

MARTIN

THE JOURNAL OF ACOUSTIC GUITARS

SUSTAIN



ABILITY

"PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND ALL OF ITS

PRECIOUS RESOURCES

HAS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF MY FAMILY'S BUSINESS

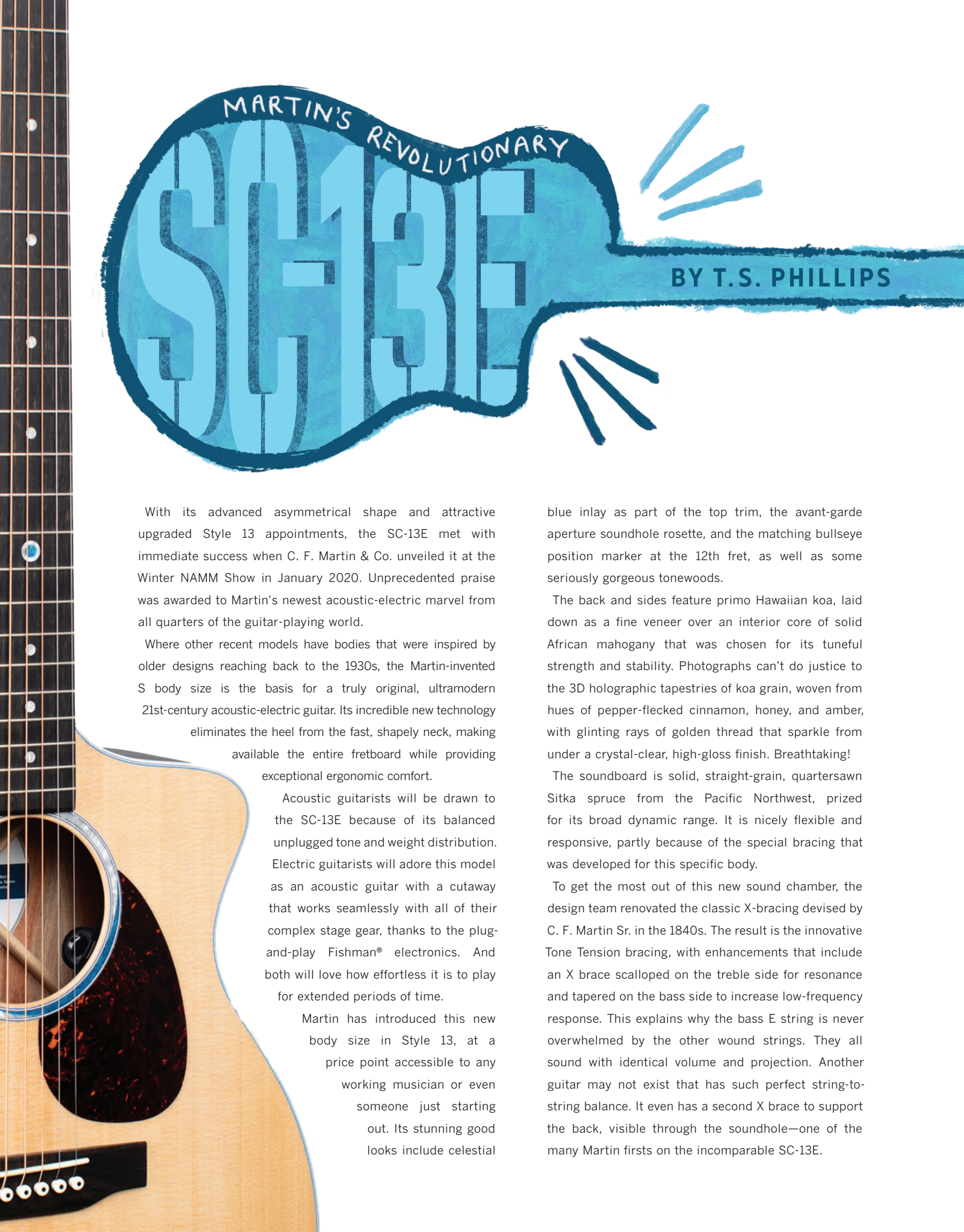
SINCE ITS INCEPTION."

C. F. MARTIN IV

VOLUME

11

**20
21**



With its advanced asymmetrical shape and attractive upgraded Style 13 appointments, the SC-13E met with immediate success when C. F. Martin & Co. unveiled it at the Winter NAMM Show in January 2020. Unprecedented praise was awarded to Martin's newest acoustic-electric marvel from all quarters of the guitar-playing world.

Where other recent models have bodies that were inspired by older designs reaching back to the 1930s, the Martin-invented S body size is the basis for a truly original, ultramodern 21st-century acoustic-electric guitar. Its incredible new technology eliminates the heel from the fast, shapely neck, making available the entire fretboard while providing exceptional ergonomic comfort.

Acoustic guitarists will be drawn to the SC-13E because of its balanced unplugged tone and weight distribution. Electric guitarists will adore this model as an acoustic guitar with a cutaway that works seamlessly with all of their complex stage gear, thanks to the plug-and-play Fishman® electronics. And both will love how effortless it is to play for extended periods of time.

Martin has introduced this new body size in Style 13, at a price point accessible to any working musician or even someone just starting out. Its stunning good looks include celestial

blue inlay as part of the top trim, the avant-garde aperture soundhole rosette, and the matching bullseye position marker at the 12th fret, as well as some seriously gorgeous tonewoods.

The back and sides feature primo Hawaiian koa, laid down as a fine veneer over an interior core of solid African mahogany that was chosen for its tuneful strength and stability. Photographs can't do justice to the 3D holographic tapestries of koa grain, woven from hues of pepper-flecked cinnamon, honey, and amber, with glinting rays of golden thread that sparkle from under a crystal-clear, high-gloss finish. Breathtaking!

The soundboard is solid, straight-grain, quartersawn Sitka spruce from the Pacific Northwest, prized for its broad dynamic range. It is nicely flexible and responsive, partly because of the special bracing that was developed for this specific body.

To get the most out of this new sound chamber, the design team renovated the classic X-bracing devised by C. F. Martin Sr. in the 1840s. The result is the innovative Tone Tension bracing, with enhancements that include an X brace scalloped on the treble side for resonance and tapered on the bass side to increase low-frequency response. This explains why the bass E string is never overwhelmed by the other wound strings. They all sound with identical volume and projection. Another guitar may not exist that has such perfect string-to-string balance. It even has a second X brace to support the back, visible through the soundhole—one of the many Martin firsts on the incomparable SC-13E.

A NEW MARTIN FOR A NEW DECADE

Fred Greene, Martin's Vice President of Product Management, wanted an asymmetrical production model for some time now. The development team explored fresh concepts and back-burner experiments that had simmered in the R&D department for years before arriving at the exciting final version released to the general public.

For the first time in Martin model history, the S signifies the actual body shape, rather than it being an initial, as in D for Dreadnought, or J for Jumbo. Tim Teel, Director of Instrument Design, said the naming was as simple as noticing the S apparent in the fluid curves he kept sketching during early brainstorming. As he put it, "In the end, I feel the S stands for whatever the player decides it stands for, on a personal level. Maybe it will stand for Stage, or Studio, or Stadium, or Solo, or Sexy, or Shredder. It is such a versatile musical instrument; it will earn every one of those designations, and more."

The S could also stand for Serious, as in the serious versatility that will earn many fans among rock and jazz players who wish to perform on an acoustic guitar without compromising their technique and style. A broader spectrum of guitarists will embrace this model's comfy contours, which are unique from all other Martin body sizes or anyone else's body sizes for that matter. It feels right at home in the lap, resting on either knee. And it's superbly suited for playing standing up, with a strap button installed on the bass-side shoulder, so the hand remains unhindered in the upper frets.

It is fitting that the SC-13E was released in the Style 13, atop the affordable Road Series. This is Martin's first 13-fret model. Guitars with 13 frets free from the body existed before and after Martin introduced the first 14-fret six-string guitars in 1930, the fabled Orchestra Models that transformed acoustic guitar design ever afterwards. However, this 13-fretter is anything but a throwback to the old days. It is all about playing thoroughly modern lead guitar.

Rameen Shayegan, International Instrument Design Manager, said that most every aspect of this project was informed by

the needs and feedback of a great many guitarists. "One of the first elements we focused on was the position of the neck joint. We split the difference between Martin's original 12-fret designs and the later 14-fret designs more prevalent today to make it extra-comfortable for as many guitar players as possible."

With the shoulder at the 13th fret, the far end of the fingerboard is closer to the guitar's body, so the 25.4" long-scale neck feels more like a short-scale neck, while retaining the potential energy in long-scale string tension. Having all the frets closer to the guitarist's body reduces repetitive stress upon their wrist, elbow, and shoulder, so they can convert more of their kinetic energy into free-flowing music for longer periods of time.

The roomy cutaway starts at the 17th fret and slants downward, so all 20 frets are within easy reach. The

distance between the highest frets remains unchanged, so the fingers do not

encounter the traffic jams found

on a short-scale guitar, a

persuasive selling point

for those who require a

cutaway. And by having

no heel, chord shapes

and note runs can be

achieved above the

12th position without

contorting the hand

or distorting the

strings and the tone

along with them.

The 13-fret neck is

a major factor in the

comfort quotient of what

is still a full-size instrument.

The total length is 40-1/2" (the

same as Size D,) while the body

length is 20-3/8" (a smidgen longer

than Size M.) At its widest, it measures

15-1/2" (closer to Size GP than OM.) The asymmetrical

silhouette shifts the bass side toward the neck and the treble

side toward the lower bout. This means less of the sound

chamber's cubic volume is eliminated by the cutaway, while

making the body seem shorter than it actually is.

Since it has the same comfortable 4-1/8" side depth as

the 14-fret 00 and 000 sizes, the SC-13E's ratio of top width

to body depth adheres to the best Martin traditions, even

on such a non-traditional Martin guitar. But then there is

that astonishing physical poise. Unlike typical acoustic

guitars, the overall weight is centered directly on the neck





joint. It hangs from a shoulder strap perfectly balanced between the headstock and the end block. As a result, the potential for full-fledged Elvis dancing and Van Halen fretboard tapping is through the roof.

A NEW NECK FOR THE NEW MARTIN

The select hardwood neck is attached to the body by the patented Sure Align® system, which is a noteworthy departure from previous Martin luthiery. The internal wooden neck block is meticulously sculpted from solid African sipo to accommodate the 4mm two-way adjustable truss rod and the components of Martin's new linear dovetail neck joint, currently exclusive to the SC-13E.

Authorized Martin service centers can set the action to the guitar owner's preferred height in no time at all, by exchanging a prefabricated adjustment plate in a narrow slot just beneath the fingerboard. Precise adjustments to the intonation are made via a small Allen wrench inserted into a set screw on the treble side of the truss rod.

Where the shoulders meet the neck, the conventional obstacle of a heel is replaced by a radical concave scoop, granting unfettered access to the entire fretboard. In other words, it's like having an electric guitar neck that actually works on an acoustic guitar—a holy grail for many musicians.

To make the most of these technological breakthroughs, the SC-13E comes with Custom Light gauge

strings that feature a .011" treble E string, allowing this new Martin acoustic guitar to respond and perform very much like an electric guitar indeed. The default setup provides a relaxed playing experience that is fun and rewarding, with full-step Jimi Hendrix bends and wagging Nita Strauss vibrato.

Light or Medium gauge strings can be used by those who prefer the action and dynamics of their traditional acoustic guitars, while still reaping the ergonomic advantages exclusive to the S size and its new neck. That remarkable neck must be experienced to fully grasp its virtues, both the futuristic ones and those rooted in Martin's venerable heritage. For all its groundbreaking specifications, this unconventional hybrid cutaway acoustic-electric guitar has an important feature found on the best vintage Martins from the pre-war era: the neck profile.

A NEW PROFILE FOR THE NEW NECK

The neck profile debuting on the SC-13E was inspired by the incredibly comfortable neck on the priceless 1930 OM-45 Deluxe in the Martin Museum. Essentially, that vintage V profile is skewed, so the apex drifts off-center, keeping it in the nook of the cupped hand as it advances up the frets. The profile on Martin's neck of the future has no V. It is carved more like the Low Profile used on the OM John Mayer model, yet it has its own distinctive skewing.

Tim Teel named it the Low Profile Velocity and described it as "an asymmetrical barrel that twists in a helical

manner to move ergonomically with your hand in all playing positions.” From the 1st fret, where the hand is angled outside of the wrist, to higher positions, where the hand is in-line with the wrist and turned parallel to the floor, the Low Profile Velocity remains an absolute joy to hold.

Guitarists encountering the SC-13E in a shop may not even notice the subtle way its neck adjusts to their playing. But that is the point; the neck shouldn't be noticed. And in this case, the neck is so kind to the fretting hand that the guitar practically plays itself.

The solid ebony fingerboard has the 1930s depth identical to those on the Authentic Series instruments, while also having the High Performance Taper of most contemporary Martins. So, it begins with a roomy 1-3/4" width at the nut and measures a slender 2-1/8" across the 12th fret, a scant 3/8" difference that enhances the sleek electric guitar feeling.

Speaking of solid ebony, the sloped belly bridge is another improvement. Both low and smooth, it is free from the usual interior edges that dig into the hand when it's resting on the bridge or palm-muting the strings.

A NEW VERSATILITY FOR NEW MUSIC

The versatility of this new guitar will overcome anyone's reservations about it seeming so different from other Martins. In fact, a famous bluegrass phenom was visiting the Martin factory before the SC-13E was released and absolutely loved playing it.

And playing is what it's all about—playing for long sessions without the fatigue that can set in with conventional guitars. That is why many people will end up owning this extraordinary Martin model. An even greater number will appreciate its worth as an electrified performance and recording instrument. It simply excels in that capacity.

On stage, the SC-13E will perform any acoustic guitar music straight out of the box. But it also handles anything an electric guitar can do. Run it through distortion, delay, or flange pedals and you just might be amazed at the righteous results. Lay off the gas pedal and settle into a nice groove, and it rings as pretty as any acoustic-electric guitar one could wish for.

The Fishman® MX-T pickup system includes an on-board tuner, discreetly hidden inside the soundhole, across from the volume and tone wheel. There is also a switch to cut the bass output in the mix, for those extra-large venues, or when a band doesn't want the guitar's bottom end encroaching on the bass and keyboards. When plugged in, the SC-13E can sound downright

huge, or lovely and delicate. And that makes for one terrific stage and studio guitar, for not a lot of money. And therein lies the brilliance of Martin introducing this new body size and neck in the Road Series. They are obtainable within modest budgets, while being a relative bargain for those with deeper treasure chests.

This elite Road Series model will appeal to younger players shopping in a price range below Martin's Standard Series. Owners of high-priced acoustic guitars will add an SC-13E to their collection because it is such a distinguished instrument had for such a reasonable price. And avid public performers will love this uncommonly versatile axe that they can bring into clubs and bars, or take on tour in place of their expensive heirloom instruments. And that is exactly what Martin's Road Series guitars were intended for all along.

Not your granddad's Martin, the SC-13E is an ultramodern acoustic-electric guitar of tremendous versatility and unmatched ergonomic ease. Its advanced shape and cutting-edge technology achieve an effortless playability that is ideal for lengthy practice and performance sessions, while creating a satisfying tonal balance that is good for countless musical styles. There is little wonder it has created so much buzz and that its popularity grows as guitarists learn firsthand how it lives up to its reputation.

