

Martin reintroduces himself to Steamboat music scene

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4 Points

In 1976, a young Bill Martin stared into a camera for a publicity photograph for the Bill



Martin Trio. The black and white image shows Martin standing on stairs with bandmates

Chris Koebnick and Rick Phillip wearing a broad smile and a hip, shiny black leather coat. His long mustache covers most of his smile and longish blond hair drapes over one side of his forehead.

It is a photograph of a twenty-something musician who arrived in the Yampa Valley in 1969 in a Volkswagen microbus with just \$50 in his pocket. By the time the shot was taken, Martin was playing gigs in Steamboat Springs, Telluride, Aspen, Snowmass and several other mountain locations to make a living.

On Tuesday, Martin, who just started playing for the public again, threw the photograph on a table in his office in Fairview, near Howelsen Hill. He said he spent most of his time performing alone, just him and a guitar on stage.

"There weren't a lot of people doing it then, so you could make a living," he said.

Some 10 years after the photo was taken, Martin retired as a musician and spent about 15 years on hiatus from music. At one point, he rarely picked up his instrument.

"It got stagnant and I got

bored. I wasn't having fun. And life, I don't care what you say, is about having fun," he said.

Also, the jazz and folk music that Martin played was not in demand, he said.

After putting his axe away, Martin became the person that most know in Steamboat today. He furthered his career as a cabinetmaker and kitchen designer and got into politics, serving on the Steamboat Springs City Council from 1991 to 1995, and as council president from 1993 to 1995.

"Many of my friends don't even know this (guitarist) side of me," he said.

Martin is now reintroducing himself in Steamboat as a guitar player, booking regular gigs at the Creekside Café. He said he feels good and that his playing is better than it ever has been.

"When I was playing guitar back then, I was just trying to be rich and famous," Martin said, pointing down at the old photo. "When I'm doing it now, I'm doing it for the right reasons. I'm just having fun."

Martin came back from his hiatus after sending his Martin D-35 guitar back to the factory to be refinished, along with a Martin 12 string.

When he got the instruments back, he couldn't set them down. Less than a year ago he traded the 12 string and an electric guitar for a brand new Martin D-42

"Sometimes you need inspiration and a new guitar will inspire you," he said.

Newly inspired, Martin figured maybe people wanted to



Bill Martin Trio

Courtesy photo

hear his style of music again.

"One of the reasons I came out of retirement is that I play folk music. My friends were saying that some of the young people are getting back into folk music," he said.

Variety is what Martin is aiming for with his new set of music. He wants to play a blend of styles and rhythms to keep his audience interested.

Martin picked up his D-42 on Tuesday and plucked a few songs, showing his different styles. First was a folk version of the Beatles song "Norwegian Wood," using a three-finger picking style that produced the rhythm, bass, and melody of the song. After that, Martin did the

jazz piece "Night and Day" in similar fashion to follow. He topped off the short session with hearty Canadian folksong with a fast rhythm, called "Ella Speed."

"That's one thing you need to do, not only as an entertainer, but as a band...you have to mix it up," he said

Martin has a new publicity photo, to replace the ones he used in the past. He's wearing a conservative tweed jacket, instead of the fancy leather, and the long hair is gone. But through his barely graying mustache, that same broad smile remains.

Starting next week, Martin plays every other weekend at the Creekside Café.