



## Kurt Cobain's world-famous guitar donated to the Royal College of Music, London

**The most expensive guitar ever sold at auction, Kurt Cobain's 1959 Martin D-18E, played during Nirvana's historic MTV Unplugged performance, has been donated to the Royal College of Music in London.**

The guitar has been donated by Peter Freedman AM, owner and founder of the Australian audio company RØDE Microphones and the Freedman Group, in memory of his father, Henry Freedman (1926-1987). Peter Freedman purchased the instrument for over \$6 million dollars in 2020, setting the world record for the highest price ever paid for a guitar. He is also the founding supporter of the Royal College of Music's Australia Commonwealth Scholarship Fund.

This remarkable donation brings one of the most significant artefacts in rock music history into the Royal College of Music, the world's No. 1 ranked institution for performing arts and music in the QS World University Rankings.

The Royal College of Music Museum includes the oldest surviving guitar in existence in its collection - a 1581 instrument made in Lisbon by Belchior Dias.

Plans are now in development for the Cobain guitar to appear in an international touring exhibition from 2026, following the success of the RCM Museum's recent landmark show, Kurt Cobain: Unplugged, which attracted more than 15,000 visitors from across the UK, Europe and North America.

Peter Freedman AM comments: 'I am delighted to gift this iconic guitar to the Royal College of Music so that they might realise the guitar's value and profile for the benefit of young musicians at the RCM and reach people around the world. This gift is dedicated to my father Henry who loved music and London, and it's an honour for me to support the next generation of musicians.'

James Williams, Director of the Royal College of Music, comments: 'The Royal College of Music is deeply grateful to Peter Freedman for his incredible generosity in gifting the College Kurt Cobain's Martin D-18E guitar. This asset opens future opportunities to share the Kurt Cobain Unplugged exhibition with an international audience; it is also emblematic of Peter's unstinting support for the performing arts and his steadfast belief in the power of education to transform lives.'

**ENDS**

**For further information, press images, or interview requests, please contact:**

Pandora George at Bullet PR

[pandora@bulletpr.co.uk](mailto:pandora@bulletpr.co.uk)

Mobile: 07729 469220

Press images can be found [here](#).

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### About the Royal College of Music

Founded in 1882, the Royal College of Music (RCM) is a world-leading music conservatoire where 900 undergraduate and postgraduate students are taught in a creative environment informed by heritage and driven by innovation. In 2025 the Royal College of Music was ranked the Global No. 1 institution for Performing Arts and Music for the fourth year running in the QS World University Rankings by Subject.

RCM graduates forge extraordinary careers across the global music landscape. Many also thrive in diverse roles across the wider creative sector and beyond, showcasing the versatility and impact of an RCM education.

The Royal College of Music has trained some of the most important figures in music including composers and performers such as Sir Thomas Allen, Benjamin Britten, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Dame Sarah Connolly, Sir Colin Davis, Gustav Holst, Lord Lloyd Webber, Sir Neville Marriner, Anna Meredith MBE, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

As a leading centre for innovation and research, students benefit from the Royal College of Music Library with manuscripts by Mozart, Elgar and Holst and the Royal College of Music Museum with over 14,000 musical items, and on-site collections. Our flourishing Junior College and community programme enables hundreds of talented young students from diverse backgrounds to access high-quality music education.

### About the guitar

Cobain's Martin D-18E is a rare and early electro-acoustic model, and his instrument was distinctively modified for his left-handed playing style. It became an integral part of Nirvana's sound and was, according to Courtney Love, speaking to Billboard, the last guitar Cobain ever played.

After Cobain died in 1994, the guitar passed to his daughter Frances Bean Cobain, who stored it with his personal archive in a Seattle vault. In 2018, it transferred to Isaiah Silva following a divorce settlement, before being sold at Julien's Auctions in June 2020. The sale achieved \$6,010,000 dollars, setting a world record that still stands today.