bracing pattern offers optimal sonic performance and stability and set the standard for acoustic flat-top, steel-string guitar design.

The removal of select material from the Standard X reduces brace mass. This allows the top to vibrate more freely, offering a more dynamic sound that is louder and fuller.
**A-FRAME**

A-FRAME “X”

This pattern offers unrivaled stability with an angled bridge plate and produces a unique tone.

**X SERIES**

X SERIES “X”

Used exclusively on X Series instruments with High Pressure Laminate (HPL) tops. It combines spruce X-bracing with bow tie plates and a carbon-fiber reinforcement brace to balance tone and stability.

**HYBRID “X” SCALLOPED**

A-frame bracing is scalloped to increase sonic efficiency on guitars featuring a mortise and tenon neck joint. Produces a louder and fuller sound.
Sisters Rebecca and Megan Lovell of Larkin Poe were just 15 and 16 years old when they were swept up into the music industry and started making music together as the Lovell Sisters. Now in their late 20s, they lead Larkin Poe as a multi-instrumentalist, singing, songwriting, roots rock duo. The band wants to make a statement with their music—as female bandleaders and instrumentalists, but most importantly, as a modern blues rock band. Which is why on their fourth studio album, *Venom & Faith*, released last November, you’ll hear everything from Megan’s lap steel and the twang of Rebecca’s electric guitar to electronic, hip-hop style beats and a drum line (programmed in GarageBand, with an acoustic horn section), all set against a blues and country-informed roots rock backdrop. Their personal approach to songwriting and arranging has evolved over time—in a process that ultimately resulted in their choice to self-produce, beginning with their third studio album, *Peach*. “We thought, you know what, let’s just go with what’s in our nature. Let’s do this, the two of us, and see where it goes,” says Rebecca Lovell. Their latest album bursts with that confident, adventurous energy, and above all, shows that the two know how to write a mean Americana anthem. We sat down with Lovell to get some more background as to how.

**What is your musical background?**
Music was a huge part of the soundtrack in the family home. Music was always playing; either our dad was spinning classic rock records, or our mom was playing Baby Bach tapes. My sister and I started playing classical violin and piano as little children, at three or four years old. We’re the first generation of music makers in our family, and we were involved in orchestras, symphonies, and quartets into our early teens. It sort of spread like wildfire in a way our parents didn’t necessarily intend. And we were growing up in Northern Georgia up in the Appalachian Mountains—so it was only a matter of time until we got bitten by the bluegrass bug. Some family friends took our whole family to a bluegrass festival when I was 13 and Megan was 14, and we became obsessed. We dropped all of our classical instruments, I picked up the mandolin and the banjo, and Megan picked up the slide guitar, the dobro. That was the jump-off point for us to creatively approach music.
What draws you to the role of a multi-instrumentalist?
Playing guitars and playing anything with strings has always been a major focus for Megan and me. I think mostly because it’s not the most obvious role for women in the industry. Typically, you’re going to see a diva who mostly sings. That’s the ready-made role model for a young woman in the music industry. For us, we’ve always been against the grain, wanting to do something that set us apart a little bit. And it wasn’t even just for that—it’s honestly where our hearts lay. Because listening to somebody like Mark Knopfler, Jeff Beck, Bonnie Raitt, and hearing the expressiveness in the way that they approach their musicianship and their instruments was always really inspiring to Megan and me as little kids. Being 15, 16 and going around to bluegrass festivals, jamming with people—musical proficiency on your instrument was sort of a given.

When did you start learning guitar?
Our dad had a Martin D-28, and he would play “Stairway to Heaven” on it. For the longest time, I really wanted to learn guitar, but my hands were too small. I remember being very fiercely rewarded whenever I could finally make a G chord on that Martin. We predominantly play electric instruments now; I typically play Fender Stratocasters, and Megan plays a very specific model of Rickenbacker lap steel from the ’30s. But acoustic-wise, Martins are the crème de la crème, baby.

How do you go about songwriting as a duo?
The bond that we share as sisters is a major driving force behind all of the music we create. We are 20 months apart, so we’ve always felt like twins—unspoken communication, very twin-like interactions between the two of us. Amazingly, after 15 years on the road, we’re still best friends. I’ll write a song and bring it to Megan, and we make it sound like Larkin Poe together. Most of the time it’s just intuitive, feeling with our fingertips through the ether until we find the right arrangement for the song. But it always happens really naturally. I can say that we’re very fortunate.

What creative challenges do you face as a songwriter?
Oftentimes creativity requires the biggest leap of faith imaginable. As a songwriter, songwriting is the one thing in life that deeply terrifies me but is the one thing that I have to keep doing. Every time I sit down in a studio to write, I have this little voice in the back of my head that tells me, “You have nothing meaningful to say. You’ve never even rubbed two creative neurons together in your life. What makes you think that you have what it takes to make something that people will want to hear?” I have to battle that down every time that I sit down to write. Which seems a little bit excessive and a bit dramatic, but I’m a creative person, and that’s my process.

What inspired you to start self-producing your records?
We had worked previously in the studio with different producers, different situations. I think at the very beginning of our career, we were learning who we were going to be as artists and what our story was going to be. The deeper that we’ve gotten into Larkin Poe, we’ve realized that we are the true arbiters of the story, and it falls completely on our shoulders. Whenever we made that decision, we decided it only made sense to produce the records between the two of us. That was an incredibly liberating decision because it allowed us the freedom in the studio to pursue little creative ideas that we might have had. Like I wanted to write a horn section, and Megan was like, “So go write a horn section,” and then I was like, “We should have a drum line section,” and Megan said, “Well, you should go write a drum line section!” So I did and programmed it using GarageBand and then brought the tracks back, and we all loved it. That’s the beauty of songwriting in that there is no right or wrong answer; there’s just, “Well maybe, that might be it, just try it.”

Would you say that spirit was the creative drive behind Venom & Faith?
Part of our goal with Peach and Venom & Faith was to create a marriage between the old and the new. Because obviously we’re pooling very American arrangements, melodies, lyrics, and trying to place them in a setting that is very 21st century. So bringing in some synthesizers, bringing in some big 808, or some hi-hat, hip-hop patterns, we’re just trying to find a way to make something that is fresh and new and not entirely derivative. As a female-fronted blues band in the 21st century, we gotta be authentic.
“We make it sound like Larkin Poe together... feeling with our fingertips through the ether until we find the right arrangement for the song.”
“ALLOWING SPACE FOR THE LEARNING PROCESS IS REALLY IMPORTANT.”
What are some of your favorite songs on the record?
“Bleach Blonde Bottle Blues” is one of my favorites. I think it represents the record well. It presents a very sassy blues lyric, and it’s got a cool kind of swagger to it that feels like a 21st century blues band should sound. My favorite to play right now is a little bit campy—it’s a track called “Blue Ridge Mountain Memories.” When I wrote it, I thought it was going to be a joke song. Because it is challenging as a writer to make something happy without it feeling cheesy. It’s about growing up in Northern Georgia in the mountains. I would write a line and laugh; I just thought it was really funny. But then I realized that it’s a little more anthemic than I would have given it credit for. That’s one of the songs in the set that people really will headbang and fist pump to. It’s really fun to just feel the spirit shift in the room with the crowd when you’re playing “Blue Ridge Mountain Memories.”

What inspired the album title?
The title of the album came from a lyric in the song “Honey Honey.” We ultimately decided to name the record *Venom & Faith* because they are seemingly opposing words, and in a lot of ways, they conjure up a picture of the American South in a way that makes Megan and me feel homey.

What are your influences?
Very early on, as young teens, we fell in love with Alison Krauss and the Dixie Chicks, seeing those female-fronted bands just kick ass. Then, of course, the Allman Brothers are a big one for us. For me, I would say Black Sabbath and Ozzy Osbourne—he’s a really big inspiration to me. I think that Ozzy could have been one of the best bluegrass singers in the world, but he just happened to sing metal. For Megan, Derek Trucks is a really big inspiration; Jerry Douglas is a really big slide inspiration, as is Bonnie Raitt—such vocal qualities on the slide. For me as a singer, Skip James is a really big vocal inspiration. He’s a traditional, hill country blues artist, who sings very high and lonesome with not that much affectation. I love the way that he sings.

Who are you listening to now?
Just recently I was listening to Jason Isbell. I think that he is one of the best songwriters of our generation. As is Chris Stapleton—he is absolutely jaw-dropping. On a blues front, I’ve been listening a lot to Willie Dixon, Lightnin’ Hopkins, Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, and, of course, I always have to listen to my Iron & Wine.

What’s next for you guys as a band?
Touring! We’ve already been in 20 countries this year. We just got back from Australia and New Zealand. It was our first time in Australia and New Zealand, and the jet lag was a kicker, but it was so amazing to go down under and play some tunes. For the next six to eight months, we’re going to be out on the road just playing shows and shows and shows and seeing people. We’ll set some time aside this fall to make some more music.

What advice would you give beginning artists?
I would encourage people to embrace being bad. It seems like a defeating piece of advice, but it’s true—when we’re baby humans, we suck at everything. We can’t walk; we can’t talk; we can’t take care of ourselves—it’s a process of learning. And I think so much of music and creativity is a practice. Unless you’re a phenom, you don’t really ever start out being awesome. Allowing space for the learning process is really important. To have patience with yourself, and if it’s something that you really love, don’t give it up. Just keep trying, keep getting behind the plough, and go for it.
In July of 1970, Frank Herbert Martin purchased the Darco® Strings company, a pivotal moment in the company’s history that marked the beginning of their in-house string production. Looking back on that acquisition from today’s vantage point, it was brilliant because strings became an increasingly critical component to the overall sound of the guitar. Bringing the equipment and expertise in-house allowed Martin to apply the same quality standards to their strings as they did to their instruments. As the company celebrates the 50th anniversary of this important event in its history, the sound engineers at Martin took a deep dive into their most recent strings innovation, the new Authentic Acoustic strings product line. On the following pages, you will get an up-close look at the materials and build technology that make all four of the Authentic Acoustic strings products unique and special.
**92/8 PHOSPHOR BRONZE**
Provides consistent true tone that is pleasantly bright and sustaining over the life of the string.

**80/20 BRONZE**
Brighter out of the pack but warms up quickly. Great for bluegrass players or anyone looking for a mellow tone.

**SILK & STEEL**
Contains an added silk thread between the round core wire and silver-plated bronze wrap wire for added comfort and warm tones.

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**AUTHENTIC ACOUSTIC SP®**
Best for everyday use in the studio and on stage; for players with rigorous practice and performance schedules.

**92/8 PHOSPHOR BRONZE**
Provides consistent true tone that is pleasantly bright and sustaining over the life of the string.

**80/20 BRONZE**
Brighter out of the pack but warms up quickly. Great for bluegrass players or anyone looking for a mellow tone.

**SILK & STEEL**
Contains an added silk thread between the round core wire and silver-plated bronze wrap wire for added comfort and warm tones.

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Best for players who want added protection for fine or vintage instruments.

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**SILK & STEEL**
Contains an added silk thread between the round core wire and silver-plated bronze wrap wire for added comfort and warm tones.

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**THREAD WRAP**
Marquis strings include a soft thread wrap at the ball end to protect the bridge plate and help seat loose bridge pins.
PROTECTIVE TREATMENT
This technology was developed to protect the core wire and the wrap wire to prevent corrosion without compromising tone.

AUTHENTIC ACOUSTIC LIFESPAN® 2.0
Best for players who demand true, unaltered tone but don’t want to change strings often.

92/8 PHOSPHOR BRONZE
Provides consistent true tone that is pleasantly bright and sustaining over the life of the string.

80/20 BRONZE
Brighter out of the pack but warms up quickly. Great for bluegrass players or anyone looking for a mellow tone.

AUTHENTIC ACOUSTIC FLEXIBLE CORE
Best for beginners and all levels of fingerstyle playing.

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Provides consistent true tone that is pleasantly bright and sustaining over the life of the string.

SILK & PHOSPHOR
Contains an added silk thread between the round core wire and phosphor bronze wrap wire for added comfort and warm tones.

THINNER CORE WIRE
Unique ultra-thin high tensile core wire and thicker wrap wire provide ultimate flexibility without sacrificing tone.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT AUTHENTIC ACOUSTIC STRINGS AND MARTIN’S ADDITIONAL STRING PRODUCTS, VISIT MARTINGUITAR.COM/STRINGS.
WE ARE FAMILY

KATIE

Katie has been working at Martin for four years and has spent time in Stringing and Polishing. Her aunt and uncle both work at Martin as well. Her favorite part about working at Martin is working on the tour route, where she has the opportunity to answer questions from visitors who have traveled here just to experience where Martin guitars are made. Her favorite model is the HD12-28 because of its exquisite sound. As a player herself, Katie makes sure she puts her best quality work into each guitar she works on.

ED

Ed has been working at Martin for eight years. His wife has also worked at Martin for the past 15 years. Ed currently works in Final Inspection, where, as a guitar player for over 40 years, his favorite part of his job is setting up and playing premium instruments every day. Ed's favorite guitar is the D-28 Modern Deluxe because of its balance.
EVAN

Evan has been working at Martin for seven years, which includes stints in Final Polish, Sanding, Spraying, and, currently, Polishing. Like many Martin employees, Evan plays guitar and wants everyone to know that he puts his heart into each guitar he works on. He will not let a guitar leave his hands if it is not up to the same quality he would choose for himself. Evan’s favorite models are the OM-42 and D-42 due to the classy pearl appointments and combination of Sitka spruce and rosewood.

COURTNEY

Courtney has been at Martin for five years. Currently in Prefinish, she has also worked in Filling/Binding Cleaning and Top and Back Assembly. Her favorite part of her job is working on repairs, and her favorite guitars are anything with an ambertone finish. One thing she wants all Martin owners to know is just how many hands touch and care for their guitar and how seriously each person takes his or her step in the process to produce the highest quality instruments available.

HEATHER & KIM

Kim has worked at Martin for 18 years, and, for the past eight years, her daughter Heather has worked at Martin as well. Kim currently works in Rim Assembly, and Heather works in Prefinish. Both take pride and comfort knowing that they work for a company that has been here for over 180 years. Heather particularly sees this reflected in the vintage-inspired style of her favorite models, the 000-28 Ambertone and 000-28 Sunburst.

PETE

Pete has been at Martin for 17 years and currently works in Customer Repair, where he has the honor of restoring vintage Martins, occasionally from the 1800s. His favorite part about the job is being able to hold the company’s history in his hands. He treats each instrument as if it were his own prized possession. His favorite guitar is the 000-28 Modern Deluxe for its new take on a classic instrument.

EVAN

Evan has been working at Martin for seven years, which includes stints in Final Polish, Sanding, Spraying, and, currently, Polishing. Like many Martin employees, Evan plays guitar and wants everyone to know that he puts his heart into each guitar he works on. He will not let a guitar leave his hands if it is not up to the same quality he would choose for himself. Evan’s favorite models are the OM-42 and D-42 due to the classy pearl appointments and combination of Sitka spruce and rosewood.
JIM SALESTROM

I knew

taken unwillingly

by a guitar. I

laughed to myself.
or so many of us born during the “baby boom” era, nothing was more important than making or listening to music, especially when it involved a guitar. All of us were influenced by the early “rock ‘n’ roll” songs that had been ushered in by Elvis Presley and his cohorts, and we all wanted to be a part of it. I know I did.

It turns out that a young man from the heartland of Nebraska, Jim Salestrom, had that same dream. Born into a family in the mid-1950s as the second of three boys, Jim found his love of music from his parents, his church, and, most definitely, in school, where he learned trombone and piano before getting involved in serious guitar playing.

Jim was gifted with an inexpensive Kay f-hole guitar as a seven-year-old, and his love for the instrument caused him to explore what other brands were out there. He soon learned about Martin guitars, and a relationship began that has continued to the present day.
It seems that in talking to Jim about his Martin collection, which includes 13 guitars, each one, wherever it came from, already had a history, except for the occasional instrument he bought brand new. He was introduced to the Martin line when he went to a 1960s concert featuring folk artists Steve Addiss and Bill Crofut, and Jim saw and heard Addiss’s Martin 12-string model, which immediately caught his attention. Just a few years later, Salestrom bought his first Martin guitar, a used D12-20 12-string purchased from a farmer’s son in Kearney.

1. 2005 Martin D-45
2. 2003 Martin D-42V
3. 1969 Martin D-41: John Denver played it new at Kearney State College
4. 1959 Martin 000-18
5. 1966 Martin D-18: Mike Taylor wrote “Rocky Mountain High” hammer lick plus “Sunshine on My Shoulders” with John Denver
6. 2015 00-42 Custom
fter forming the band Fresh Air in 1971, soon to become Timberline, with older brother Chuck and some other friends, he found an ad in an Omaha newspaper for a used D-41 owned by a General Motors executive. That became the first of many Martin six-string guitars Jim has purchased and still uses today. A trip to New York in the mid-1970s brought a 1940 0-15 into his life. To this day, Jim remarks, “It sounds like a D-35 on steroids! Talk about a big sound!”
ne of Salestrom’s favorite stories, after having become friends with singer/songwriter John Denver, was being at the famed Red Rocks Amphitheatre outside of Denver, Colorado, in 1972. It was the first time the man, who had earlier hit the charts with “Take Me Home, Country Roads,” was performing there, and Jim was running sound. John’s lead guitarist at the time, Mike Taylor, played a 1966 D-18, one of Martin’s more popular Dreadnoughts. It was at that show that John performed “Rocky Mountain High” for the very first time to thunderous applause, and Mike’s lead work was all over the recording that was eventually released. When Mike passed away in 2010, that special Martin, which can also be heard on Denver’s signature recording of “Sunshine on My Shoulders,” ended up in the possession of Kris O’Connor, John’s former personal manager and concert producer, who gifted it to Salestrom in 1995.

Jim fondly remembered John, when in the fall of 1973, he got a guitar lesson from the famous singer. “At the Cushing Coliseum in Kearney,” Salestrom recounted, “John showed me the drop D tuning that changed my life, and then he played the Buddy Holly classic “Everyday,” but he had a different way of playing it...his own cool groove. John was an incredible guitar player with a great sense of timing. Dick Kniss [Denver’s bass player] and Mike Taylor were, too.”

Salestrom also spent a week with Denver and O’Connor singing background vocals and playing guitar and banjo when the recording of John’s Different Directions album was being produced.

Since Denver’s untimely passing in 1997, Jim has been seen on the road all over the United States, as well as in other countries, conducting a troupe of musicians associated with the popular star of the 1970s. The multimedia production, with Denver videos being shown on a giant screen, features Salestrom leading the former star’s band musicians and supplying the instrumental and vocal accompaniment to many of the songs we all remember.

Jim’s band Timberline also opened shows for country music’s Dolly Parton, which led to Jim playing in her band intermittently from 1979 on, once his band had broken up. Salestrom utilized a number of his prized Martins playing for Parton, especially his Dreadnoughts, a CEO-4, and a 1987 J-40M jumbo acoustic.
Of his time with Parton, Jim recollected a couple of HBO specials he did with her, one of them at the Dominion Theatre in London, England. “We were doing three shows (for HBO), and they were filming it for three nights with film. This was back in the day when the Irish Republican Army (the IRA) was doing some really bad things...like blowing up places in London. During a taping for one show, Dolly’s manager walked out on stage right in the middle of the opening act’s set and announced that the theatre had received a bomb threat! Everyone took proper precautions, and, fortunately, no bomb went off.” Salestrom remembered what Parton said about the ordeal: “Well, somebody told me about show business [that] the best way to do a show is to make ‘em laugh, make ‘em cry, and scare the hell out of them, and you know you’ve done a good show!”

In addition to working with others, Salestrom has managed to have a successful solo career of his own, releasing about an album a year since the early 1980s. His most recent recording, 2017’s _Shady Pine_, was produced in Nashville by former Denver keyboardist Chris Nole, and, says Salestrom, “It might be one of the best-sounding records I have ever made.”

Jim has passed his love of Martins to his son, James, who lives and performs in Nashville. Together, they have a new live album soon to be released. James also writes songs and plays a 000-18 and a newer GPC-16E.

In the online chat I had with Jim in the writing of this piece, Jim summed up his feelings about Martin guitars this way. “I have loved Martins since I was 12. I believe the new ones are being made with the same integrity and quality of sound, maybe even better with all of the improved technology.” He stated for the record that his road guitar is a beautiful 00-42 Custom (“small and mighty loud, and it fits above the seats on United Airlines”). If he drives to a show, you’ll find him playing his D-45 and J12-65 12-string. His D-42V is brand new, and in spite of rocker Steve Miller’s advice to go out and “scratch it up,” Jim leaves that one at home where he plays and enjoys it.

Jim has also played his Martins on the Academy Awards show, The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson, at the White House for four different presidents, and in the United States Supreme Court. He also started the Grateful Music Foundation that gives instruction and musical instruments to schools. So far, he has presented three Martin guitars to schools.

Having signed up with the Martin Artist Relations Program in 1987 with then-representative John Marshall, Jim’s professional contacts over the years include a number of important music industry figures, who had nothing but good things to say about him. Dick Boak, former Director of Martin’s Museum and Archives, says of Jim: “In my two decades of friendship with him, I found Jim to be a talented, generous, passionate, and prolific guitarist and musician who shares a deep love for Martin instruments.”

George Gruhn, arguably the foremost authority on vintage guitars, not only here in the United States but throughout the world, says that “Jim has owned many fine guitars over the years and has come to appreciate Martin instruments for their superb sound and playability as well as their historical and collector’s item appeal.”

Fellow singer/songwriter Livingston Taylor says, “The magic of a Martin is fully revealed when placed in the hands of a master like Jim Salestrom...it seems almost like a godly gift!”

And O’Connor adds that Salestrom is “a wonderful entertainer and a fabulous guitarist. I think his name should be known in every household for the wonderful person he is.”

To find out what Jim is up to at any given time, check out his website, [JimSalestrom.com](http://JimSalestrom.com), and if he’s ever in your neck of the woods, go see him play. You’re guaranteed to go home with a big smile on your face that’ll stay for at least a week, and maybe longer.
OM-45 | SERIAL # 54139 1933

This prized near-mint condition OM-45 was acquired for the Martin collection from John DeGrote, who kept it by his side during World War II. Both John and the guitar survived the invasion at Normandy in 1944 and reunited in a Martin ad campaign that ran in the late 1990s.

STAUFFER STYLE GUITAR
BY C. F. MARTIN SR. 1834

The oldest instrument made by C. F. Martin Sr. in the collection, this Stauffer style guitar is constructed with flamed maple back and sides and an elaborate clock-key adjustable neck fashioned from inlaid strips of ebony and ivory. (Martin Estate)
Leon Redbone was a mysterious and unique performer. He was elusive and unwilling to share much about his private life but captivated audiences with his ragtime playing and vaudeville persona. He rose to popularity in the 1970s. According to an Associated Press article, Bob Dylan said that after seeing Leon perform, if he had his own record label, Leon would be the first musician he would sign.

This OM-18 was used extensively by Leon throughout his career. He can be seen playing it on the *Saturday Night Live* episode from November 19, 1977.

**"GRANDPA" D-18**  
KURT COBAIN, MARY LOU LORD, ELLIOTT SMITH  
SERIAL # 132933 1953

This well-worn D-18 was coined “Grandpa” by Cobain himself, and was gifted to the rocker by then girlfriend Mary Lou Lord in 1991. The guitar was used by Cobain while on tour for Nirvana’s second and most notable album, *Nevermind*. In later years, the instrument was returned to Mary Lou Lord, who subsequently toured with the late Portland rock troubadour Elliott Smith, who also performed with the guitar.

**TEX FLETCHER D-42 | SERIAL #56287 1934**

Specially made for radio cowboy Tex Fletcher, this is the only pre-WWII D-42 ever issued. Tex held his guitars like most lefties but learned to play on a right-handed guitar. Hence, this guitar has a left-handed fingerboard and pickguard but is strung for right-handed play.

**LEON REDBONE OM-18 | SERIAL #45962 1931**

Leon Redbone was a mysterious and unique performer. He was elusive and unwilling to share much about his private life but captivated audiences with his ragtime playing and vaudeville persona. He rose to popularity in the 1970s. According to an Associated Press article, Bob Dylan said that after seeing Leon perform, if he had his own record label, Leon would be the first musician he would sign.

This OM-18 was used extensively by Leon throughout his career. He can be seen playing it on the *Saturday Night Live* episode from November 19, 1977.
TRAVELING THE
EXTRA MILE
FOR SUSTAINABLE TONEWOODS
In 1997, C. F. Martin & Co. became one of the first guitar builders to buy tonewoods from certified sustainable sources. More than 20 years later, with other guitar companies now embracing sustainable tonewoods, Martin continues to lead the way in tonewood sustainability, taking it in directions that benefit the forest environment and those who live there.

“C. F. Martin’s efforts regarding tonewood sustainability have evolved over the years,” observed Michael Dickinson, Sourcing Specialist. “We began with a commitment to—when possible—purchase tonewood independently certified as sustainably sourced and responsibly harvested. Today, a sizeable percentage of our tonewoods come from sources controlled or certified by the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®), license code FSC-C008304, the organization with probably the most rigorous sustainability standards.”

While certified sustainable tonewoods provided a foundation for C. F. Martin’s efforts, the company soon realized true sustainability was more complicated than sourcing wood in a sustainable manner. “For tonewoods to be sustainable, their environment has to be sustainable as well,” Michael explained. “The straight-grained, richly colored tonewoods we know and love come from stable, biodiverse forest ecosystems. They also come from locations populated by indigenous people, many of whose livelihoods don’t involve timber.”

With these elements of sustainability in mind, C. F. Martin’s wood buyers began visiting the countries from which it sources tonewoods; going to the timber regions to meet suppliers, government officials, and researchers. These visits proved so valuable that Martin representatives now make several such journeys each year.

“Site visits to the sources have been beneficial both in terms of our tonewood quality and our sustainability efforts,” noted C. F. Martin Sourcing Specialist Albert Germick. “We see firsthand how suppliers procure and mill their timber. We confirm that the sustainable sourcing we see in the paperwork matches the reality on the ground. We see how countries and their scientists are working to conserve their forests as sustainable resources. And occasionally, we find specific ways we can help support local sustainability efforts.”

There are indirect benefits to these visits as well, according to Robert Garner, founder and director of ForestBased Solutions LLC, which provides technical services to help Martin navigate the sustainable tonewood supply chain. “C. F. Martin & Co. strengthens supplier relationships with every visit, and those relationships are incredibly important. Also, Martin is an internationally recognized brand, and the company’s commitment to sustainability instills confidence in everyone involved that sustainable is the way to go. Lastly, loggers, millworkers, and suppliers alike see Martin’s efforts to procure top-quality tonewood, and appreciate the wood they provide won’t disappear into anonymous products, but instead will be used in revered guitars their owners will cherish for decades.”

“The trips Michael, Albert, Robert, and others (usually a team of three or four) take to tonewood sources typically last between a week and two weeks. The countries are thousands of miles from Nazareth, the forests and many of the mills are in isolated locations, the accommodations often are primitive, there is plenty to do, and unforeseen delays are a fact of life. “Every trip is an adventure,” Albert commented.
Michael is one of Martin’s sourcing specialists on these trips, having taken well over a dozen of them since 2010 as its exotic and sustainable wood buyer. Albert is a newcomer; he became a sourcing specialist in 2018, after two decades of working for the company in manufacturing, quality assurance, and research & development. Albert’s descriptions of the trips he and his cohorts took to India and the Republic of the Congo early in 2019 show their challenges and their benefits to Martin’s sustainability efforts.

India

India is home to East Indian rosewood (Dalbergia latifolia), which is among the most popular tonewoods Martin offers. While East Indian rosewood grows across much of India, some of the finest wood comes from the state of Karnataka, and it was here Albert and the Martin team spent most of their nearly two-week visit.

Even for experienced travelers, the change in climate between Pennsylvania and India can be jolting. “Temperatures in Nazareth were in the low 30s when we left, while those in Mumbai were in the low 90s when we arrived,” he marveled. A quick commuter flight took them to Hubli, the city at the heart of Karnataka’s East Indian rosewood trade.

The visit to Hubli began with a tour of the new lumber mill built by one of Martin’s primary East Indian rosewood suppliers. While there, Albert and the crew reviewed wood grading criteria with mill management and senior staff.

East Indian rosewood is tightly regulated both by international treaty and the Indian government, which auctions legally procured logs at centrally located depots. “Reviewing and verifying the government paperwork that tracks East Indian rosewood—typically wild-grown trees shading small blocks of coffee trees planted beneath the canopy—from harvest to depot to mill is a big part of every Martin trip to India,” Albert noted. The Indian government began regulating forests and timber harvesting under the Indian Forest Act in 1927 and has expanded those regulations in the years since. Strict enforcement has resulted in a steady, sustainable supply of quality East Indian rosewood.

The next day, the group and the mill’s procurement manager traveled two hours by car to one of the depots. There, they saw recently auctioned lots that included logs destined for Martin and met with local officials. “Ten to 15 rosewood logs comprise an auction lot, and only a few logs in each lot will be suitable for tonewood production. It was fascinating to learn how logs are graded, how lots are put together, and how our vendor selects which lots to buy.” Albert also found the climate—for timber country—fascinating. “Hot, I expected; but dry was a surprise. That corner of Karnataka was like a desert, only with trees and wild monkeys.”

Next stop was Dandeli and the Institute of Wood Science and Technology’s field station, where Martin supports ongoing research into the size, distribution, and growth rate of East Indian rosewood in an undisturbed forest. “Dandeli is a rugged, beautiful place. It also is home to black panthers, tigers, bears, wild elephants, and venomous snakes. It was NOT a relaxing walk in the woods.”

Albert and the Martin team’s final stop on this India trip was the port city of Cochin, in the state of Kerala, to visit three additional sawmills that supply C. F. Martin with East Indian rosewood. All three mills are located within this bustling city: The two small facilities process wood exclusively for guitars, while the largest mill produces both guitar wood and wood veneers. Per usual, there were wood quality standards to review and paperwork to check and verify at each mill. After three days in Cochin, it was back to Mumbai to catch the flight home.

“EVERY TRIP IS AN ADVENTURE.”

ALBERT GERMICK
MARTIN SOURCING SPECIALIST
The Republic of the Congo

Situated in sub-Saharan Africa, the Republic of the Congo (ROC) provides C. F. Martin & Co. with a range of fine tonewoods. For many years, it has been a Martin source of ebony (Diospyros crassiflora) for fingerboards and bridges. More recently, it also has provided Martin with sapele (Entandrophragma cylindricum) for backs, sides, and tops, and sipo (Entandrophragma utile) for Road Series necks.

The Republic of the Congo is frequently confused with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but they are separate countries. The Republic of the Congo is significantly smaller in size and population than the other Congo, which is located to its south and east. It has a tropical climate and is home to one of the largest rainforests in Africa. “The Republic of the Congo also is a leader in Africa in the responsible, sustainable management of its forest resources,” Albert noted. “It’s one of the major reasons we source tonewood there.”

Timber resources in the Republic of the Congo are handled differently than those in India. The government grants exclusive concessions—essentially large blocks of forest—to private companies, which manage those blocks and selectively harvest timber from them over several decades in accordance with the national Forest Code. The concession from which Martin purchases ebony, sapele, and sipo received FSC certification in 2006.

Like the Martin team’s flight to Mumbai, its flight to Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo’s capital, took nearly a full day. Also, like India, the weather on arrival in Brazzaville was hot. “After all that time in air-conditioned planes and airports, stepping outside was like hitting a wall.”
Albert brought a special guitar along on this trip—a custom Martin Dreadnought Junior (DJR-10) built exclusively with tonewoods sourced from the Republic of the Congo: sapele top, back, and sides; sipo neck; and ebony fingerboard and bridge.

Transportation within Africa can be problematic, and so it was on this trip; the Martin team’s flight north to the town of Ouésso was delayed by a day when the plane became unavailable due to a government emergency. The flight itself was an object lesson in the difference between the country’s populated south and its virtually empty north. “Brazzaville is a thoroughly modern city, but, except for some nearby farmland, the rest of the country looks like a vast, unbroken forest from the air,” he observed.

Situated on the Sangha River, Ouésso is the gateway to the Republic of the Congo’s rainforest. From here, Albert and the team traveled by truck to Pokola, where the concessionaire’s sawmill is located. Between fording the Sangha River via primitive ferry and traveling on dirt roads built for logging trucks, the 30-mile trip took two hours.

Pokola is a company town; the 15,000 people there live in company housing, and 1,500 of them work at the mill. The day was spent touring both. “The mill is a fascinating mix of new and old technologies,” Albert remarked. “The milling process is entirely automated; the logs are laser scanned, dedicated computer software determines how to cut each log for optimal yield, and computer-guided gang saws do the cutting. But the facility has been in use since 1968; the sounds of chain driven log and lumber conveyors are reminiscent of an old amusement park.” Waste sawdust is used to power the mill, the town, and the local water purification system.

The next day, the Martin team and concessionaire representatives traveled three hours into the rainforest to see how the concession harvests timber, specifically ebony. Along the way, they also stopped at locations where sapele and sipo—both huge trees—were being felled. “The concession surveys a portion of its holdings and uses GPS to map and ‘mark’ specific mature trees—often only one every couple of acres—for harvest,” Albert explained. “When a ‘marked’ tree is harvested, both the stump and the logs are stamped with an identification code and matched to the recorded GPS coordinates. A ‘chain of custody’ record—

“IT WAS IMPORTANT THEY SEE HOW THE WOODS THEY HARVEST AND MILL ARE USED; HOW MARTIN TURNS THEM INTO SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL TO SEE AND HEAR.”

ALBERT GERMICK
subject to FSC® audit—tracks each tree and its wood all the way from the stump to Martin. After a timber harvest is completed, that block of forest is left undisturbed for the next 30 years to allow additional trees to mature."

While traveling back to Pokola, the group stopped at a small village to meet the forest’s indigenous people. Albert showed the Martin Dreadnought Junior to the villagers—who almost never see finished products made from the trees that surround them—and played it for them. “A guitar was something new to them. It was a treat to see their reactions when they heard one for the first time, especially the children.”

On their final full day in Pokola, Albert and the team gave a presentation on Martin guitars to the concessionaire’s management, with the Dreadnought Junior helping drive the message home. “It was important they see how the woods they harvest and mill are used; how C. F. Martin & Co. turns them into something beautiful to see and hear,” Albert stressed. The team then gifted the guitar to the mill, to serve as an enduring reminder of its role in creating such beauty.

They later toured the Pokola hospital, which Martin supports with annual grants. The grants reflect Martin’s view that sustainability is about people as well as resources; allowing them to live and thrive in their native homeland.

Upon returning to Brazzaville the next morning from Ouésso, the Martin team made three additional stops. The first was a meeting with Deputy Chief of Mission Matthew Cassetta and his staff at the U.S. Embassy, who wanted to hear about the company’s sustainable tonewood sourcing in the Republic of the Congo. The team then had lunch with a representative from USAID, which provides U.S. developmental assistance to partner countries like the Republic of the Congo. They also met with the Republic of the Congo’s Director General of Forests to discuss the country’s desire to expand its wood market in the U.S. and the importance of forest sustainability to that effort. The team spent the night in Brazzaville before heading to the airport and home.

LOOKING FORWARD, MOVING FORWARD

C. F. Martin & Co.’s drive to achieve true sustainability for tonewoods, for their forests, and for the people who live in those forests will continue. The progress Martin and a few like-minded companies have made so far shows true sustainability is possible; all it takes is the willingness to try and the will to do right by those whose futures depend on stable, renewable forest environments.

A truly sustainable tonewood future will be achieved by looking forward and moving forward. Looking forward to new technologies that will reduce wood waste. Looking forward to new forest management techniques that will enhance wood quality. Looking forward to new materials that will reduce wood demand. Looking forward to ideas as yet unimagined. And moving forward to embrace them all. Martin already is traveling the extra mile(s) for sustainable tonewoods—on the ground today and moving forward toward the future. The adventures have just begun.

FOR MORE IMAGES AND VIDEOS, VISIT MARTINGUITAR.COM/JOURNAL.

Right: wild grained East Indian rosewood.
‘70s DARCO® ADVERTISING

This strings ad from the 1970s gave you the prescription to cure bad tone. On the medicine bottle, you can see some of the names of the legendary strings Martin has been producing since acquiring Darco. You just had to follow the simple instructions, and you’d be sounding like a million bucks in no time.
ACOUSTIC KIT

Darco Acoustic Kits were sent to Martin’s dealers so they could let their customers pick the perfect strings for them. This kit allowed for a player to fine-tune their string set from 32 available gauges. With 13 plain-steel and 19 bronze-wound choices, there had to be almost endless discussions about what gauges were best suited for an acoustic.

DARCO NEW YORKER

Darco New Yorker were the premium string sets that “The C. F. Martin Organisation” offered in the Darco Strings line. They were available in special bronze-wound or silver-plated folk sets for acoustic guitars and blue-alloy or nickel flat-wound for electric guitars.
IN MEMORIAM

EMILY MEIXELL | 1983–2019

It’s rare in this life to come across a human being that just seems to bring joy to everyone who is lucky enough to cross her path. All of us here at Martin hit the lottery the day Emily walked through the door with her warm smile and her kind heart. We were blessed by her company for 12 years until August of 2019 when she lost a hard-fought battle with cancer. Emily was funny and caring and grounded. She was silly and humble and cool. And she was so very talented. During her tenure at Martin, Emily worked her way through every department in the factory. Her ability to soak up and retain every detail of the guitarmaking process made her a tremendous asset. But Emily was not learning to get ahead or make a name for herself. She was learning so she could help anyone who may one day have needed her guidance. That was just her way. That’s what made her so special. Emily was trusted, respected, and loved by colleagues, customers, and fellow musicians around the globe, who will forever miss her radiant smile and the joyful sound of her laughter.

Strum on, Emily. We are better for having known you.
MARTIN GUITAR NECK REST

MARTIN AUTHENTIC ACOUSTIC STRINGS

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