

LONG BIOGRAPHY

THE GREAT GUITARS

Martin Taylor, Frank Vignola, Vinnie Raniolo and Peppino D'Agostino

"One night, four great guitarists, twenty-four strings"

Bringing together four of the leading acoustic guitarists of their generation, **The Great Guitars™**, featuring Martin Taylor, Frank Vignola, Vinnie Raniolo and Peppino D'Agostino, continues the guitar supergroup tradition. Martin Taylor, who replaced Herb Ellis in the original Great Guitars in the 1980's, and toured as part of the group alongside the legendary Barney Kessel and Charlie Byrd, is now carrying the guitar trio tradition forward into the 21st Century with the addition of jazz guitarist Frank Vignola, fast-rising player Vinnie Raniolo and Italian acoustic guitarist Peppino D'Agostino.

Combining Martin Taylor's award-winning virtuosic finger style with Vignola's jaw-dropping technique, Raniolo's energetic playing and D'Agostino's classical-inspired artistry, the evening features solo, duet, trio and quartet performances by four acknowledged masters of the acoustic guitar. Together they have worked with artists ranging from Tommy Emmanuel and David Grisman to Donald Fagen and Wynton Marsalis and will present an evening of virtuosity, emotion, humor and musical fireworks.

Pat Metheny calls Martin Taylor "one of the most awesome solo guitar players in the history of the instrument" while Jeff Beck says "he out-shreds all of us....I've never seen anything like it". Top 10 albums in both the USA and Europe, a record 15 British Jazz Awards and an MBE from the Queen of Great Britain have seen Taylor recognized as the world's foremost exponent of solo fingerstyle jazz guitar playing.

Frank Vignola is one of the most accomplished, multi-dimensional players walking the planet today. Les Paul added him to his 'Five Most Admired Guitar List' for the Wall Street Journal while the New York Times deemed Vignola as 'one of the brightest guitar stars'.

Even though his career in music is only at the beginning, Vinny Raniolo has already had many opportunities that take most players a lifetime to achieve having toured 14 countries and played with some of the world's leading musicians.

Peppino D'Agostino is a Renaissance man and his inspired and poetic guitar style saw him voted as 'Best Acoustic Guitarist' by readers of Guitar Player Magazine. D'Agostino's playing is like a wonderful journey, taking its inspiration from the music of Brazil, America, Ireland and his native Italy.

www.thegreatguitars.com

100 WORD BIOGRAPHY

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KEY QUOTES

"Martin Taylor is one of the most awesome solo guitar players in the history of the instrument. He's unbelievable" – **Pat Metheny**

"[Martin Taylor] out-shred's all of us put together....I've never seen anything like it" – **Jeff Beck**

"The man is no less than a guitar genius" – **Martin Bashir (MSNBC Anchor)**

"No matter how complex or daring, Taylor's interpretations never short change the melodies; indeed, his remarkable fluid touch imbues a seamless beauty. Martin Taylor is something to behold." – **The Washington Post**

"Martin Taylor is one of the greatest and most impressive guitar players in the world." – **Chet Atkins**

"How versatile is Frank Vignola? He's collaborated with Lionel Hampton and Madonna, covers Mozart and McCartney on the same record and is one of Les Paul's favorite guitarists." – **The Boston Globe**

"Frank Vignola...is one of the brightest of the young guitar stars" - **New York Times**

"Peppino's technical prowess, lyrical artistry on the steel string and unique stylings seem almost impossible to come from one guitar." – **Guitar One**

"A giant of the acoustic guitar" – **San Diego Reader**

"A phenom in the same league as John Fahey, Leo Kottke, Doc Watson and John Renbourn" – **Jazziz**

"A poet....among the best talents around" – **San Francisco Chronicle**

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

[Date]

For Immediate Release

THE GREAT GUITARS COMES TO [INSERT CITY]

[Date][City] Four of the world's leading acoustic guitarists will bring their guitar mastery to [Venue Name] on [Event Date]. The Great Guitars™, featuring Martin Taylor, Frank Vignola, Vinny Ranilo and Peppino D'Agostino continues the guitar supergroup tradition with a special evening of musical fireworks that is a must for any guitar or music fan.

The Great Guitars™ traces its heritage back to the 1970's when the legendary jazz guitarists of that era toured the world and recorded together. Now award-winning guitarist Martin Taylor, who was part of the original group, has reformed the format for the 21st Century, enlisting three of the leading acoustic players of today. The concert features solo, duet, trio and quartet performances by four acknowledged masters of fingerstyle, acoustic and jazz guitar.

Pat Metheny calls Martin Taylor "one of the most awesome solo guitar players in the history of the instrument" while Jeff Beck say Taylor "out-shreds all of us.....I've never seen anything like it". Taylor, who received an M.B.E. from the Queen of Great Britain, is today recognized as the foremost exponent of fingerstyle jazz guitar and his online guitar school has students in 58 countries.

Frank Vignola is one of the most accomplished, multi-dimensional players walking the planet today. Les Paul added him to his 'Five Most Admired Guitar List' for the Wall Street Journal while the New York Times deemed Vignola as 'one of the brightest guitar stars'.

Even though his career in music is only at the beginning, Vinny Raniolo has already had many opportunities that take most players a lifetime to achieve having toured 14 countries and played with some of the world's leading musicians.

Peppino D'Agostino is a Renaissance man and his inspired and poetic guitar style saw him voted as 'Best Acoustic Guitarist' by readers of Guitar Player Magazine. D'Agostino's playing is like a wonderful journey, taking its inspiration from the music of Brazil, America, Ireland and his native Italy.

The Great Guitars performance at in [City] at [Venue] starts at [Time] and tickets can be ordered by calling [Box Office Number] or going to [Box Office Website]

www.thegreatguitars.com

INDIVIDUAL ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Martin Taylor

Martin Taylor is a multi-award winning guitarist and Acoustic Guitar magazine calls him 'THE Acoustic Guitarist of his Generation'. He dazzles audiences with his solo shows, which combine virtuosity, emotion, humor, and a strong stage presence while his inimitable style has seen him recognized as the world's foremost exponent of solo jazz and fingerstyle guitar playing.

Taylor has invented and developed a way of playing the guitar that is admired, and often imitated, by guitarists all over the world. As well as his solo concerts and recordings, he has also collaborated with musicians from many different musical genre including Jeff Beck, Tommy Emmanuel, Bill Wyman, Chet Atkins, Stephane Grappelli, David Grisman, George Harrison, Jamie Cullum, Bryn Terfel, Dianne Schuur and Gary Burton.

He has been awarded two honorary doctorates, a BBC lifetime achievement award, Top 10 albums in both the USA and Europe, a record 14 British Jazz Awards and in 2002 he was appointed MBE 'For Services to Jazz Music' by Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain. As one of the world's most recognized online guitar teachers his innovative online guitar school with its headquarters in Napa, CA has been featured on NPR, BBC, Fox News and the LA Times and is subscribed to by guitarists in over 58 countries.

From 1979 to 1990 he toured the world and recorded over 20 albums with the French jazz violin legend STEPHANE GRAPPELLI. Their album with Vassar Clements "Together At Last" won a Grammy Nomination in 1987. Monsieur Grappelli described him as "A great artist, rich in talent and elegance".

His ground breaking solo album ARTISTRY, produced by Steve Howe, was released in 1992 to much critical acclaim. It was No 1 in the HMV Jazz Charts for a record 12 weeks and launched his career as an international solo artist.

After two very successful albums for Sony/Columbia, KISS AND TELL and NITELIFE, he went on to record several albums for The Guitar Label.

In 1999 he was made an Honorary Doctor of the University of The West of Scotland and in 2002, was appointed MBE "For Services To Jazz Music", in The Queen's Birthday Honours List, which he received personally from Her Majesty The Queen at an investiture at Buckingham Palace.

In 2007 he received the prestigious BBC Radio 2 "Heart of Jazz" Award in recognition of his career in music, was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the North Wales Jazz Guitar Festival for his "Contribution to Jazz Guitar Worldwide".

He has also received a record 14 British Jazz Awards as a guitarist, and as a composer he was nominated for "Best Contemporary Song" in the BBC Folk Awards in 2009.4 The prestigious Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama made him an Honorary Doctor of Music in 2010.

His film credits include the French comedy "Milou En Mai" directed by Louis Malle, and more recently his composition "Green Lady" is featured in the Andrew Piddington movie "The Killing of John Lennon". His many TV credits include the theme music for "After You've Gone" featuring Nicholas Lindhurst and Celia Imrie, and the cult "Nicole-Papa" TV commercials for the Renault Clio.

Outside of his work as a musician he is also involved in several charities including the Child Bereavement Charity, is Patron of the My Wish Foundation of Sri Lanka, and is a Trustee and Vice President of Scotland's Buddhist Vihara.

His autobiography "Martin Taylor- Autobiography of a Travelling Musician" was released in 2005.

April 2010 saw the launch of the uniquely innovative Martin Taylor Guitar Academy online. Late 2010 saw the world premiere of an exciting new work for guitar, orchestra and big band with the creation of Martin Taylor's 'Spirit of Django Suite'. Based on themes by Martin Taylor and arranged by Guy Barker this large orchestral piece features Martin Taylor, Spirit of Django, the Guy Barker Big Band, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

At the end of 2010 Martin performed at a special private dinner at Windsor Castle for Prince William on the eve of his engagement to Kate Middleton. With the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics in 2011, the BBC have made a performance of the suite by Martin Taylor and the Britten Symphonia part of their 2011 Proms concerts at London's Royal Albert Hall.

When not touring he divides his time between Scotland and California, where the Martin Taylor Guitar Academy is based.

Frank Vignola

Frank Vignola is one of the most extraordinary guitarists performing before the public today. His stunning virtuosity has made him the guitarist of choice for many of the world's top musicians, including Ringo Starr, Madonna, Donald Fagen, Wynton Marsalis, Tommy Emmanuel, the Boston Pops, the New York Pops, and guitar legend Les Paul, who named Vignola to his "Five Most Admired Guitar List" for the Wall Street Journal. Vignola's jaw-dropping technique explains why the New York Times deemed him "one of the brightest...stars of the guitar".

Born on suburban Long Island on December 30, 1965, Vignola was raised in the New York area. The Italian-American started playing the guitar at the age of six and grew up admiring a variety of guitarists. Far from a jazz snob, Vignola never listened to jazz exclusively and was also a major fan of classical, rock, R&B, and pop. The guitarists that he admires range from Django and Les Paul to rock icons like Frank Zappa and Eddie Van Halen. As a young adult, Vignola studied at the Cultural Arts Center of Long Island and went on to enjoy an enormous amount of sideman gigs in the 1980s including recording and touring with the likes of Madonna, Leon Redbone, Ringo Starr as well as coming into his own as a leader in 1988 with his famed Hot Club of France tribute which was hailed in the NY Times as one of the top ten acts in New York City in 1988 and forged the way for the many Django Hot Club groups that followed. The New Yorker was 27 when, in 1993, he signed with Concord Jazz and recorded his first Concord session as a leader, Appel Direct. Many more Concord releases followed in the 1990s as well as 3 releases for the Telarc label as co-leader of the group Travelin' Light. The early 2000's found Vignola recording a solo guitar CD for Acoustic Disc as well as performing regularly with guitarist, Les Paul. This also marked the time that Frank began working with record producer Joel Dorn as well as making featured appearances on Atlantic, Sony and Warner Brothers Records with the likes of Donald Fagen, Queen Latifah, Mark O Connor and Wynton Marsalis. He also recorded a collection of Gershwin pieces for Mel Bay Records titled, "Vignola Plays Gershwin" which was number 2 in NPR radio airplay charts. In recent years, Vignola has recorded two important collaborative CD's, "Just Between Frets" with Tommy Emmanuel on Solid Air Records and "Frank-N-Dawg, Melody Monsters" with mandolinist David Grisman on Acoustic Disc Records.

Frank has written 18 guitar instruction books for Mel Bay Publications and has recorded 6 Educational DVD's for Truefire.com. He has performed hundreds of clinics and masterclasses at major universities and colleges throughout the world including Julliard and Boston University. Currently, Vignola is touring world wide.

Vinny Raniolo

Even though his career in music is only at the beginning, Vinny has already had many opportunities that take most players a lifetime to achieve. Vinny has already toured 14 countries with more to come. Now playing guitar along side many of the finest musicians in the world, he is very excited to see where his musical career will take him.

Currently, Vinny is touring as a duo with one of the world's finest guitarists, Frank Vignola. He also plays with many notable musicians such as, Tommy Emmanuel, Bucky Pizzarelli and David Grisman to name a few. This year a show will be aired internationally on the PBS network titled "Four Generations Of Guitar" which Vinny is honored to be a part of as the younger generation.

Peppino D'Agostino

Peppino D'Agostino doesn't just play the guitar. He composes, arranges, collaborates, improvises and has even been known to sing a song here and there in both English and Italian. But what he does create on the guitar makes the difference between simply playing and truly making music apparent in the most wonderful ways.

D'Agostino has been hailed as "a guitarist's guitarist" by Acoustic Guitar magazine as well as "a giant of the acoustic guitar" (San Diego Reader), and holds many top guitar awards, but the San Francisco Chronicle encapsulated the essential difference that distinguishes D'Agostino's music when it dubbed him "a poet."

That poetic eloquence, grace and magic suffuses *Nine White Kites*, his first album of new compositions for the guitar in a decade (during which time he's done much else wonderful with his musical talents). The set of 11 songs and two bonus tracks launches with the soaring fingerpicking of the title track, leading the listener through a tour de force showcase of D'Agostino's mastery and artistry.

Numbers like "Barefoot in Rio" (on which D'Agostino makes a rare appearance on nylon string guitar), "Cowboy Minestrone" (an homage to master country picker Jerry Reed) and "Reggae Ragu" travel through spots on the musical globe where he finds stylistic inspiration to blend with his own international roots, while "San Francisco 1982" revisits the allure of the city he first visited on vacation that year and soon after returned to and made his home. "Street Pulse" bristles with a kinetic urban energy, "Imminent Dawn" evokes the mystical junction of night becoming day, "Jump Rope" is a stunning showcase of guitar athleticism and dexterousness, and the sparse and subdued "Silence In Between" captures the music in the space among the notes. "Clare's Gifts" and "Sweet Sylvia" are D'Agostino's musical Mona Lisas that paint women on guitar. D'Agostino wraps it up with two Italiano melodic deserts on the bonus tracks: "Nella Fantasia," an Ennio Morricone melody (originally "Gabriel's Oboe" in the film *The Mission*) with lyrics by Chiara Ferrau, beautifully sung by Peppino's daughter Aleza, and the spry folk classicism of "La Gazza Ladra."

After a listen to *Nine White Kites*, It's no wonder that Acoustic Guitar says that D'Agostino is "one of the most capable composers among fingerstyle guitarists" while the San Jose Mercury News notes his "gift for writing emotionally evocative tunes." The title reflects the fact that "music is weightless," D'Agostino observes. "But if you think about it, it can create very deep and heavy feelings. The kite is very light, like music, but it also can evoke feelings. Plus it symbolizes a sense of freedom, and kites are universal, found all around the world."

A native of Italy, D'Agostino has made his considerable international mark as a musical artist on the guitar since he arrived in America a little over 25 years ago. The readers of *Guitar Player* voted him Best Acoustic Guitarist in 2007, and the following year in Acoustic Guitar's People's Choice Awards he won a Bronze medal for Best Acoustic Album of All Time for his 2002 release *Every Step of The*

Way (tying with Leo Kottke, one of his prime inspirations) and another Bronze award as Fingerstyle Guitarist of the Year. But as said above, it's not just his talent that makes D'Agostino so notable, but also what he does with it.

The Chicago Tribune praises his "virtuosity and complexity" as well as his gift for composing "memorable melodies." He is also an "astonishing entertainer" (Anchorage Daily News). Yet it's what Guitar One has noted as his "lyrical artistry" and fellow master player Adrian Legg describes as the "warm humanity" of his playing that has earned him the stature of being a "phenom," as Jazziz raves.

How has D'Agostino earned such high praise and honors? "Music is not only what you know musically, but also what you experience in life, because it is a reflection of our personalities and spirit," he explains. In his playing and writing one feels his heart, spirit, soul and essence as well as your own.

He began playing guitar at the age of 10 when he heard his cousin play in church. After D'Agostino got a few lessons from the cousin, he embarked on a journey of self-study and further exploration on the guitar and in music that continues today. So in addition to his "technical prowess" (Guitar One), he displays a stunning stylistic range in his work that spans classical to pop music and incorporates a spectrum of folk, ethnic and world styles. From his teens into his twenties, D'Agostino learned about and absorbed many musical colors and flavors, being so enthralled with all to know about music and his chosen instrument that he went AWOL one night from the Italian Army to catch a concert by some acoustic guitarists he admired.

After making his recorded mark in his homeland with his first album *Bluerba* in 1981 and *Silk and Steel* two years later — both discs collaborations with fellow players that set the stage for many to follow — he moved to America in 1985. Starting out by performing in the streets and on Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, he graduated to playing in restaurants and then clubs and concerts after a fellow musician introduced D'Agostino to a booking agent. He made his American recording debut in 1987 with *Acoustic Spirit* on Shanachie Records, and has since issued six more albums prior to *Nine White Kites*, the most recent being *Made in Italy*, a musical travelogue through the songs and composers of the country where he was born and came of age.

He has released the collaborations *Classic/Steel* (2001) with contemporary classical guitar master David Tanenbaum and *Bayshore Road* (2005) with his close friend and virtuoso electric player Stef Burns. D'Agostino also performs and has recorded with the United Guitar Ensemble, which features his steel string guitar alongside eight nylon string classical masters.

He has also released three instructional/performance DVDs as well as the book *New Acoustic Guitar* (Warner Bros. Publications), and also designed his signature Seagull guitar with innovative guitar maker Robert Godin that won a Silver People's Choice Award for Acoustic Guitar of the Year from *Acoustic Guitar* magazine in 2008. A hot ticket live performer in North and South America and Europe, he charms audiences with performances that are captivating and full-blooded musical experiences.

"I play Brazilian music, Irish music, country music, blues, ragtime, classical," he says of just some of the many styles heard within what he creates. Inspired by such diverse players as Paco de Lucia, Leo Kottke and Carlos Santana, among many others, his influences also include the progressive rockers like Genesis, Emerson Lake & Palmer, Gentle Giant and Mike Oldfield he listened to in his teens and early adulthood.

"I'm grateful to my curiosity," D'Agostino explains. "A lot of people stay within a frame and say they play blues and they play blues all their life. And that's fine. I'm not judging anyone. But the way my brain works I need to explore different styles and what's available there and what's possible and what others do."

“Peppino writes wonderful guitar pieces,” says Kottke of his onetime acolyte. “He’s one of my favorite composers for this cranky instrument. Plus, he’s a tone player. I love his sound... [he] gets the resin and the wood.”

D’Agostino likens his musical approach to the culinary artistry of his native Italy. “If you only know about tomatoes, garlic and basil, you will only make a certain kind of sauce. But if you know about maybe thyme, parsley, onions and olives, you make a different kind of recipe. But you have to know how to mix those elements with discretion and elegance.” The results provide a delectable and nutritious listening experience for music lovers of all tastes that brings D’Agostino satisfaction that radiates throughout his self-dubbed “Minestrone music”. For as he says, “Our job as musicians is to try to do what we love.