

Guitar

Presented by the Boston Bluegrass Association



- **Belongs to the String Family**
- **Made of wood with wound metal strings**
- **A rhythm and lead instrument in Bluegrass**
- **The Martin D-28 is the defining bluegrass guitar**



Guitar played by David Hynd with Gigi Hynd playing bass fiddle.

If American folk music has a common instrument it is certainly the guitar. As early as the 1600's, Spanish settlers had brought to the New World a European style guitar with five sets of double strings. By 1800, the six string instrument known today had evolved in southern Europe and was brought over from places like Italy and France. Most of these guitars were smaller than modern models and were strung with gut strings and plucked with the fingers. Guitars were seldom known in the Appalachian mountains or with the white working class of the South. A number of blacks in pre-Civil War times were guitar players and almost all of them were from the Mississippi River delta. Their thumb-picking style would later be the basis for classic delta blues. Throughout the 1920's, American musicians set about inventing new ways to tune and play the guitar.

The first generation of country or "hillbilly" musicians tended to play a style one of them described as a "threshing machine," with loud, percussive strokes designed to provide little but rhythm. But soon key players showed the guitar was capable of adding melody lines as well as rhythm. And in 1927, at the famous Bristol sessions in southwest Virginia, Maybelle Carter (of the Original Carter Family) introduced what would become known as "the Carter Scratch," playing a melody on the bass strings and brushing the higher strings for rhythm. It would become the quintessential "lick" for country music.



Thelma Richardson at a family jam in Virginia