However, time and wear and tear have not been kind to the signatures. Richard Konter corresponded with C. F. Martin III shortly after the North Pole flight and invited C.F. to meet him in New York City. They apparently became friends, and further correspondences led to the 1952 trade of Konter's ukulele in exchange for a full sized Martin Dreadnought. The little instrument has held its mysteries in Martin's collection ever since.

The story of the Konter ukulele is complicated and fascinating. It has even captured the interest of the Smithsonian Institution and The National Archives. Both have assisted with Martin's research into this special instrument. At the Smithsonian, non-invasive multi-spectral imaging has been conducted (including ultraviolet, infrared, and reflectance transformation imaging) to help reveal abraded and faded signatures. At the National Archives, photographs and documents from Konter's and Byrd's personal files have been scanned and studied for clues about who some of the unidentified signatures might belong to and where and when they were added.

Larry Bartram and Dick Boak are continuing their research into the Konter ukulele. They are currently working on a small book about the ukulele containing stories, photos and documents to flesh out a fascinating chapter in U.S. history, polar exploration and Martin's contribution to them.
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I was ten years old in 1965. The folk boom was peaking, riots erupted in Watts, the Vietnam War wasn’t going well, and rock & roll looked like it might be here to stay. My dad and grandfather were running the company. My father was part of the current scene. My grandfather was watching a generation in flux.

My father was 31 when the D-35 was introduced. We had just moved into a new factory and business was good. Frank Martin was a complex amalgamation of family business heir, beat generation hipster, sports car enthusiast and madman. He was caught up in a vortex of musical styles that were defining the ‘60s, and many of the artists who were doing the defining were playing Martin guitars.

The exact origins of the D-35 are lost to history. We do know that its development is attributed to the scarcity of Brazilian rosewood. In what is probably our first acknowledgement of the challenge of making more guitars out of scarce resources, my dad’s colleagues created the three-piece back D-35. While three-piece backs were not new on guitars, I think it’s safe to say that the Martin D-35 is the most popular three-piece back guitar ever made. The D-35 has a traditional, yet cool, elegance that was — and is — just right.

Happy 50th birthday, D-35!

Sincerely,

C. F. Martin IV
Chairman & CEO
C. F. Martin & Co., Inc.
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE D-35
Q & A WITH CHAIRMAN & CEO CHRIS MARTIN IV ON MARTIN’S ICONIC D-35

Do you remember when the D-35 was introduced?
CFM IV - I was ten years old in 1965 when the D-35 was introduced, so I don’t have firsthand recollection of its introduction, but I do have a sense for its general history and significance in the Martin line.

Whose idea was the D-35?
CFM IV - A variety of employees have staked their claim as having conceived the D-35 or its three-piece back. Bob Johnson, Martin’s Vice President and computer expert at the time, is often mentioned as having first suggested the idea. We do know that the first prototype (labeled the X-35) was constructed with standard D-28 5/16” width unscalloped braces. We suppose it is possible that Ken Smith Jr. had a hand in the prototypes, as he often talked about that. Perhaps because of the extra back center brace or the altered tonal dynamics of a three-piece back, the sound was judged to be a bit bass heavy. So three additional pairs of prototypes were made (A, B and C), and the C pair with thinner ¼” width 00-sized top braces was deemed to be the best. That prototype also had smaller 000-sized back braces and mitered fingerboard binding. The combination counteracted the perceived bass-heaviness, giving a pleasing and powerful tone, and that’s what we went with.

The early D-35s were made with Brazilian rosewood, right?
CFM IV - The D-35 was introduced in 1965, so it was four years until Martin made the decision to switch over to East Indian rosewood on all of our models. With its three-piece back, the D-35 provided an opportunity to use up Brazilian rosewood of a smaller dimension, so during the transitional years, it was common to see the unrecorded use of Brazilian rosewood sides and center wedge with East Indian rosewood wings, or East Indian rosewood sides and center wedge with Brazilian wings, or really any combination of the two species. It’s a little confusing, and we get a lot of calls about that.

Does Martin match the sides with the back wings, or the sides with the center wedge?
CFM IV - With respect to grain, I personally always prefer the ones that match the grain of the sides to the center wedge, but the nature of the model gives us flexibility to do it both ways.

The D-18 and the D-28 are such famous Martin models. In your opinion, does the D-35 rival them?
CFM IV - When it was introduced, the D-35 took off like a lightning bolt. Our records show that, in 1974 through 1977, D-35 sales even outpaced those of the D-28, and the D-35 outsold the D-18 from 1973 through 2005 and beyond. So the D-35 has been a mainstay in our line. I guess since it’s only 50 years old instead of more than 80 years for the D-18 and D-28, it is more or less the younger brother of those iconic pre-war models. But it’s a bit fancier and prettier I think, with a tone to be reckoned with. I also think that because it efficiently used smaller pieces that might have ended up not being used at all, it was, in some way, the predecessor to our sustainable and certified wood models and that’s certainly a great contribution.

Two-piece backs are certainly standard, and they are offered in a multitude of sizes and shapes. Why isn’t the three-piece back on more models?
CFM IV - I had a hand in introducing the HD-35 with herringbone trim, scalloped braces and locking tuning machines. I thought it would be a huge success. Maybe it was the odd tuners or the higher price, but it never took off the way I had hoped. In fact, aside from the D-35 model itself, we haven’t had the traction with the three-piece back on other shapes and sizes. There was an OM-35 as I recall, and the M-36, plus a number of artist editions like the 12-fret D-35S Judy Collins, the M3M George Martin, the M3SC Shawn Colvin, and perhaps several others. But in the standard offerings, the D-35 stands alone and unique. Given the pressure on tonewoods that we are experiencing, I wouldn’t be surprised if the three-piece back were to become much more significant in the future.

Who is the most famous D-35 player?
CFM IV - I guess it would have to be Johnny Cash, because he is so personally identified with the famous black D-35 that he is so often pictured with. We still offer a commemorative version of that guitar. A number of iconic artists have played or currently play the D-35: Sting, Bruce Springsteen, George Harrison, Steve Miller, Nancy Wilson, Van Morrison, Seth Avett, and many, many more — I’d say that’s pretty good company!

How do you feel about the Martin Dreadnought shape being the most popular and most replicated body size in acoustic guitars?
CFM IV - I suppose I should be upset that people copy our Dreadnought design so widely, but actually I feel pretty flattered. And you know, it’s pretty easy to copy a shape, but I haven’t heard any guitar that matches our tone. That belongs to us!
Looks like a Martin Dreadnought to us! A NASA satellite image taken over the lowland plains of Argentina in 2007 captures the artistry of a farmer with a passion for guitars.

Stephen Colbert of The Colbert Report hamming it up on-air with his Martin D-41.
David Bromberg visits the Martin exhibit at the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) in Phoenix, Arizona.

Kent Courtney with his Martin Custom Dreadnought at the annual Camp Geiger Civil War reenactment. Kent was singing songs of the era in various places around the camp. Okay, okay, we know the Dreadnought model isn’t correct for the period.

The Nature Conservancy and Martin Guitar have partnered on the #SaveElephants initiative in an effort to erode the prestige of ivory and help save these amazing animals. In support for the campaign, Sir Paul McCartney signed a lefty Martin D-28, which was auctioned and sold for $50,000. All proceeds go toward providing resources for the Elite 1 and Elite 2 Elephant Rangers in Kenya.
The borough of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, is located in the heart of the Lehigh Valley, a verdant region of mountains and rolling hills chock-full of history, custom, and tradition. The beauty of the Valley, conspicuous for its red oaks, American chestnut, dogwood, and spicebush, in addition to a smattering of sassafras saplings and witch-hazel shrubs lining the upland ridges and fishing streams, confirms its place in America as one of its most beautiful locations.

This unlikely cornucopia of beauty and resources was once owned by George Whitefield, an English evangelist and one of the chief voices of the Great Awakening. While traveling in Georgia to preach, Whitefield met a group of Moravian missionaries. He would invite them to Pennsylvania to build a school and orphanage in Nazareth for Negro children. In November of 1740, Whitefield discharged the Moravians from their duties and ordered them to vacate Nazareth due to an argument over predestination. Homeless but hopeful, the exiled Moravians secured a promising location on the banks of the Monocacy Creek with the help of Nathaniel Irish, a land agent for William Allen—Chief Justice of the Province of Pennsylvania, as well as the namesake of nearby Allentown—and arrived at their new home, Bethlehem. Moravian blacksmiths, tanners, and craftsmen occupied much of Bethlehem, while the best farming and foodstuffs were regularly produced in Nazareth. Further adding to Lehigh Valley lore, it is worth noting that the original 5,000-acre tract in Nazareth also bears the storybook history of being sold from Pennsylvania founder William Penn’s daughter Laetitia to William Allen for £500 sterling and one red rose annually.
What, you may ask, does this elongated history have to do with Martin Guitar? What I can tell you is that every time I visit C. F. Martin & Co. or explore the Lehigh Valley, there is something unique to the brand’s provenance and to the area itself that I never quite get right on paper—something floating out there beyond the old churches and streams, beckoning somewhere from the ether. Pulitzer Prize-winning ornithologist and biophysicist Jared Diamond suggests that cultural regions either collapse or succeed based on an amalgam of available resources, climate change, competing forces, and good or ill stewardship of the land within a particular area, and what most confounds me about the lush but humble valley under discussion is this: For whatever reason or combination thereof, the Lehigh Valley is extraordinary at producing world-class goods and services, while maintaining that quality over time. Martin Guitar is the oldest guitar manufacturer in America—founded while Andrew Jackson was still presiding over only 24 states. But when it comes to longevity in the region, Martin is not alone. David Jüngling—later anglicized to Yuengling—founded America’s oldest brewery in nearby Pottsville a few years earlier. The Moravian Book Shop in downtown Bethlehem is the oldest continuously operated bookstore in the United States, so old that General Washington himself may have perused its shelves after coming back to gather his personal effects, stored at a nearby farmhouse while he was encamped at Valley Forge.

And then there is this: Bethlehem Steel was the nation’s second-largest steel producer, trailing only J. P. Morgan’s U. S. Steel in terms of dollars and production. It was also one of the largest shipbuilding companies in the world. Bethlehem Steel was the go-to employer in the region before its collapse in 2003. Steel forged in Bethlehem was used for Alcatraz, the Chrysler Building and Madison Square Garden. It was used for the Golden Gate Bridge, Rockefeller Center and the Grand Coulee Dam. Bethlehem Steel provided large structurals for the Empire State Building—the first place in New York I was paid to be a writer—while also providing the steel for the George Washington Bridge, which I cross as I make my slow creep toward Nazareth. The U.S. lost over six million factory jobs between 2000 and 2009, a full one-third of all decent factory jobs being moved overseas in an effort to cut costs. As I make my way to meet with Chairman & CEO Chris Martin IV, traveling across a bridge like a metal skeleton of one steel company’s demise, I think about Martin’s famous Custom Shop. I think about the word custom. I wonder about the customs and traditions that have made the Lehigh Valley such a surprising and beautiful little juggernaut. I wonder about the customary practices that
have allowed Martin Guitar to withstand not only the Great Depression but also this last great economic tidal wave, particularly when a local brother company/steel magnate/shipbuilder crashed upon the rocks to go belly up. I wonder why a prospective buyer would order a custom guitar from production-heavy Martin Guitar rather than, say, an independent luthier with nothing but skill and time on his side. But the traffic is heavy, and we are not there yet. The morning’s still young, and New Jersey skies are too hazy. So sit back, buckle up, and enjoy the ride.

The C. F. Martin & Co. factory is situated in a green residential area that gives the steady impression that the enterprise itself was created in the dark times before people had figured out where factories were supposed to go. In fact, when founder Christian Frederick Martin moved to Nazareth from New York City, he could only situate himself on the outskirts of town as a result of not being a member of the Moravian Church. In time, the city grew to meet him halfway.
This morning I am to sit down with C. F. “Chris” Martin IV, Chairman & CEO and great-great-great-grandson of the founder. I’ve read some material that makes me instantly like Chris, for reasons all my own: Chris Martin’s parents divorced at an early age, and much of his love for the company was cultivated while spending summers in Nazareth with his grandparents. While his father ran the company, Chris’ grandparents put in the work to help Chris understand the importance of quality and integrity. By the time Chris’ grandfather died, accounting firms brought in to help settle the estate were recommending that C. F. Martin & Co. be liquidated.

Growing up on a farm in southwest Oklahoma, my own parents had divorced, and though my family had homesteaded a farm at the time of the state’s founding, I was never good with my hands (whereas my father could have built a working cotton stripper with bailing wire and beer cans). My grandparents took care of me during the summers, and I later lived with them during my late teen years as my father politely ran the ancestral cropland into the ground. My grandfather took me under his wing out of some hope I could correct the mistakes in judgment. A few weeks after I submitted my last piece for Martin, my grandparents and an aunt died within a span of 40 days, and I wrote nothing but three eulogies over the course of six months until agreeing to a one-time meeting with Chris. Because of the aforementioned, I hoped we would be somewhat kindred.

Chris Martin has a spacious but homey office, replete with paintings from India and Australia, as well as a wide array of nautical knickknacks. A carved stingray glides against the wall as if traversing the sea floor. Of particular interest to me, Chris has almost a complete wall of bookshelves with well-worn, dog-eared tomes on business, art, literature, history, and—of course—guitar making. Like my own shelves at home, wedding pictures, family pictures, and curiosities line the shelves. A beer bottle from De Koninck Brewery stands prominent, straight from the world’s diamond district. Like Martin, De Koninck was also founded in 1833, and I wonder about a secret meeting of the 1833 Club. As you can tell, I love the office; I can see myself behind the desk, sipping on a Yuengling while greedily devouring the last passages of *The Great Gatsby.*

As Chris walks in, I take note of his curly hair and those eyes that twinkle like a tinker, the way he seems controlled but in perpetual motion: a quick phone call here, a signature there, one last text to a production manager. He has a lean but wiry frame reminiscent of the ranch hands one might see smoking and leaning against a post somewhere in west Texas, and like a cowboy, he is wearing denim jeans. A CEO in denim jeans is ever a novelty, and you could say I liked him better for that.

From the beginning I begin to engage Chris about the area. He explains as follows: “The Lehigh Valley has changed dramatically. A couple of generations ago, it was not uncommon for people to say, ‘I can make more money at Bethlehem Steel.’ Okay, it’s a little hotter over there…but now Bethlehem Steel is gone, just as many businesses across the country are now gone. But the Lehigh Valley has always been the sort of place that families come to stay. There’s a strong work ethic. People stay in the community, get a job, and know that they’re probably working for a company that can stand the test of time.”
This history of longstanding businesses supported by a committed and engaged work force is surely one of Martin’s greatest secrets. As Chris explains, “The Custom Shop was formally begun in 1979, but I have to be honest with you: If you go down to the museum and look at some of the guitars we have amassed over the years as part of our collection, I have to acknowledge that the company has been in the custom guitar business since 1833. During the very early years, C.F. had not yet established a particular style for his guitars. You could say that each one was a custom guitar. A custom Martin guitar is for a customer who wants to spend some time to learn about our history. We’re not the custom guitar maker if you want to do something really crazy. That’s what an individual luthier is for. If you like our tradition but want something distinctive—either subtle or deeply ornate—you want to be able for the customer to say, ‘That’s a Martin guitar.’ And if C.F. walked through that door, I would want him to recognize his product. Beyond just my family, the DNA of our company is generational. The different relationships here—mother, father, brother, aunt, uncle, cousin, neighbor, grandfather—are mindboggling. There was a point that we had three generations of the same family working here, and there are several examples of two generations working on the floor. I try not to think about legacy, but I would never want any of my ancestors to be embarrassed by what is going on here. The good news for me is that I have a factory full of employees who mostly feel the same way because it is their family legacy, too.”

Chief Product Officer (CPO) Fred Greene elaborates, “There are a lot of little shops and acoustic guitar makers in the world creating good stuff, but the majority of them are essentially based on our product. They are sort of customized versions of what we do. Everyone sort of has the feeling that the 1930s were the golden era of guitar making for our company, and some things we simply didn’t do anymore. Our idea was to create a small shop within the big shop, because there is always the feeling that small shops are giving you a certain amount of attention to detail, and people thought we were just big factories who pushed a log into a steel box and popped out a guitar on the other end, and that’s not the reality of how we do anything in our factory.” Martin adds, “The advantage we have is the buoyant market for used Martins of a certain age. Our guitars hold and gain value. When you’re spending lots of money on a used guitar, you have to bring in third parties. And then there’s no warranty. And then people want modern necks. Some of the aspects of old guitars weren’t as good, either for structure or playability. Some of them have clunky necks. We can make a guitar that appears to be from the 1930s but feels like it’s from the twenty-first century.”

In exploring the legacy, it should be noted that the return to Martin’s roots began not long after Chris took over the company. The Custom Shop was started in an effort to look at the quality of Martin’s best historical guitars and to ensure that quality, not production, was the chief cornerstone of the business. This eventually led to popular lines like the Authentic Series in 2005, so true to Martin’s pre-war models that Martin’s Research and Development team used the Smithsonian Institute’s high-resolution CAT scan machines to take elaborate measurements of how those guitars were constructed and poured through the Martin archives to decipher how to best replicate those steps in the modern world. As Fred Greene explains, “We launched our Authentic Series, which entails remaking guitars from the 1920s and ‘30s and ‘40s. We used hot hide glue, which is this old style of heated-up animal protein glue that we had gotten away from using because it dries so quickly and is more difficult to work with. All of these mythologies have arisen around these old-world techniques, belief that if things are done by hand, they sound better. People assign qualities to it like black magic. But what we found out was that, in some cases, there was some truth to it. Hide glue does make the guitars sound different. Certain neck reinforcements like the old ones, t-bars or ebony truss rods for example, do give the guitar a different tone. No one thing by itself is the deal breaker, but all of them combined add up to a recipe with a special sound and feel.”

“A CUSTOM MARTIN GUITAR IS FOR A CUSTOMER WHO WANTS TO SPEND SOME TIME TO LEARN ABOUT OUR HISTORY. WE’RE NOT THE CUSTOM GUITAR MAKER IF YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING REALLY CRAZY.”

—CHRIS MARTIN IV
It is clear that Martin understands the value that many guitar aficionados place on pre-war Martins, particularly models made during the years 1933 to 1942. These acoustic guitars are now some of the most expensive in the world, prompting one BBC report to collectively call them the “American Stradivarius”—a hefty nod to the most coveted and well-built violins in history. One of the ways that Martin is striving to improve upon the timbre and tone of their new guitars is through the process of torrefaction. Torrefaction is a type of induced decomposition brought about when biomass, in this case wood, is exposed to high temperatures and then systematically cooled. Torrefied wood was used as far back as the eighth century when Vikings began to use torrefaction to enhance wood’s resistance and durability. This allowed for stronger tools and hulls as they encountered wine-dark waves and the breaching flukes of whales out on the open water. Torrefaction breaks down the cellular fiber of the wood, and, in Martin’s case, the process is used to coax the wood into providing an aged tone. Jeff Allen, General Manager of the Custom Shop, explains: “Torrefied wood is going to be a huge part of our 2015 line, especially our Authentic Series. It’s a very selective group of people who buy Authentics. If they could, they’d probably buy an original ’37 or ’33 because that’s the nirvana for those guys. Torrefaction helps create a guitar that is very similar to that, with identical specs but with wood that has been fast-forwarded into having the aged tone they would get if they could afford a 1937 D-28.”

Martin seems to always have an eye on the future that is aided by their willingness to look back. A large percentage of independent luthiers base their guitars on golden-era Martin specs, but Martin has the advantage of having access to meticulous notes made during that era. Allen recently immersed himself into 11,000 pages of
typewritten and handwritten notes from the twenties and thirties in an effort toward perfecting the original finish. He deciphered countless letters written from floor supervisors to managers, from managers to upper management and from suppliers to Martin. “In those letters,” Allen explains, “you start finding recipes and processes that have sort of been lost through the years. Obviously, Martin has made improvements to the process, but a lot of these independent guitar makers talk about how accurately they’ve reproduced our finish. That said, no one really knows the real process but us. I sifted through tons of documents and I found old recipes and processes, as well as the reasoning for why they moved away from varnish to lacquer and from hand polishing to the buffing machine. Much of it had to do with sales. Back in the late twenties, supervisors started saying that they couldn’t keep up with the old varnish process. It’s all by hand and very slow. You keep building coats of varnish and polish it by hand. Martin looked into furniture makers and car manufacturers; they were using lacquer. Lacquer back then was kind of new and really considered a state-of-the-art sort of thing. Car manufacturers, in particular, were raving about it, and Martin thought they could create a better product that also met with demand. But the 1930s guitars were never shiny like the guitars today.” Allen has dedicated himself toward perfecting the finish and plans for the Custom Shop and the Authentic Series to offer it in 2015. He’s managed to acquire the original materials and has replicated the process himself.

At heart, though, any steps are in service of the artist. As Fred Greene explains, “When we look at torrefaction or rapid prototyping technology, that is just to serve the player. Guitars only exist for one reason and that is to make music. If you aren’t making a guitar for someone to be inspired to create art, then what is the purpose of it? It’s a giant paperweight.” As I think about the success of the Custom Shop, I think about society’s collective move toward the great age of individuation. Human beings have made efforts to differentiate themselves throughout the duration of history, but social media, combined with a skyrocketing world population, has given this desire to be heard a deeper, more insistent voice. As Chris Martin pointed out, people look to stand out from the pack, yearn to search out the terms of their own bragging rights. For some music lovers, a custom guitar helps satisfy that urge. The word custom comes from the same Latin root that gives us the word costume, though it only partially holds the connotation of disguise. Rather, a costume may denote accentuating one’s best and most telling features. In some ways, our craving for customization, our desire to be seen as ourselves, is one of the most universal characteristics binding us as a species.
Today my tour guide’s name tag reads Allysen. Early on, she explains that her father works in the factory and that she grew up in a house brimming with musical instruments. Allysen explains that Martin is the home to over 560 employees, as she leads us to a Custom Shop inlay specialist named Sean. He is one of only 15 or so employees who work solely for the Custom Shop. Sean is delicately crafting an inlay of an eyeball playing a guitar. A computer graphic is isolated on a screen by his side, but Sean uses a blade and a magnifying glass to do the bulk of the work by hand. Sean explains to the crowd, “I’m like a tattoo artist for guitars.”

The tour puts me in touch with a host of Custom Shop employees over the course of the day. I meet Dale Eckhart, a merry luthier who is so well-regarded by his peers on the floor that one gets the feeling that he would play Yoda in Martin’s rendition of Star Wars: The Musical. He explains that a custom guitar can take anywhere from two to six months, with a D-100 taking a year. (The one-millionth guitar took two.) His knowledge and expertise have allowed him to travel the world, most recently to Asia, where Japan and China are successful international markets for Martin Guitar. Dale has worked for Martin for over 40 years, and it is clear that many of his confederates take it as a badge of honor to be located next to his station. Beside him, another Shawn explains the process of applying hide glue under heat lamps; a pair of ladies navigate bindings and inlays while discussing American Idol. An inky rose vine climbs up one woman’s arms before blooming immaculate in the flesh. Nearby, Kevin sports a tattoo of the Allentown waterfront while perfecting a neck fit, his specialty. Fred Greene later explains that being a member of the Custom Shop is a matter of pride, and many employees see themselves as players writing themselves into the grand narrative of American music history. Most of the employees I speak with have worked for Martin for over 15 years and would prefer to stay on for over 15 more.

And as I end my tour of the Custom Shop and the factory as a whole, I am stricken by the efforts the employees have gone to, like all of us, to customize their workspaces. Workstations are filled with bridges and pickguards and tone bars, but they are also filled with graduation pictures and wedding pictures and crayon-drawn Father’s Day cards. They are filled with rosewood and abalone and mother of pearl, but they are also filled with American flags and sports logos, a Superman emblem from a casual comic book fan. Chris Martin and his office of anchors and books. Allysen interrupts my train of thought to tell a colleague she’ll be there for his wedding. A mother comes to share a lunch break with her son. And on everything, on every cubbyhole and wall, there’s a surprising amount of love for Martin. Always, there is Martin.

In 1925, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote The Great Gatsby, a book about the complications of riches and social strata within a small subsection of coastal Long Island. The guiding algorithm of the novel was intended to suggest that the American Dream was dead, and the book received little public fanfare, largely because readers were skeptical of the premise or too afraid to believe it. Readers changed their opinion over time, but it took years. And when Jared Diamond wrote Collapse, its message was clear: Great stewardship toward resources and a culture of purposive action can keep a civilization running for a thousand years, and at Martin its greatest resources are its people. If the American Dream is dead or gravely wounded, no one told those remarkable people inhabiting the Lehigh Valley, who go into work attempting to make the product—and themselves—that much better every day. A rose was once the property tax of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, and maybe for that reason even beauty is seen as the deepest currency.

A headstock is just like any other piece of wood. A headstock is just a piece of wood that can be customized to say anything. But in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, it just so happens that a headstock most often says C. F. Martin & Co., and the employees of the Custom Shop hope that name says it all. Fred Greene says, “We’ve been making guitars for over 181 years. Whether it’s an old one or a current guitar, they share something in common, more than just the sticker on the headstock. Whatever has happened in the old days has continued as a lineage. We have folks in the Custom Shop who have been there for 40 years, and then they learned from someone who had been there for 40 years. All at once, you have 80 years of knowledge and history connected. It is not a machine-made piece. It is really just people who are sweating over the tops of the guitars, literally sweating.”
And, in some cases, you get little nicks in your finger or little cuts and maybe a little bit of blood on there, too. It’s literally sweat and blood; it’s all in there, in that guitar. It sort of gives the instrument some sort of a soul that is hard to explain. No matter what we do, our guitars always seem to sound like Martins. Sometimes I’ll try to design things that sound a little bit different, but that Martin DNA—there’s a strand of DNA that somehow runs through the guitar no matter what you do, something ‘Martin-esque’ in how it sounds. There’s nothing else you can chalk that up to other than the folks in our factory and something they’re doing personally—physically—that is imparting some little piece of themselves into the guitar.”

And Jeff Allen says: “I have to admit, at Gibson and at Fender, I experienced the same kinds of characteristics there to some extent, but at Martin there’s a tunnel of connectivity all the way back—like a chain from the beginning—that’s been preserved until now. Knowing that I’m carrying on something that precedes me and that will far outlast me is special. At Martin, we’ve never had a meeting where we discussed productivity in a way that made me compromise what is really in the consumer’s best interests. That’s one of the key differences between the places I’ve been and where I am now. Here, we ask ourselves, ‘How do we not screw up the legacy we’ve been entrusted with? How do we make sure that the history books will show that we maintained a legacy of quality?’”

“How do we not screw up the legacy we’ve been entrusted with? How do we make sure that the history books will show that we maintained a legacy of quality?”

—JEFF ALLEN
This line of thinking has ensured that Martin, for the foreseeable future, will always put the custom in customer. In honoring the work of their family and of the community, they have steeled themselves against suffering an untimely demise. And if that headstock weren’t just a piece of wood and could put on the trappings of flesh and soul, I think that shiny C. F. Martin & Co. logo may say something like this: “We collected the best woods from the outskirts of the world. We collected shell and mother of pearl from the shores of distant waters. And we built a factory and filled it with people. We filled it with chisels and hammers and files, but we also filled it with Dale and Allysen and Sean. We filled it with their kin and the descendants of Moravians, because sometimes people work better when the music of their lives is tinted with an almost holy purpose. We filled our factory with people forged from the fires of Bethlehem Steel, because we needed a ruggedness that could still fight the good fight, yet whistle while it worked. There are over 150 parts to a guitar and over 300 processes, but we found the people who sought to master them all, and they made that labor one at a time. We created a culture where a CEO can know a worker’s child and where a grandfather and a granddaughter can talk shop beside the fire. We looked at the best way to build guitars and chose great artistry over the common dollar. We decided on perfecting guitars instead of just producing them, so that sometimes when you order a guitar from Martin, there is mahogany or rosewood or Adirondack spruce, but there is always a little bit of sweat and blood built into the mix. And that blood carries a DNA you’ll find in everything we’ve built before so that old men will recognize in our tone the songs of their youth. A rose can be a property tax or the sly tattoo on the arm of a woman, or it can climb around the neck of a guitar, if you so choose, because we have people who can do that. This guitar may carry you to musical stardom or to your dad’s garage, but this guitar also carries the dreams and sweat of our mothers and our fathers and our fathers’ fathers, the customs they established toward making life their own. We did this because sometimes you need a quality that won’t die on you. We did this because sometimes a boy will look back into the past to atone for the sins of his father. So that when you take out your guitar for the first time and strum a sound that tickles your throat and fills your chest hole where the stuff of life is stirring, you will know that we made you—we give you—THIS.”
Unplugged since 1833.

This 1939 000-42 (EC) was built during a time when everything was unplugged. And it still sounded sweet during its legendary 1992 performance. www.martinguitar.com
THE MILK CARTON KIDS: HEALTHY BONES FOR STRONG GROWTH

“We’re going to go back in a minivan this summer for a few short runs.” This is what I hear at the start of my conversation with acoustic vocal harmony duo and erstwhile folk revivalists The Milk Carton Kids. They say this just ahead of sound checking the first of a pair of sold-out shows at Texas’ esteemed Mucky Duck, at the start of a string of sold-out dates across the country, on the heels of a Grammy nomination and their first-ever magazine cover, and amidst a cacophony of praises from the likes of NPR and The New York Times Magazine. “Back in a minivan,” they say. “For a few short runs.”

Three years into a career that has taken them from relative obscurity as solo artists to massive critical and popular success, Martin Ambassadors Kenneth Pattengale and Joey Ryan can now tour by bus when they need to. But it’s their willingness to forego the trappings of stardom—the tour bus, the latest gear, the biggest stage show—and hop in a minivan in search of more organic growth that defines them. Over the course of an hour-long conversation with a duo that is equal parts humble and hilarious, we talked about what it means to be your best rather than simply the biggest, the challenges and opportunities of their meteoric rise, about their sound, and about guitars.
Martin – You’ve been nominated for a Grammy, you’re on a sold-out tour, and people are talking about you all over the web. But despite the fact that you’re getting bigger and bigger, your shows seem to be getting more intimate. Why is that?

Kenneth – The whole idea for me—and Joey might have a different take on it—is that these things that we surround ourselves with, these modern tools of the trade, they always seem to bother me on an artistic level, on a sonic level, on an integrity level. The minute you plug a really nice sounding guitar into a cord, then into an amp, and then into a crummy PA system, all of a sudden your really nice guitar sounds like dirt. I can’t figure out why anybody does that.

I think we’ve learned over the course of four years that when we’re trying to write and record these songs—when we’re standing maybe three feet away from each other—we’re achieving a special kind of sound that happens right in front of us, right in the air between us. There’s nothing you then need to do, if you’re playing for 1,000 people, other than to just put a microphone there. And if there are only 20 people, you don’t need the microphone even.

Martin – Does this approach tie in to the “folk revival” label that often gets thrown around when people talk about your music?

Kenneth – To me it’s not being thrifty or economical or stylistic; it’s literally just the best thing for what we’re trying to do. And I think where that ties into this vintage idea is that, I imagine whatever the Greenwich Village scene was in the ‘60s—or the Cambridge, Mass., scene or what have you—back then it was just people on acoustic guitars, and it was folk music, and it was kind of quiet and listened to and devoured. They didn’t have any need to do it any differently; and I think the way we do it kind of resembles that, but only because our objectives are kind of similar, not because we’re trying to emulate some older style.

It’s very easy to figure out that miking a guitar sounds better than plugging it in, and so we’ve always played that way. At some point last fall, we found out that it sounded even better when the two of us sang on just one mic. If it sounded better to plug our guitars in and play with in-ear monitors and headset mics, we’d do it. Though headset mics look kind of goofy, and we kind of look goofy anyway.
**Martin**—Martin Ambassador Del McCoury and other bluegrass acts often do their harmonies the same way, all sharing a single microphone.

**Joey**—We saw Del McCoury at Hardly Strictly Bluegrass, and he was by far the best sounding show of the whole festival. And obviously he wasn’t doing it to be “old-timey.” It just sounds better.

**Martin**—And the single microphone adds to the intimacy. Would you say that’s an intentional move on your part?

**Kenneth**—There’s some intentionality there, but I think we come by it honestly. Del does the same thing—he understands that to go and play on a stage for people who bought tickets, who hopefully have some idea of what you do and have some connection to the material, you kind of have an obligation to go up there and legitimize the price of the ticket. And there are a couple of parts to that: one is, hopefully you’re on your game musically, so you do that—that’s the reason everyone is there. But beyond that, I’ve never really understood the reasoning behind going up onstage dressed exactly as you are.

From early on, Joey and I put on our “Sunday suits,” as it were. They’re not, like, vintage pants from railroad-hopping times, and we don’t have any suspenders between us. It’s not like we scour the vintage stores for whatever is fashionable. It’s like if I were going to a wedding. A wedding is a formal occasion; and I think we learned pretty quickly that when you put on formal clothes, and you stand onstage, and you play the songs earnestly, and you show a little bit of your personality, people are naturally attracted to the thing that is happening at the center of the stage. And honestly I think, if we didn’t wear suits, I don’t think people would find us as funny or as engaging as they do. I think there’s just something inherently built into what performance is, and kind of what show business is. So you make it an occasion.

Del McCoury and those guys are doing the same thing. He knows that when he goes to a show, it’s a formal occasion, and you dress up.

**Joey**—But it’s not a costume—he’s just wearing his nice clothes.
I find that as I play that guitar more and more, though, there’s something that’s naturally been happening over the past three years, over 350 gigs or something: it seems to be actually moving and self-correcting, and now I often find that I can get through these shows just fine without that handkerchief anymore. The guitar has somehow adjusted to the way I play. Maybe it’s just getting played more, maybe I’m traveling through more humid climates regularly—I don’t know what it is. But there are less problems with that guitar than there were three years ago, just by happenstance. So I find that it’s kind of a little bit unnecessary at this point, but it’s too late to take it off now.

Like, we did our first magazine cover earlier in the year. We were on Acoustic Guitar magazine, and they did this whole photo shoot where we’re looking like dopes and all that, and, for some reason, I forgot to bring the handkerchief. I didn’t have it with me. And I remember it was back in the days I still needed it, and when that cover came out, the only comments that seemed to come from people who knew our music, or knew our band or our history, was everyone saying, “Where the hell’s the handkerchief?” So on the front cover of Acoustic Guitar magazine, I forget to bring the thing that people all recognize.

Joey – I’m looking at the shot now, and I think you didn’t even have the capo on. So I guess there wouldn’t be a handkerchief anyway? Or when there’s no capo, do you just move the handkerchief all the way down to the headstock?

Kenneth – I don’t think we play a song where there’s no capo anymore.

Joey – Well, right. We don’t play a song in the show, but when we were just screwing around for the photo, there’s no capo, so there wouldn’t have been a handkerchief anyway.

Kenneth – I mean, it was a staged shot, for us.

Joey – Yeah, it’s a fraudulent picture. A total lie. We were hungover as hell.
Martin – You have a unique sound, especially in the current musical landscape. Does it frustrate you when critics try to lump you in with the Americana movement, and this glorified idea of the past? Or are you glad to be considered a part of the apparent revival?

Joey – I don’t care anymore. [said with a smile]

Kenneth – ...Joey’s lost his love for life. [laughing]

Joey – Well, if you are a vocal harmony duo, I think it’s inevitable that you will be considered in light of the harmony duos that came before you. So when people say that it’s like Simon and Garfunkel, or that it’s like the Everly Brothers, or even the Smothers Brothers or something like that, it’s inevitable. And, I think, totally appropriate because we’ve chosen a format which has existed for a long time. We have not invented something completely new in terms of the instrumentation and the format: it’s guitars and singing. It’s like if you started a blues band, everyone would talk about you in terms of blues artists. We’ve started a harmony group, and so we kind of get talked about like we’re in the context of other harmony duos, and it’s just as appropriate as it is lazy.

Kenneth – In terms of the current so-called folk revival thing, and the Americana thing, I guess like Joey said: I’m sort of over it. I just don’t know—I mean, if you’re talking qualitatively about music, there’s not really a common thread between what we do and what a band like Mumford & Sons is doing. To me it’s not even in the same world. And I understand that telling that story is actually good for business; it’s good for the greater proliferation of dudes with acoustic guitars on stage in 2014. I can see how that’s an access point for writers and for publicists and for the industry, but I don’t really agree with it at all.

Martin – Do you think there are bands using that as a stepping stone to more mainstream popularity?

Kenneth – Yeah, but I don’t think that’s necessarily bad or anything. I think that’s part of their purpose. And if you think about it, they do it quite well; they’re quite successful at it. I don’t know, if we had some other bandmates—a drummer or even a kick drum or something—maybe we’d do it, we’d try to ride that horse. I actually don’t think it’s really available to us. And frankly, to me personally, it’s not very interesting. If I had that assignment, if I had to write a song that could’ve met all the needs to qualify it to be a pop radio hit, I don’t think I’d be super interested in doing the job.

Kenneth – In terms of the current so-called folk revival thing, and the Americana thing, I guess like Joey said: I’m sort of over it. I just don’t know—I mean, if you’re talking qualitatively about music, there’s not really a common thread between what we do and what a band like Mumford & Sons is doing. To me it’s not even in the same world. And I understand that telling that story is actually good for business; it’s good for the greater proliferation of dudes with acoustic guitars on stage in 2014. I can see how that’s an access point for writers and for publicists and for the industry, but I don’t really agree with it at all.

Martin – You wouldn’t imagine two guys doing what you do would be as successful as you’ve been; you’re not exactly Kesha. But still, you’re getting more and more popular, playing bigger and bigger shows. How are you dealing with that?

Joey – Well, we try to keep everybody’s expectations low. Because not only is it not Kesha, but it’s not even the Lumineers; and like Kenneth said, it’s not even Mumford. It’s way narrower than that. And one of the most important things for us, in the midst of all this fervor about acoustic instruments and music with these acoustic roots, is to try and make sure that when we start working with a label or with an agent, that they don’t think we’re going to be the next big thing, that they don’t get their hopes up that we’re going to have a radio hit or something like that. But if we can get to the point that maybe we’ve almost gotten to, where we can play theaters 25 years from now—where we can play small, medium, or large theaters 25 years from now—then that’s the whole point of it. There’s nothing beyond that; it’s not going to keep getting bigger. There’s a ceiling; there’s a cap on it. And that’s great, that’s fine.

Kenneth – And if some other crazy stuff happens and we become more famous than we are now, fantastic. But I promise you that I’ll never respond to someone who I’m in business with, who takes a significant percentage of the money I make. If they’ve got a different idea of what I do than the idea that I have, I’ll kindly tell them to go screw themselves, and that’ll be that.

Joey – And you’ve never heard anyone tell someone to screw themselves more kindly than Kenneth.

“I THINK IT’S INEVITABLE THAT YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF THE HARMONY DUOS THAT CAME BEFORE YOU. SO WHEN PEOPLE SAY THAT IT’S LIKE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL, OR THAT IT’S LIKE THE EVERLY BROTHERS, OR EVEN THE SMOOTHERS BROTHERS OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, IT’S INEVITABLE.”

-JOEY RYAN
Martin – I heard you’re working on a new album during this tour. Is that true?

Kenneth – Yeah, writing part of the album while doing our day job at night, as it were. The impetus for making that decision was the realization that when you do 110 shows in a minivan, that’s 110 days out of the year you’re probably spending six hours sitting in a car, looking at your phone. And since we’re in a position now where we can tour in a bus and kind of get that time back, we figured that’s 110 days potentially that you get to actually try and do some work. I thought we’d be able to make use of more of those days, but the last 35 days have reminded us that there’s just a lot of inherent internal exhaustion, so that maybe only a few of them are available emotionally or energy-wise. But I think they’ve been invaluable.

Martin – And you’re also working with Martin on a DVD at the same time as this?

Kenneth – We’ve had a camera crew with us on this entire tour, with the intention of them documenting that ambitious idea we just talked about, of trying to write some good songs on the road, and giving a glimpse into that. And at the same time, there’s all kinds of other fun stuff going on, like the time Martin had us as visitors to the factory. They documented me picking out all the materials and talking with Fred [Greene, Martin’s Chief Product Officer] about the guitar they were making for me, and also the conversation with Joey—trying to lure him from the Gibson side—and then us going into the museum with Dick [Boak, Martin Director of Museum and Archives] and playing a bunch of the old instruments. So, we had those guys out there with us filming, to try and capture some kind of glimpse of what it’s like to be us at this stage, with the hope of coming out of it with some kind of narrative documentary, something that might be of interest to either a fan, or people who might not be fans yet. And that’s something that literally wouldn’t have happened without the gracious support of Martin Guitar.

Martin – So you removed some of the pressure of writing a new album by using this tour to get a head start on it, but then added pressure by filming the whole thing?

Joey – Yes. [laughing] I can’t say that we necessarily make the right decision every time, but, dang it, we’re making decisions, whatever they are!

Martin – You mentioned your new Custom, Kenneth—what design are you considering?

Kenneth – I am insanely stoked about this guitar. I’ve had a lifelong love affair with Martin. They were the first acoustic guitar I ever owned—a D-1 that I got in like 1997. I remember whining and moaning to my dad until he bought me that guitar, and I still have it, and I still love it. Now they’re working on a Custom, a kind of workingman’s replica of my ’54 0-15. The idea is to have the best craftsmanship—Custom Shop craftsmanship—but in the same spirit as an 0-15, with literally no flourishes. Really paying attention to that craftsmanship, but trying to keep it modest on the materials side, the way that maybe they were approaching them when they were making them from the ’30s to the ’50s. I was pushing them to sand the wood down thinner than they were comfortable with, and we’re barely putting any lacquer on it—we’re kind of trying a big grand experiment out of the Custom Shop. Not surprisingly, Fred and Amani [Duncan, Martin Vice President of Brand Marketing] and everyone at Martin were totally stoked about the idea. It seems like they’ve been as excited about it as I am, which, to me, wasn’t surprising. But it was really nice when we go and get geeked out about this, that the folks I’m working with don’t pause, that they go, “Great, let’s do it!” That was just really cool.
It left the factory perfect 46 years ago.

Then it got better.
D-35 50TH ANNIVERSARY

In addition to the D-35 Brazilian 50th Anniversary Limited Edition model being offered, Martin is further celebrating the significant anniversary of the D-35 with the inclusion of a special 50th Anniversary interior label and a 50th Anniversary booklet for every stock model D-35 initiated during 2015. Strung with SP Lifespan 7200.

www.martinguitar.com/new
In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the introduction of the D-35 Dreadnought (1965-2015), Martin is pleased to introduce the D-35 Brazilian 50th Anniversary Limited Edition. Constructed with Madagascar rosewood sides and back wings, a Brazilian rosewood back center wedge and headplate, an FSC® Certified European spruce top with ¼” non-scalloped X-bracing, and ivoroid bindings throughout, this enhanced D-35 is a fitting tribute to one of Martin’s most popular and inspired models. Limited to no more than 100 special instruments, each D-35 Brazilian 50th Anniversary Limited Edition model bears an interior label personally signed by C. F. Martin IV (numbered in sequence with the edition total), a limited edition D-35 Anniversary poster designed by Hatch Show Print and a 50th Anniversary booklet. Strung with SP Lifespan 7200. | www.martinguitar.com/new
DREADNOUGHT JUNIOR

It is certainly rare that Martin introduces a new body size. Please welcome the Dreadnought Junior! Fashioned for player comfort, clear powerful tone and easy action, the Dreadnought Junior is reduced to approximately 15/16" of the full Martin 14-fret Dreadnought dimension (14 ¼" width at the lower bout) with an expressive 24" scale length. A solid Sitka spruce top features scalloped ½" high performance X-bracing with a single asymmetrical tone bar. The back and sides are bookmatched from sapele, and Richlite, an ebony alternative with similar hardness and appearance, is chosen for the fingerboard and bridge. The Dreadnought Junior (aka “D Jr”) comes factory-equipped with Fishman’s Sonitone sound reinforcement system and includes a USA-made, form-fitted nylon gig bag for easy transport. Affordably priced, the Dreadnought Junior is ideal for smaller players, students, travelers, or anyone who aspires to the clarity and depth of tone that has defined Martin instruments for more than 180 years.

www.martinguitar.com/new
D-41 PURPLE MARTIN COCOBOLO

A favorite theme of Chris Martin’s, this 2015 version is the second in a series of Purple Martin Limited Editions. With richly colored cocobolo back, sides, and headplate, a premium grade Adirondack spruce soundboard with scalloped 5/16” width Martin X-bracing, and Style 41 inlay around the perimeter of the top and circumference of the rosette, this model’s tone is in perfect harmony with its creative appointments. The black pickguard as well as the ebony fingerboard and bridge are all inlaid with an artistically rendered and dramatic Purple Martin motif. Limited to no more than 50 special instruments, each D-41 Purple Martin will bear an interior label personally signed by C. F. Martin IV and numbered in sequence with the edition total. Strung with SP Lifespan 7200.
www.martinguitar.com/new
Limited to just 75 guitars, the Martin Custom Shop offers this stunning 24.9" scale CS-00041-15 Edition for 2015. The back and sides of brilliant orange and black grained cocobolo are combined with Martin’s Vintage Tone System (VTS)* Adirondack spruce top, delicately scalloped with high performance ¾" top bracing for an unparalleled complex and vibrant tone. Premium inlay techniques are employed for the cocobolo headplate that features multi-piece East Indian rosewood and genuine mahogany tapered ribbon inlay with rosewood script lettering bordered in mother-of-pearl. The body is bound with Hawaiian flamed koa wood trim and further enhanced with Style 41 abalone inlay around the perimeter of the top and the circumference of the rosette. Specially designed concave ribbon inlays in select abalone, mother-of-pearl and genuine mahogany grace the black ebony fingerboard, and complementary tapered ribbon inlays adorn the back. Strung with SP Lifespan 7100. | www.martinguitar.com/new

* The new Martin Vintage Tone System (VTS) uses a unique recipe that is based on the historic torrefaction system. The VTS acts much like a time machine in which Martin can target certain time periods and age the top/braces to that era. This focused method allows Martin’s craftsmen and women to recreate not only the pleasing visual aesthetics of a vintage guitar, but also reproduce the special tones previously reserved for vintage instruments. Learn more about Martin’s Vintage Tone System (VTS) at www.martinguitar.com/VTS.
OM-28 AUTHENTIC 1931

Like the OM-45 De Luxe Authentic 1930, the OM-28 Authentic 1931 shares Martin’s incredibly significant 24-fret neck Orchestra Model innovation with its lengthened 25.4” scale and 1¼” neck width. The combination of these features ushered in the final evolutions of the modern acoustic guitar that we enjoy today, providing a powerful, balanced and versatile – if not ideal – fingerstyle instrument. Based on a rare 1931 OM-28 (Serial number 45629) originally owned by Mike Seeger and borrowed from the collection of Vintage Instruments in Philadelphia, the specifications have been closely followed with the exception that Madagascar rosewood replaces the rarer Brazilian rosewood, and Martin’s Vintage Tone System (VTS)* Adirondack spruce top and braces are used to replicate the aged appearance and tonality of the 1931 original. All other appointments and processes, including hide glue construction, hand shaping and assembly, and tucked under bridge plate and bracing, are completely faithful. Strung with S² Lifespan 7200.

www.martinguitar.com/new

* The new Martin Vintage Tone System (VTS) uses a unique recipe that is based on the historic torrefaction system. The VTS acts much like a time machine in which Martin can target certain time periods and age the tonewoods to that era. This focused method allows Martin’s craftsmen and women to recreate not only the pleasing visual aesthetics of a vintage guitar, but also reproduce the special tones previously reserved for vintage instruments. Learn more about Martin’s Vintage Tone System (VTS) at www.martinguitar.com/VTS.
OM-45 DE LUXE AUTHENTIC 1930

The OM-45 De Luxe Authentic 1930 draws its inspiration and exacting specifications from the 1930 OM-45 De Luxe recently acquired at the Guernsey’s Instrument Auction in early April 2014. Only 11 OM-45 De Luxes were made originally, all in 1930, and the model has become one of the most sought after, rare and valuable vintage Martin guitars ever created. (Roy Rogers owned and performed with the very first OM-45 De Luxe ever made.) Only 11 guitars (like the original run) are offered in this edition, each a painstakingly handcrafted replica of the original 1930 model in the Martin Museum collection. This model boasts Martin’s Vintage Tone System (VTS)* Adirondack spruce top and braces to replicate the aged appearance and tonality of the 1930s original, and Brazilian rosewood back and sides. Strung with SP Lifespan 7200.

www.martinguitar.com/new

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15 SERIES

OOO-15M BURST

The OOO-15M, constructed with solid mahogany top, back, sides and neck, is already an extremely popular and affordable Martin model, exhibiting a clear, powerful, expressive and balanced tone. For those who love the appearance and presence of a beautifully applied sunburst, this model is softly shaded with solid dark mahogany stain along the edges of the body and neck, joining its Dreadnought visual counterpart in the Martin line — the D-15M Burst. Strung with SP Lifespan 7100.

www.martinguitar.com/new
SS-GP42-15

Martin’s Anaheim NAMM Show Special for 2015 — the SS-GP42-15 — is a spectacular stage performance guitar. With its Martin’s Vintage Tone System (VTS)* aged Adirondack spruce soundboard and highly flamed Hawaiian koa back and sides, this Grand Performance acoustic-electric cutaway offers premium Style 42 appointments, state-of-the-art onboard Fishman Aura VT electronics, Madagascar rosewood bindings, and a polished gloss lacquer finish with “toasted sunburst” top shading. As extra ornamentation, the fingerboard is inlaid with Martin’s tree of life pattern that winds its way contiguously onto the Madagascar rosewood headplate in select abalone pearl. Personally signed by C. F. Martin IV and numbered in sequence, no more than 50 of these special guitars will be offered, and they are only available for ordering by C. F. Martin Authorized Dealers in attendance at the 2015 Anaheim NAMM Show. Strung with SP Lifespan 7100.

www.martinguitar.com/new

* The new Martin Vintage Tone System (VTS) uses a unique recipe that is based on the historic torrefaction system. The VTS acts much like a time machine in which Martin can target certain time periods and age the top/braces to that era. This focused method allows Martin’s craftsmen and women to recreate not only the pleasing visual aesthetics of a vintage guitar, but also reproduce the special tones previously reserved for vintage instruments. Learn more about Martin’s Vintage Tone System (VTS) at www.martinguitar.com/VTS.
SSC-OM35-15

Martin’s SSC-OM35-15 is the second in a series of NAMM Show Special guitars created specifically for the Canadian marketplace. The unique Style 35 three-piece back features cherry wings with a Pacific big leaf flamed maple center wedge. Matching cherry sides combine with an Adirondack spruce top with high performance ¼” scalloped bracing for a stunning complexity of tone. The back and sides are finished with a Canadian flag-inspired red toner prior to application of beautifully polished gloss lacquer. The fingerboard, bound in mitered grained ivoroid to match the body, is inlaid with the Style 42 snowflake inlay pattern in select abalone pearl. Each instrument bears an interior label signed by C. F. Martin IV and individually numbered in sequence. Orders for these special guitars will be accepted from Martin Authorized Dealers in attendance at the 2015 Anaheim NAMM Show and limited to orders taken on the show floor. Strung with SP Lifespan 7100.

www.martinguitar.com/new
Why you fell in love with us in the first place.

D-35 Brazilian 50th Anniversary Limited Edition
John Mayer is back and better than ever. After curtailing his singing for more than two years to deal with a career-threatening throat condition, Mayer took his music in a new direction—one that blends 1970s California, traditional Americana and his own unique style. Born and Raised, released in 2012 while he was still undergoing treatment, became his third album to top the Billboard Top 200 chart. Mayer broadened his new musical landscape with his sixth studio album, Paradise Valley, released only a year after Born and Raised, which reached No. 2 on the Billboard Top 200 chart. Mayer’s new musical direction soon became the motivation for the new Martin John Mayer Signature Edition guitars. Just as he had with the Martin OM-28JM John Mayer Signature Edition Model and the OMJM John Mayer Special Edition nearly a decade earlier, Mayer approached Martin Guitar with a clear concept of the instrument he wanted. “There’s something about a smaller-bodied acoustic guitar that has always appealed to me,” he observed. “I was inspired to return to a completely natural way of writing and recording music, and at the center of that vision were the Martin O0-sized guitars that defined an era of brilliant songwriting in the ’60s and ’70s.”
Early on, Mayer began calling the instrument he envisioned the Stagecoach Edition. “I had this idea of this fictional history of a guitar. What would a guitar look like for a cowboy who was traveling by stagecoach? Or a businessman traveling by stagecoach who wanted a guitar to play but didn’t want to spare any expense?” He was also adamant about creating a special instrument. “The guitar cannot be just a combination of favorite specs. It is about finding a center of gravity to a design, where everything about it works together.”

Using Martin’s classic 00 12-fret body style as the starting point, Mayer and former Director of Artist Relations Dick Boak (currently Director, Museum and Archives, Special Projects) brought together a unique combination of tone woods and appointments: beautiful but seldom utilized cocobolo back and sides for great projection, Adirondack spruce top with hand-scalloped Adirondack spruce braces for clear tone and outstanding dynamic range, full Style 45 blue paua pearl inlay on the top, back, sides, headstock, fingerboard and 1902 alternate torch headplate inlay.

The crowning glory of the guitar was its Style 45 rosette. Created in blue paua pearl, the rosette, arched across rather than under the fingerboard, is a first for Martin. Aaron VanWhy of Martin’s Custom Shop played a significant role in turning this hard-to-execute concept, where the inlay on the top and the inlay across the fingerboard must align perfectly, into reality. Martin’s newly appointed Chief Product Officer, Fred Greene (formerly Vice President, Manufacturing and General Manager, Custom Shop), coordinated the builds, both the prototypes and the limited production. “I am very proud of this guitar. Our team was able to overcome some unique design challenges that we’ve never done before, in order to actualize John’s vision for this guitar. It is a modern guitar whose DNA is firmly rooted in Martin’s historical past,” says Greene.

The Martin 00-45SC John Mayer Stagecoach Edition was introduced at the 2012 National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Show in Los Angeles, where Mayer joined Boak on stage to discuss the genesis of the guitar and showcase its superb sound. Only 25 Martin 00-45SC John Mayer Stagecoach Edition guitars were produced, one of the smallest limited editions in C. F. Martin history, and Mayer bought two for himself. The entire edition sold out almost instantly. Needless to say, many fans of Mayer and of pearl-inlaid 00 Martins were disappointed.

With so much unfilled demand and Mayer preparing for his first concert tour in nearly three years, he and Martin immediately returned
to the drawing board to create a second Stagecoach guitar, the Martin 00-42SC John Mayer Custom Signature Edition. While the hallmark 360-degree pearl rosette was retained, less pearl-intensive Style 42 appointments and minor changes like a Sitka spruce top and block letter abalone pearl headstock inlay made the new Stagecoach Edition a relative bargain. The Martin 00-42SC John Mayer Custom Signature Edition was introduced at the 2013 NAMM Show, and in less than two years, 225 of this open-ended Custom Signature Artist Edition have been built.

Traditionalist. Individualist. Determined. Creative. During the past few years, Mayer has shown qualities that have made him one of the most intriguing artists in recent memory. He is anything but predictable, and never has been, and that’s one of the reasons his music is so engaging.

“They love to tell you, stay inside the lines, but something’s better on the other side,” sang Mayer in the hit “No Such Thing,” and the words speak volumes about the man who wrote them. From the beginning, Mayer has defied convention.

Born and raised in Connecticut, he first became captivated by the guitar by watching Michael J. Fox play one as Marty McFly in the movie Back to the Future. He began playing and taking lessons at age 13 and became so obsessed with the instrument, his worried parents had him evaluated by a psychiatrist. He began playing local clubs while still in high school, both solo and with the band Villanova Junction. When he was 17, he was hospitalized briefly for cardiac dysrhythmia, an event that prompted him to begin writing songs.
After graduating high school, Mayer worked at a gas station for a year (using the money earned to buy a guitar). He then enrolled at Berklee College of Music at the urging of his parents but dropped out after his first year. He moved to Atlanta to perform live with his friend Clay Cook as Lo-Fi Masters. In 1999 he went solo, recording an EP and playing clubs across the South. As he once said, “Connecticut’s where I built the parts, Boston’s where I assembled them, and Atlanta is where I sold them to the people.” Mayer caught his big break in 2000, when his appearance at the South by Southwest Music Festival brought him to the attention of record labels. Room for Squares, his first full-length album, made its major label debut in September of 2001. By the end of 2002, the album had gone multi-platinum (sales surpassing four million copies) and yielded several hits, including “No Such Thing” and “Your Body Is a Wonderland.” The latter earned him his first Grammy Award for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance.

Soon after, Mayer joined forces with C. F. Martin to create his first Signature Edition Guitar, the Martin OM-28JM John Mayer Signature Edition. Martin’s Dick Boak recalled how the collaboration came about. “He was the rage, and he came to visit us. I was into his songs and simply went for it. He clearly had scads of talent as a player, a songwriter and a lyricist.” Introduced in July of 2003, the OM-28JM John Mayer Signature Edition combined the OM body and long scale for balance and “punch” with an Engelmann spruce top for rich, warm tone, East Indian rosewood back and sides and a slim, fast, low-profile mahogany neck. Distinctive appointments included fine line inlaid aluminum borders on the ebony headplate and bridge, aluminum inlaid headstock decal, aluminum bridge pins, a pearl rosette, a “Triangle and Dots” international pilot’s symbol for 1200 hours (i.e., high noon, which was replicated...
from his wristwatch) at the 12th fret, Mayer’s signature at the 20th fret, stage and studio-ready Fishman/Martin electronics and an interior label signed by Mayer and Martin Chairman and CEO C. F. Martin IV. The Martin OM-28JM John Mayer Signature Edition sold out within days.

Heavier Things, Mayer’s second album, was released in 2003 and driven by the hit single “Daughters” and became his first to top the Billboard Top 200 Singles chart. “Daughters” won him Grammy Awards for Song of the Year and Best Male Pop Vocal Performance, but Mayer himself began to feel pigeonholed as a romantic singer/songwriter. He announced he was “closing up shop on acoustic sensitivity” and began embarking on a series of collaborations — both live and in the studio — with various hip-hop, jazz and blues artists, including B. B. King, Common, Alicia Keys, Buddy Guy, Kanye West, Herbie Hancock, John Scofield and Eric Clapton.

He formed the John Mayer Trio in 2005 with drummer Steve Jordan and bassist Pino Palladino to play harder-edged blues and rock. The short-lived group released one live album, but both Jordan and Palladino worked closely with Mayer on his third solo album, Continuum, which was released in 2006. Showcasing Mayer’s new blues and soul sound, Continuum reached No. 2 on the Billboard Top 200 Album charts, yielded a hit single in “Waiting on the World to Change” and earned him two more Grammy Awards, one for Best Pop Vocal Album and another for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance.

With his career soaring and the Martin OM-28JM John Mayer Signature Edition looking small in retrospect, Mayer and C. F. Martin were inspired to create a new Martin Special Edition. The Martin OMJM John Mayer Special Edition, like its predecessor, features an Engelmann spruce top, East Indian rosewood back and sides, pearl rosette, herringbone purfling and factory-installed electronics but dropped the elaborate bridge, headstock and fingerboard inlays in favor of a traditional gold Martin headstock decal and dot fingerboard inlays, with his inlaid signature at the 20th fret. Introduced in 2006, the open-ended Martin OMJM John Mayer has become one of C. F. Martin’s most popular Special Editions, with more than 3,200 built thus far.

The next three years brought him additional recognition. He appeared on the cover of Rolling Stone in 2007 in an issue recognizing the “New Guitar Gods” and was selected by Time magazine as one of the “100 Most Influential People” of 2007. He performed a solo instrumental version of Michael Jackson’s “Human Nature” at Jackson’s memorial service in 2009. That same year, he won two more Grammy Awards, Best Male Pop Vocal Performance for “Say,” an original song from the movie The Bucket List, and Best Male Rock Vocal Performance for a live version of “Gravity” from the concert album Where the Light Is: John Mayer Live in Los Angeles.

Battle Studies, Mayer’s fourth studio album, was released in late 2009 and immediately shot to the top of the Billboard Top 200 Album chart. “Who Says,” the first single from the album, debuted at No. 17 on the Billboard Hot 100 Singles chart. Two other singles from the album, “Heartbreak Warfare” and “Half of My Heart,” the latter recorded with country star Taylor Swift, were also chart toppers.

After a challenging period in 2010, Mayer made the decision to stay out of the public eye for an extended period. He began work on his fifth studio album, Born and Raised, but his time away soon changed from a matter of personal choice to a matter of medical necessity. Mayer was losing his voice.
In the summer of 2011, he realized something was seriously wrong. A laryngeal expert at Massachusetts General Hospital and the voice expert Mayer had previously recommended to Adele when she had voice problems evaluated him. The diagnosis was granuloma, a benign lesion in the back of the larynx caused by excessive use. Symptoms include hoarseness, throat pain, and constant throat clearing and coughing. In Mayer’s case, the condition was aggravated by a longtime struggle with acid reflux. “I thought I’d just take a pill and it would go away, but the problem got worse and worse,” he recalled.

In October of 2011, Mayer underwent surgery to remove the granuloma, which was followed by an injection of Botox into Mayer’s vocal chords in August to truly paralyze them. Several weeks later, with the chords showing major improvement, Berke administered another series of Botox injections.

During three months of complete silence, his vocal chords slowly healed, but progress in getting his voice back proved difficult. “Everything changed about my voice,” he said then. “I don’t have the projection. My laugh changed. Now I wonder if I can go right back to the shape of my voice that I had when I was singing.” In January 2013, he performed for the first time in nearly two years at a benefit concert for Montana firefighters. The set was only four songs, but it was a start.

A month later he had made significant progress. “It’s coming back slowly,” he acknowledged. “Like today, I did a warm-up and told myself, ‘Wow, I can sing more notes than I could two months ago.’” In March, he announced a spring and summer concert tour spanning 43 cities. “The greatest gift I have in my life is the opportunity to play again, which is the opportunity to dream again,” he said. “My dreams were in escrow, but when I found out this thing in my throat had receded, the most exciting thing for me was to have a second chance at a new life. My dreams have come true twice. That’s really cool.”

After a few warm-up shows in April and July, Mayer’s Born and Raised World Tour crisscrossed the United States and took a brief detour to South America before returning to the U.S. in October. One of the high points was the concert at Los Angeles’ Hollywood Bowl, where Mayer took the opportunity to thank Berke for helping him “sing on stage again.” Against all odds, Mayer was back.
The sound of music drenched in California sunshine.

Learn more about John Mayer’s Martin 00-45SC and how Laurel Canyon shaped the California sound at martinguitar.com/laurelcanyon
He was clearly thrilled to be healthy and back on the road, exclaimed, “I’m having an incredible time touring.” With his voice in fine fettle and his band firing on all cylinders, the Born and Raised World Tour kicked off its second leg with a short run of European concerts in October and nearly a score of U.S. concerts in November and December. The tour resumed in April of 2014 with concerts in Australia, New Zealand and Japan before concluding in June with performances in Scandinavia and Great Britain. As is his style, Mayer revised the set list at every show, adding and dropping songs, changing the order and throwing in the occasional cover to keep things fresh.

For all his success, Mayer remains a guitar fanatic, though until recently he believed he had moved beyond that phase. “To be honest, I thought I was done discovering the guitar in the sense that, for the most part, there was nothing I’d feel in a new guitar that I hadn’t felt in some way before. I was in Kurosawa Music in Tokyo looking at something completely different when I asked if they had a vintage section. I browsed it for a moment before setting my eyes on a 1975 Martin D-45 in pristine condition. I sat with it, and as soon as I started strumming, something completely different than I usually play came out. The thing about me is that I don’t play any set thing on the guitar when I first pick it up, ever. I go where the guitar tells me to go, and this guitar took me up the California coast.

“I was suddenly discovering these percussive, complex chords and rhythm patterns that I had never played before. And the whole thing shook in the right way. A lot of the satisfaction of playing a great guitar comes via the resonance through your chest and arms. This thing was so mellow and somehow, through the years, it had developed this beautiful high end. Just the nicest high end, like this throaty, harmonic treble without the tin. I bonded with it instantly, and it’s been my travel companion ever since. You’ll be seeing a lot of it. I call her Umi, which is the Japanese word for ‘beach.’ I went from Tokyo to Santa Barbara in one strum of the guitar that day.”

Asking Mayer to compare his Stagecoach Editions to his OM-28JM Signature Edition, OMJM Special Edition and the recently acquired D-45 is like asking a parent to choose his or her favorite child, but he had interesting observations on each of the guitars. “The three model types stand perfectly apart from one another. The OM-28JM is the most ‘well rounded’ in terms of my sound and feel. If I could keep only one, it would be the OM model. It’s like my No. 2 pencil.
The Stagecoach Edition is designed in such a way that it responds incredibly well to fingerstyle playing. I still can’t get over how well defined the spirit of the Stagecoach Edition is. I can always tell when something calls for the Stagecoach. The Stagecoach is a film camera. It’s a vinyl record player. It’s classic and stable, solid and never needs to be upgraded.

“The D-45 has a bit more slack on the strings — more jangle to it. I think the most iconic song ever played on a D-45 is ‘Heart of Gold’ by Neil Young. If you want to know why the D-45 has become such an enduring model, your answer is right there in that song. I realized a lot of the difference on that guitar, feelwise, is due to the depth of the body and, therefore, the distance of the neck from your stomach — it’s just a bit further away from you due to the guitar body being taller. That’s a picking guitar. The three models together are the perfect acoustic toolkit. Between them, I have it all covered.”

After finishing the Born and Raised World Tour, Mayer began writing and recording new music for his next album, slated for release in 2015. “I think my favorite times to create an album are when the trend is up for grabs. Music is definitely between phases right now, and I always see that as the best time to create. Fans are tapping their fingers against their lips and wondering what it is they want to listen to next, and that makes me want to create it. I’m looking forward to mixing and matching elements on the next album in what will hopefully be a very fresh way.”
FALL IN LOVE WITH MARTIN SP LIFESPAN® STRINGS

There’s a magic moment that happens the first time you pick up an acoustic guitar—the first time your hand wraps around the slope of the neck and your thumb brushes against the windings of the low E string, the first time the curve of the body rests on your knee and you wonder how this could possibly feel so familiar when you’ve never done it before. And all of this happens before you ever form a chord and pull a pick across the strings. And then you pluck a note—just one note. And you make it sing. It’s a moment so special that no guitar player will ever forget it. It’s the moment that you formed an instant bond to this timeless instrument that will become your love, your means of expression, your solace, your joy; the love that keeps you company into the wee hours of the morning and patiently awaits your return after an unwelcomed absence.

And then like every guitar player who has ever come before you, you learn the cold, hard truth. Your new love needs to be taken care of if you want it to keep singing the way it should. Over time, it is going to start sounding dull and lifeless. Its voice is going to ring less true. The notes won’t rise and fall with the same vibrancy that puts you in a musical trance whenever you hear it. The strings won’t let your fingers slide easily down the fret board or bend to your will the way they did when they were shiny and new.

So you do what you have to do. You roll up your sleeves and change your strings for the very first time. And just like that, your guitar becomes new again. And you get to relive that magic moment.

Changing guitar strings really isn’t much fun, and it can, in fact, put a nice little dent in your wallet if you change them as often as you should. The unavoidable fact of playing guitar, however, is that your strings are going to wear over time. They’re going to lose their tone. They will accumulate dirt and grime from your fingers. Corrosion is going to happen. And you’re desperately going to want to bring your love back to life again.

This predicament has plagued guitar players for generations, and there have been many attempts at a solution, dating all the way back to the 1920s. Unfortunately, many of these attempts at extending string life have been to coat the strings with slick, heavy polymers, putting a barrier between musician and instrument. True, these techniques extend the life of the strings; but they also break an essential point of connection between you and the instrument you love, and they can alter the natural tone of the strings.

Through the application of technology and engineering, Martin found that there really is no need for heavy, sound-altering coatings, and, in fact, there’s a much better way—chemically treated strings. They are designed to repel the dirt and grime from your fingers as competently as...
their coated counterparts, but they do so much more than that. Treated strings attack the problem at its source.

Coated strings work by keeping your fingers from actually touching the skin of the string—its windings. Coated strings address wear at the superficial level alone. They do little to prevent the deterioration where the windings wrap around the string’s core, its bone and muscle. This is where strings undergo their heaviest corrosion, resulting in poor sound quality and that dull tone that leaves you seeking something new. The heavy coatings also change the vibration patterns of the string and, therefore, start out less vibrant than uncoated strings, effectively dampening the brighter overtones.

Martin SP Lifespan strings offer a more complete protection. They are treated at the point where atoms lock arms with one another, curtailing corrosion at the molecular level. The Lifespan treatment also repels surface dirt and oil that can cause the strings to lose their tone prematurely, and does so without inhibiting the natural vibrations of the string. To create these longer life strings, Martin engineers begin with their toughest Martin SP strings crafted with high tensile strength core wire, and then they apply a tightly controlled, multi-step chemical process that results in a treated string that sounds fresh and uninhibited.
To make the treatment process ultimately successful, they needed to examine every component of the Martin SP string manufacturing process. They immersed themselves in the mechanics of wrapping the string around the core, securing the wrap with a twist lock, shaping of the hex core and qualifying the raw materials used to construct the string components. Martin didn’t simply compare the strings to the competition; they set out to create a string they could feel good about putting on their guitars—strings that ensure when we play them, we’ll hear pure Martin tone in each and every note.

But this wasn’t just an intellectual exercise—it was about creating a string that serious players could appreciate. Through their thorough testing process, Martin invited guitarists to try playing guitars strung with Martin SP Lifespan strings and guitars strung with coated strings. Not surprisingly, every guitarist could tell the difference between Martin SP Lifespan strings and the coated strings. What might be more surprising is that when these same musicians listened to other guitarists playing Martin SP Lifespan strings, coated strings, and traditional untreated strings, they were still able to pick out the coated strings. But they couldn’t tell the difference between Martin SP Lifespan strings and the untreated strings. Heavier coatings add mass to the string and affect vibration patterns. The changes in vibration patterns affect the tone of the guitar. Martin SP Lifespan strings are designed to let the strings vibrate naturally.

Martin puts nearly two centuries of quality and dedication behind their guitars. And they carry the same level of craftsmanship and experience into their line of strings. Their treatment process repels dirt and grime and inhibits corrosion, without putting a barrier between you and your guitar. When your fingers touch the Martin SP Lifespan strings, all you feel are the grooves of the windings. When you pluck your notes, pick your strings, or strum your chords, your audience will hear the clarity of your playing and the precision of your notes—pure and unaltered, brilliant and new.

Remember the first time you picked up an acoustic guitar and fell in love? Well, the honeymoon isn’t over yet. Martin SP Lifespan Strings.
Martin Ambassador Gabrielle Aplin
SP Lifespan® 80/20 Bronze

Martin Ambassador Jake Bugg
SP Lifespan® Phosphor Bronze
Martin 000-15SM

Martin Ambassador Hunter Hayes
SP Lifespan® Phosphor Bronze
Custom Martin 00-42K

Martin Ambassador Jason Isbell
SP Lifespan® 80/20 Bronze
Martin D-41 Special

Martin Ambassadors
The Milk Carton Kids
SP Lifespan® 80/20 Bronze
Custom Martin 0-15
Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth, Andy Sannella, 1928, with a Martin 00-21 guitar signed by all of the 1928 Yankees. Photo courtesy of National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY.
Roy Rogers with his OM-45 De Luxe, the first of only 11 made in 1930, which is similar to the OM-45 De Luxe recently purchased by the Martin Museum at the Guernsey’s Auction in New York City.

The priceless OM-45 De Luxe (#11) recently purchased by the Martin Museum at the Guernsey’s Auction in New York City.

Two women playing Martin parlor guitars, circa 1890.
When Danny Davis isn’t tweaking turns, hitting jumps and riding switch on the world’s toughest mountains and half-pipes, chances are you’ll find him sporting a Grateful Dead tee shirt and jamming on his guitar. If there’s one thing that gives this Olympic snowboarder as much satisfaction as a brisk, cloudless day of shredding fresh powder, it’s a slow summer evening unwinding at his home in Truckee, California, with his crew of musical “Frends.”

A group of chilled-out dudes that like swilling beer and talking about gnarly thrashes on the pipe might be what comes to mind when you think of a snowboarding crew. While boarders often get pegged this way, Davis and his group dream a little bigger than that. Their collective grew out of a shared love for boarding, music and, ultimately, a desire to help make the world a better place.

When snowboarding started to be taken more seriously as a sport, Davis noticed that the atmosphere was beginning to shift. What had once been a clan of supportive, generous friends working hard at what they loved was starting to become more exclusive. He and his buddies began to formulate a stronger ethos in an effort to preserve the general bonhomie that was such an important part of their snowboarding experience.
The Crew, with Davis at the helm, is all about cultivating an energy that fosters positivity and success instead of the “me against the world” outlook that competitive athletes sometimes embrace. For Davis, a community is a force; it’s a channel for enacting change and making an impact on a bigger scale. Davis’ mellow disposition and friendly spirit have a lot to do with his beloved status in the snowboarding community. He and his crew started a music festival that brings over 3,500 people to Southern Vermont every summer to frolic in the grassy meadows and hear indie and bluegrass bands, like Deer Tick and the Sleepy Man Banjo Boys, perform in a bucolic New England setting. He doesn’t travel anywhere without his LXM Little Martin, and lights up at the prospect of an impromptu jam session with fellow boarders after a day of competing.

When he’s on his snowboard, commentators and judges gush over his graceful moves, alternately kaleidoscopic and soaring. But his impact on the world stretches far beyond the half-pipe. In addition to bringing a harmonious vibe back to the snowboarding community, Davis has also taken a strong stance on climate change and sustainability efforts. He helped launch a green initiative at the Frendly Festival to minimize waste and increase sustainability awareness. Taking advantage of his position in the snowboarding community, he partnered with Burton and Mountain Dew to develop an eco-friendly outerwear line made from melted Mountain Dew bottles that are spun into yarn. As an ambassador of the athlete-focused environmental foundation Protect Our Winters, he helps use the power of the winter sports community to support the fight against climate change.

Davis’ ability to simultaneously hunt for meaning, engagement and improvement in everything he does has helped him become one of the most influential snowboarders in the world, a pretty sweet guitar player and a trendsetting environmentalist.
Martin – How long have you been playing guitar?

Danny Davis – I had my first guitar lesson in 4th grade. I know one of the first songs I ever learned was by Eagle-Eye Cherry. It didn’t even matter what the song was; I just loved the feeling of strumming the strings and making music. I remember I was so excited when my parents got me my first guitar that I was speeding home on my bike so fast that my front tire busted and fell off! I hurt myself and had to miss my first lesson, but what I remember is just how excited I was to get home and play.

M – What kind of guitar are you playing these days?

DD – An LXM Little Martin. It’s the easiest thing to carry, because I travel so much for contests and things and I need to have a guitar with me. When I’m more settled, I play with a bigger Martin. A D-1 model. It has a super lush, pretty sound.

M – Is it the only instrument you play?

DD – Mostly. Everyone, all my snowboarder friends, plays guitar. Jack (Mitrani) can play banjo. Luke (Mitrani) plays guitar. Sometimes melodica or slide steel. It’s so cool how, once you start learning about music, you can start to pick up different instruments and already have a head start. I love to play around on the harmonica and drums, but I don’t have any formal training on them.

M – Do you guys have a band?

DD – Right now we play just because we love music. Jack will learn a song he likes and then teach me, and we’ll just jam. Jack and Luke write a little music and we do a lot of cover songs. I shy away from performing, though. I guess with the performance aspect of snowboarding, music sort of provides an escape from that. For me, anyway. Snowboarding is my chance to show off. Music is my way of kicking back and relaxing. I would love to have a band someday, though.

M – Which musicians got you interested in music initially?

DD – Green Day. Blink 182. Incubus. Bush. I was in middle school and those were the bands on the radio, the stuff my older brother was listening to. Then when I started to travel more for snowboarding contests, my dad would insist on controlling the stereo while he was driving. That got me into The Dead, Steve Miller Band, Tom Petty, Floyd. I remember buying The Wall, the movie, which totally blew my mind. When I started getting really busy with snowboarding, I didn’t have a lot of time to play guitar anymore, so that’s when I got into listening to all kinds of s**t on my headphones.
M – So you like to have music on while you’re snowboarding?

DD – Totally. Always. I can’t focus without it. It’s like taking a road trip in silence — feels weird as s**t [laughing]. I used to steal mixes from my brother, a lot of Eminem and Detroit rap. Then my friends started burning CDs that I would play on my Discman, and then it got easier with my iPhone. I just put it on airplane mode and snowboard for four or five hours straight, and it’s such an awesome motivator. I can’t get my mind where I need it to be without having music in my head.

M – It’s interesting that snowboarding has such a distinct vibe compared to other competitive sports. Do you think of it as super competitive?

DD – Well, snowboarding is competitive, but it’s also the most friendly sport ever. Everybody’s pretty cool and congratulatory. When I was growing up and we all started competing and getting coaches and getting a little more serious about it, we formed a crew. The Frends Crew. We were all rooting for each other, and it was a force that really started to work for us. People started to notice. When I would compete, it took the pressure off and just made it fun. It didn’t matter if I did well, because one of my friends would do well. When it was your turn, you could have fun. It’s better to have a clan than to be on your own. There’s more opportunity to do well when there’s more of you.

M – What are your favorite mountains to snowboard?

DD – Oh, man, so many amazing places. I think I’ve been to every continent, but, honestly, Alpine Valley back in Michigan is one of my favorites. That’s where I grew up. Those mountains taught me how to snowboard. I’ll never stop loving it there. Also, I live in Truckee, California, and snowboarding at home is always great. We’ll get some friends together and drive up into the Sierras on our snowmobiles and eventually make it to this amazing face. I love snowboarding like that, just exploring what nature gives you.

M – How about events?

DD – Peace Park! It’s the coolest. It’s a huge skate park, and you can kill it on transitions, jumps, rails and stuff like that. I get to invite and snowboard with different people. Last time we got to give away a 00-DB Jeff Tweedy Signature Artist guitar from Martin, and we had our friends in a bluegrass band come and play. It’s always awesome.
M – You guys started up The Frendly Music Gathering a few years ago. How did the idea come about?

DD – Honestly, we wanted a place for all our friends to come together, relax and listen to awesome music. We just set up a camp, told everyone to meet here, brought some cool bands in and have fun. It’s a nice escape, music. We all work hard when we’re competing and getting a chance to just chill out is great. When we saw how well it turned out, we decided it was an awesome way for like-minded people to come together and have an event that’s all about healthy, positive energy and straight-up fun.

M – You’re 26 and you’ve already established a name for yourself as one of the most influential snowboarders in the world, started up a successful music festival and helped develop an eco-friendly clothing line. That’s a pretty serious resume for someone of any age! Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

DD – I want to keep competing as long as I can. But when I get older, I’ve always had this vision of being able to buy like 100 acres up in Vermont and make my own little off-the-grid kind of place. Someplace really deep in the mountains where I can wake up on winter mornings, take the dogs out and go snowboarding. And in the summer go for a hike or go fishing. It’s always been my dream to just be somewhere beautiful, have my friends around me and have the ability to get out into nature. That’s what I really want. [Pauses] And hey, maybe that’s when I’ll be able to start my band!

M – Sounds like, with all your musical friends, that wouldn’t be too hard to do! Just a matter of finding the time, huh?

DD – Exactly. For now, I want to keep doing what I’m doing...keep on breaking bones. God [he laughs]...it’s crazy how happy snowboarding makes me.

Martin Guitar and Burton Snowboards collaborated with Danny Davis on a limited edition snowboard — Easy Livin’ — that will be available at select Burton retail stores nationwide in January 2015. Check burton.com for locations near you.

Danny Davis was recently named a Martin Ambassador. You can learn more about the music-loving pro snowboarder at martinguitar.com/ambassadors or dannydavis.com.
Hank Williams with his D-18 Martin Guitar, 1947. Courtesy of Martin Archives.
Nashville thought Hank Williams was trouble. Here’s his partner in crime.
FROM THE WORKBENCH

BILL JONES

Bill Jones is the Plant Manager of Production at the Nazareth facility. He decided to work at Martin seven years ago because he believes nothing could possibly be cooler than building guitars. Bill’s favorite part of being Plant Manager is being involved in creating an instrument that means so much to people.

ROBERTA “BIRDIE” ALLEN

Roberta Allen goes by the name of “Birdie.” Over the last decade, Birdie has worked in numerous departments but has found her niche in end piecing. You may have even taken a factory tour with her. She is seen as a motivator by her coworkers and constantly strives to be the best end installer she can be.
After taking a Martin Guitar factory tour, visitors leave with a laser-etched soundhole that Kim Knauss created. A 14-year employee, Kim is the laser engraver who always wanted to work at Martin due to the hands-on work. She admires the family orientation at Martin and is proud to be a part of its 181 years of history.

As the Custom Shop Administrator, Emily Meixell helps turn someone’s idea into his/her dream guitar. A seven-year employee of Martin, Emily had the chance to be cross-trained in every aspect of guitar building. She is proud to work for a company that treats her like family and gives her endless learning opportunities.

As the Customer Repair Manager, Dave Doll refers to himself as a guitar doctor. It’s not all about fixing guitars for Dave; it’s also about giving someone part of their life back. As a 14-year employee of Martin, his best advice for guitar owners is to use preventive measures such as monitoring humidity. Dave also has a YouTube series called “Dave Doll’s Pro Tips” that can be found at martinguitar.com/davedoll.

In 1976, Linda Davis-Wallen began working in the Martin sawmill. She broke ground for women working in the lumber business with her vast knowledge and personality. Linda, a 40-year employee, is currently the Sourcing Specialist and cherishes the friendships that she has made through her work, both inside and outside the company.
IMAGES OF AMERICA C. F. MARTIN & CO.
By Dick Boak,
Foreword by C. F. Martin IV

Telling a story in pictures is C. F. Martin & Co., the newest addition to Arcadia Publishing’s popular Images of America series. The book, by author and Martin employee Dick Boak, with a foreword by C. F. Martin IV, boasts 200 vintage images, many of which have never been published, and chronicles the evolution of the iconic family guitar business.

“Some people think I have the best job in the world,” Boak said. “I guess I must agree, as I get to work on great little books about Martin guitars, like this one!”

The formula for C. F. Martin & Co.’s success has always been an unparalleled commitment to precise handcraftsmanship blended with optimum tonewoods, innovation, and singular design. This family business has persevered from the Civil War through the present and remains the oldest surviving maker of stringed instruments in the world. It is the largest and most respected producer of acoustic guitars in America.

The images in this book trace the remarkable development of the acoustic guitar in the hands of six generations of Martin family members who have managed the business from 1833 to today. C. F. Martin & Co. captures the buildings, employees, musicians, and exquisite instruments that have contributed to lasting legacy models.

Price: $23.99 (US)
128 pages/softcover

Now available for purchase in The 1833 Shop® at martinguitar.com/imagesofamerica
Inventing the American Guitar is the first book to describe the early history of American guitar design in detail. It tells the story of how a European instrument was transformed into one with all of the design and construction features that define the iconic American flat-top guitar. This transformation happened within a mere 20 years, a remarkably brief period. The person who dominates this history is C. F. Martin Sr., America’s first major guitar maker and the founder of the Martin Guitar Company, which continues to produce outstanding flat-top guitars today. After emigrating from his native Saxony to New York in 1833, Martin quickly established a guitar making business, producing instruments modeled after those of his mentor, Johann Stauffer of Vienna. By the time he moved his family and business to rural Pennsylvania in 1839, Martin had absorbed and integrated the influence of Spanish guitars he had seen and heard in New York. In Pennsylvania, he evolved further, inventing a uniquely American guitar that was fully developed before the outbreak of the Civil War. Inventing the American Guitar traces Martin’s evolution as a craftsman and entrepreneur and explores the influences and experiments that led to his creation of the American guitar that is recognized and played around the world today.

Price: $54.99 (US)

Now available for purchase in
The 1833 Shop® at martinguitar.com/americanguitar
Pete Seeger has been an iconic figure in American music for more than 70 years. As a member of the Almanac Singers in the 1940s and the Weavers in the 1950s and as a solo artist in the decades that followed, he sparked a revival of traditional music that continues today. As a songwriter, he wrote “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” and “Turn, Turn, Turn!” and co-wrote — with Lee Hays of the Weavers — “The Hammer Song” (“If I Had a Hammer”). As an artist and activist, he popularized the spiritual “We Shall Overcome,” performed at the 1963 March on Washington, protested against the Vietnam War, spearheaded efforts to eliminate pollution of the Hudson River and fought tirelessly for the rights of the common man. As a musician, he inspired a generation of banjo players, but he was also known for his unique 12-string guitar that Martin replicated in 2011 as the JSO! and J12SO! Sing Out! 60th Anniversary Pete Seeger Custom Artist Edition in collaboration with SingOut! Corporation, which publishes a nonprofit folk music magazine that Pete helped to organize in the early 1950s.
Discover vintage tone with strings made to harmonize with your guitar’s wood. Visit martinstings.com for details.
SOMETHING OLD

RICHARD KONTER'S MARTIN UKULELE

Archaeologist and educational software publisher Larry Bartram showed up in the Martin lobby one day to have his Martin guitar repaired. While strolling through the museum, he took a glance at a ukulele with signatures on it. He immediately noticed the signature of his glacial geology professor from the University of Arizona, Laurence Gould, on the front of the instrument. Gould was 81 years old when he taught Bartram, having been chief scientist and second-in-command on Richard E. Byrd's first Antarctic expedition during 1928-30.

Bartram returned several weeks later to pick up his repaired guitar. He brought with him Gould's book, Cold, and asked the receptionist if he could speak with someone about the ukulele. Martin archivist Dick Boak was summoned. Dick unlocked the museum case and brought Larry and the ukulele upstairs for a close inspection. The index of Gould's book revealed the names of many involved with Byrd's earlier 1926 Arctic expedition and, within an hour, nearly 20 previously unknown signatures were identified and a great story began to unfold!

As it turns out, this little Martin Concert ukulele is perhaps the most historically significant and valuable ukulele on the planet. It belonged to Richard Wesley Konter (also known as "Ukulele Dick"). The Brooklyn native was an accomplished player and famous ukulele enthusiast in New York City. He worked with Tin Pan Alley composers and publishers, arranging popular songs for ukulele like "If You Knew Susie Like I Know Susie" and "You For Me, Me For You From Now On."

Konter was also a Navy veteran and able seaman. When he volunteered his services and musicality for Byrd's 1927 Expedition to the North Pole, he was quickly added to the crew. In spite of the severe weight restrictions on board the expedition's plane, Konter secretly conspired with pilot Floyd Bennett to stow the little Martin ukulele under Bennett's seat for the arduous polar flight. When the plane returned safely fifteen-and-a-half hours later, great celebrations ensued.

It was no small feat to be the first fliers to reach the North Pole. In the weeks following the expedition, many events were held to honor Byrd and his crew, including a ticker-tape parade and a White House reception. Richard Konter, ukulele in hand, attended many of them and managed to obtain signatures for his ukulele. Of course, the ukulele bears the names of notable Arctic and Antarctic explorers like R. E. Byrd, Floyd Bennett, Roald Amundsen, and Laurence Gould—but it doesn’t stop there. Other significant political figures of the day signed the ukulele, including President Calvin Coolidge, Vice President Charles G. Dawes, Secretary of State Frank Kellogg, General John J. Pershing, Theodore Roosevelt Jr., as well as celebrities such as Charles Lindbergh, Thomas Edison, and Lowell Thomas. The body of the ukulele is literally

Richard W. Konter pictured with his, now famous, Konter uke and Byrd expedition mascot, Igloo. Photo courtesy of ACME.
covered with signatures—well over 100. However, time and wear and tear have not been kind to the signatures. Richard Konter corresponded with C. F. Martin III shortly after the North Pole flight and invited C.F. to meet him in New York City. They apparently became friends, and further correspondences led to the 1952 trade of Konter’s ukulele in exchange for a full sized Martin Dreadnought. The little instrument has held its mysteries in Martin’s collection ever since.

The story of the Konter ukulele is complicated and fascinating. It has even captured the interest of the Smithsonian Institution and The National Archives. Both have assisted with Martin’s research into this special instrument. At the Smithsonian, non-invasive multi-spectral imaging has been conducted (including ultraviolet, infrared, and reflectance transformation imaging) to help reveal abraded and faded signatures. At the National Archives, photographs and documents from Konter’s and Byrd’s personal files have been scanned and studied for clues about who some of the unidentified signatures might belong to and where and when they were added.

Larry Bartram and Dick Boak are continuing their research into the Konter ukulele. They are currently working on a small book about the ukulele containing stories, photos and documents to flesh out a fascinating chapter in U.S. history, polar exploration and Martin’s contribution to them.