

# Basic Detail Report

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## Guitar

### Date

1969

### Primary Maker

C. F. Martin & Co.

### Description

Merle Travis, born in Rosewood, Kentucky, in 1917, achieved great fame in California in the 1950s and '60s as a performer and songwriter. Drawing on his youth in a coal mining region, *Dark as a Dungeon*, *Sixteen Tons*, and *The Nine Pound Hammer* became classic country hits. This Martin D-28, once owned by Merle Travis, was customized with the country artist's name in mother-of-pearl on the fretboard, "So everybody could read and learn my name by the time the show was over." After Travis' death, the instrument was sold to Marty Stuart, country artist and former son-in-law of Travis' friend, Johnny Cash. Cash bargained with Stuart for the instrument, which he wanted for his museum, The House of Cash in Hendersonville, Tennessee (now closed), and Stuart traded him the guitar for one owned by Hank Williams. Later, Cash gave the instrument to Travis' son, Thom Bresh,

after the two musicians collaborated on the last two Johnny Cash albums. Along with the guitar, Cash gave Bresh the following advice: "Play this guitar, son. There could be a day when you may want to sell it. If you play it, when that day comes you'll be able to say this guitar was owned and played by three great musicians and a poet." Stringing: six steel strings Soundboard: two-piece spruce, very wide grain Back: two-piece book-matched East Indian rosewood; back stripe comprised of alternating sections of light-dark-light and dark-light-dark purfling strips, every fourth strip a light-dark-light strip three times longer than the others, surrounded on each side with one strip of light hardwood purfling Ribs: two-piece East Indian rosewood divided by white celluloid end graft strip (slightly wider toward top than bottom) surrounded by thin white and black celluloid purfling on each side (2 strips each); rosewood plugs filling one hole on each side at center bouts Head: mahogany veneered with rosewood on front face Neck: mahogany; white plastic strap button affixed to treble side of neck heel with philip's head screw; hole on heel cap for strap button, now missing Heel cap: white celluloid Binding: white celluloid; top trim comprised of black-white-black-white-black celluloid purfling strips; back trim comprised of two purfling strips of black and white celluloid Fingerboard: ebony; 20 nickel-silver frets; "TRAVIS" inlaid in mother-of-pearl between 4th and

10th frets; mother-of-pearl stars inlaid behind 4th and 12th frets, on each side of "TRAVIS" inlay; single mother-of-pearl dots behind 15th and 17th frets (holes filed behind 5th and 9th frets); two abalone dots behind 12th fret (holes filled behind 7th fret); white celluloid side dots behind 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 12th, 15th, and 17th frets Nut: ivory Bridge: ebony with curved lower edge; mother-of-pearl stars inlaid on each side; angled, white celluloid saddle; white celluloid bridge pins with abalone eyes (eye of high E-string imitation abalone plastic) Pegs: six chrome-plated steel worm-gear machine tuners by Grover with convex head surfaces and enclosed worm gear mechanisms Endpin: white celluloid with black celluloid eye Rosette: wide band of white and black striped celluloid (9 strips), surrounded on each side with narrower bands of the same material (5 strips each), with natural wood in between Pick guard: imitation tortoise-shell celluloid Varnish: clear with fine craquelure Linings: kerfed mahogany Neck block: mahogany; chamfered corners End block: mahogany; chamfered corners; mahogany graft at center, perpendicular to top and back Top braces: spruce X-brace, the joint of main cross brace reinforced with white canvas; rosewood bridge plate Back braces: spruce back graft; four spruce back braces, the two braces in the lower bouts with rounded edges, and wider and lower in height than the two braces in the upper bouts

### **Dimensions**

Total guitar length: 1029 mm (40-3/4") Back length: 508 mm (20-3/32") Upper bout width: 296 mm (11-1/2") Waist width: 278 mm (10-27/32") Lower bout width: 400 mm (15-3/4") Rib height (including edging) at heel: 100 mm (3-30/32") Rib height, at waist: 112 mm (4-13/32") Rib height, at end block: 124 mm (4-15/16") Head length: 160 mm (6-5/16") Head width, top: 72 mm (2-27/32") Head width, bottom: 60 mm (2-5/16") Neck length (nut to ribs): 358 mm (14-1/8") Neck width, nut: 42 mm (1-5/8") Neck width, heel: 55 mm (2-1/8") Soundhole diameter: 103 mm (4") Vibrating string length (nut to bridge edge): high E: 646 mm (25-5/16"); low E: 651 mm (25-11/32")