

# Martin & Co.<sup>®</sup>

EST. 1833

## THE MARKET

The guitar has long since surpassed the piano as the most popular musical instrument in the world. C. F. Martin led the charge ever since the guitar began to take hold in the early 1800s. Although economic conditions will always peak and fall, Martin has been able to survive the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and even the disco decade. The formula for Martin's success is and always has been an unparalleled commitment to precise hand-craftsmanship blended with optimum tonewoods, innovation, and singular design. Today, Martin remains the oldest surviving maker of stringed instruments in the world, and the largest and most respected maker of acoustic guitars in America.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

While Martin's many contributions to the evolution of the guitar are well documented, perhaps the most lasting innovations pertain to the many dozens of shapes and sizes that Martin originated. To meet musicians' increasing need for volume, the guitar grew in size from a relatively small instrument played by women in the parlors of their homes into the larger, more resonant guitars that we know today. With each incremental increase in size, Martin captured a tremendous variety of tonal textures, giving guitarists a seemingly unending array of tonality for the varied styles and genres of their music.

## HISTORY

Having studied instrument making in the shop of Viennese luthier Johann Stauffer, Christian Frederick Martin returned to his hometown of Markneukirchen in what is now eastern Germany. The town's violin makers considered the guitar little more than furniture and forbade him from hanging out his shingle. Although he was eventually vindicated, hurt feelings and the death of his father caused him to pack his tools and immigrate with his wife and two children to the freedom and excitement of the New World. He arrived in New



York City in November 1833 and promptly set up a thriving music store near what is now the mouth of the Holland Tunnel. Unhappy in New York, he moved to Nazareth in eastern Pennsylvania in 1839. In this small town of Germanic immigrants, his exquisitely made instruments evolved to provide the very definition of "the guitar."

For more than 177 years, Martin guitars have been prized for their tone, consistency, quality, and attention to hand-crafted detail. Professional and amateur musicians in every category of music hold Martin guitars in high esteem. Among the extensive list of famous musicians who have owned and played Martin guitars are Elvis Presley, Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Eric Clapton, Joan Baez, Sting, Johnny Cash, Gene Autry, Hank Williams, Jimmy Buffett, Jimmy Page, Tom Petty, Willie Nelson, and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. More than 150 artist signature-model collaborations with many of the era's greatest guitarists have raised more than a million dollars for the charities of each artist's choosing.

## THE PRODUCT

The first appearance of the now-famous X-bracing pattern was seen on Martin guitars between 1840 and 1850. This ingenious bracing system provides strength for the soundboard without the use of excessive support for the top, which can inhibit a guitar's tone. X-bracing is now a standard feature on virtually all steel-string guitars worldwide.

Martin's 14-fret neck design was developed in late 1929. Prior to the period, guitars were generally equipped with a 12-fret neck. As the story goes, a renowned plectrum banjoist of the day, Perry Bechtel, suggested to Frank Henry Martin that he make a guitar with a longer neck that would allow for more access to the upper notes. Following Bechtel's advice, Martin introduced a guitar with the longer neck and dubbed it an "Orchestra Model" (OM). The 14-fret neck was so well received that Martin eventually extended the feature to all models in its line. In short order, 14 frets became the standard design for the entire guitar industry. Martin's highly versatile OM guitars are acknowledged as the standard for finger-style guitar technique.

The Martin Dreadnought model made its first public appearance in 1916, produced exclusively for the Oliver Ditson Company of Boston and New York. Ditson went out of business in the early 1930s, and Martin subsequently incorporated



these tonally powerful models into its own line of guitars. Today they are the most popular models in the Martin lineup, and virtually every maker of acoustic guitars has attempted to copy the original Martin Dreadnought. While copying cosmetic appearances is relatively easy, copying



the tone of a Martin is far more difficult. Martin guitars are repeatedly recognized and honored with gold awards from the readership of the guitar and music media as being the finest acoustic instruments available.

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

As the sixth generation of the Martin family to run the business, Chris Martin has led the company through two and a half decades of unprecedented growth and success. About the company's current products, he states, "The guitars we're building today, I believe, are among the best in our company's history — models for every taste and playing style, from the traditional to the most avant-garde. When future generations look back at what we've done, I want them to see how much of our great tradition we have sustained and, at the same time, to see how boldly we have moved into the future."

In 2005, Martin surpassed a major milestone with the completion of its 1,000,000th instrument. Martin's continuing popularity is attributed to a general resurgence of acoustic guitar music, an ever-increasing respect for Martin's high level of craftsmanship, and Chris Martin's bold yet open-minded management style. The priceless 1,000,000th Martin guitar took two years to make and is now on display in the new C. F. Martin Museum & Visitors Center.

As computers and technology dominate culture, guitars, too, have embraced the digital world. Martin responded with an array of onboard pickups and preamplifiers that allow today's musicians to plug into their home computer or the professional recording studio. These sensors are also invaluable for performance venues ranging from the local coffeehouse to Madison Square Garden.

In addition to guitarmaking, Martin is also one of the world's largest manufacturers of quality musical strings and a major distributor of fretted instrument accessories.

### PROMOTION

Perhaps Martin is its own greatest competitor. The company's guitars tend to improve with age; historically, so has their value. A top-of-the-line

Martin D-45 made prior to World War I with an original selling price of about \$300 now brings a hefty \$300,000-plus on the vintage instrument market.

While the company supports local dealerships with music media advertising, the best promotion happens through word-of-mouth among musicians, or from the thousands of visitors who flock to Nazareth for the company's extensive museum and fascinating factory tour.

Guitar enthusiasts, music lovers, and the general public are welcome to visit the impressive new C. F. Martin Museum & Visitors Center (510 Sycamore Street, Nazareth, PA). Visitor information is available on the Martin website at [www.martinguitar.com](http://www.martinguitar.com).

The Martin Factory Tour offers a unique insight into how quality guitars are constructed. Visitors witness a fascinating blend of old-world craftsmanship and modern technology. The highly acclaimed C. F. Martin Museum displays the company's impressive collection of stringed instruments and unique artifacts dating from the early 1800s through the modern era.

A trip to the Visitors Center should include a stop at the 1833 Shop, which offers a wide selection of Martin memorabilia, strings, books, and accessories — everything for the guitar player or enthusiast.

Located in the original old North Street Martin plant about a mile from the Museum & Visitors Center, Guitarmaker's Connection offers an array of tonewoods, guitarmaking kits, repair and construction books, luthier tools, glues, and hard-to-find items for instrument makers.

### BRAND VALUES

Since 1833, C. F. Martin & Co. has been a permanent part of the American experience: producing the oldest, most respected, and most innovative guitar in American history. Blending hand craftsmanship with state-of-the-art technology, Martin guitars remain unsurpassed in tone, playability, quality, and enduring value.

Martin's steadfast adherence to high standards of musical excellence, mixed with some sagacious management, has largely accounted for



the company's remarkable longevity. Business conditions and musical trends change over the years, but Martin's attitude toward guitar building has not varied.

In the preface to the 1904 catalog, Frank Henry Martin explained, "It takes care and patience. Care in selecting the materials, laying out the proportions and attending to the details which add to the player's comfort. Patience in giving the necessary time to finish every part. A good guitar cannot be built for the price of a poor one, but who regrets the extra cost for a good guitar?"

More than a century has passed since Frank Henry Martin of the family's third generation authored this statement, but it still accurately expresses Martin's ongoing commitment to quality. He would be surprised indeed to see today the business that C. F. Martin Sr. started in 1833. What was once a one-man shop is now an energy-filled facility with more than 500 skilled employees. It all started with a love of wood and music. What better tribute to a tree than to resonate song as a Martin guitar!



### THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT MARTIN GUITAR

- Six generations of Martin have continuously owned and operated C. F. Martin & Co. Current chairman and CEO Christian Frederick Martin IV took the helm of the company in 1986. The seventh generation — Claire Frances Martin — was born to C. F. Martin IV and his wife Diane Repyneck in 2004.
- Eric Clapton and John Mayer performed with their signature-model Martin guitars at a benefit for the victims of Hurricane Katrina during *Larry King Live* on CNN in September 2005.
- The Martin Dreadnought model was named after a large class of World War I British battleships.