

BY RAY MATUZA

## MIRABELLA STYLE 01 ART DECO CUSTOM

Cris Mirabella has garnered himself a reputation for being the man when it comes to dead accurate repro pickguards and bridges for ailing D'Angelico, Gibsons, etc. Heck, the Boston Museum even commissioned him to fashion a 'guard for their '54 New Yorker featured in the museum's "Dangerous Curves - The Art of Guitar" exhibit.

So this, combined with similar tasks for Thomas Van Hoose, Music Express, custom inlay work for Ed Clark Guitars plus 18 years of repair experience, has led to the natural progression of Cris' delving into the art of full-fledged guitar construction.

With the periphery of the immaculately kept Mirabella workshop lined with beautifully restored violins, antique instruments and a host of vintage Martins and Gibsons in various states of repair, it comes as no surprise that Cris' first offering would be in the form of an acoustic guitar.

The Mirabella Style 01 Art Deco Custom pays homage to the 1892 vintage Martin Size 1 and brings it to the present with modern bracing construction and a few other variations to boot. Measuring in at 12 3/4" with a body depth of 4", the instrument features a close grained top borne of 65 year old German Spruce complimented by quarter sawn Indian Rosewood sides and back.

Ultra smooth Waverly vintage style engraved banjo tuners start the set of D'Addario Phosphor Bronze .012s along its old style Martin 25 3/8" scale length terminating at a beautifully hand carved Ebony "pyramid bridge" equipped with an ivory saddle.

As the "Art Deco Custom" tag implies, the Mirabella Style 01 is embellished with ornate appointments. Aged fingerboard binding with abalone side position markers as well as abalone body and sound hole trim surround the instrument. An absolutely gorgeous mother of pearl and green abalone "ribbon" headstock design is mirrored on the ebony fingerboard's 9<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup> fret position. While it doesn't do anything for the sound, it sure does look purdy!

Construction is immaculate and clean throughout with tight fitting neck and "diamond" headstock joints. Peeking inside reveals neat, clean kerfing with no glue schmutz anywhere. A mirror like nitrocellulose lacquer finishes off the instrument and although I detected minor seepage into the grain in a few spots, Cris informed me these were not corrected as this guitar will "make the rounds" and more than likely suffer a few dings and bangs.

The Style 01 Art Deco Custom sings with an open rich tone and amazingly loud voice. The scalloped X bracing pattern (similar to Santa Cruz and Collings) allows for a more free moving top while also helping to balance out the inherent high end of the small sized body. In addition, the shaved down neck and end block adds to the guitar's volume.

If you're a fan of vintage Martin chunky "V" shaped necks, this baby will be right up your alley. In combination with immaculately finished and dressed Dunlop frets spanning the 1 13/16" (at the nut) neck, this made for a pleasurable playing experience.

A slightly high action allowed for the instrument to be played hard with no string buzzes or fret rattles anywhere. Also under these moments of voluminous inspirations, the sound remained clear and uncompressed with the power of a bigger bodied instrument.

Conversely, finger style passages responded with a ringing clarity and balance up the fingerboard that I suspect will only get better as the guitar reaches maturity.

With the Style 01 Art Deco Custom striking a balance between visual and acoustic artistry, Cris Mirabella's heart as a true artist is further exemplified by the self penned poem affixed to the neck block inside the instrument: "Without you my voice is silent, unheard by all the world. With you it is strong and overflowing with emotion, I can speak to God."



Mirabella Style 01 "Art Deco Custom" (as tested with many options) \$6,500.00 with hard shell case

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