

The Journey Begins

by Paul Reed Smith

The road from my workshop in a historic, haunted Annapolis garret to a state-of-the-art factory was a tough one. Fact is, I always loved working with my hands. Why else would a high school kid sign up for three or four shop classes at a time? My first guitar was built as a challenge to my college music professor for some credits. I got an A and decided to pursue my dream of making guitars for a living. There were a lot of late night brainstorming sessions. I was lucky if I finished a guitar a month. Once a guitar was completed, I'd play it at a gig field testing in the purest sense. Every design change taught me something new. The next change was built on what I had learned or on feedback from other players test driving the equipment. Over ten years we went through three headstocks, several renditions of body shapes, many tremolo designs, and many experiments with woods and construction methods to get the right mix. I remember hanging out at the local concert arenas for six or seven hours before a show to make friends with the roadies. With a backstage pass in hand, I'd peddle my guitars to the stars. One night in ten I'd make a sale. Carlos Santana, Al Di Meola, Howard Leese, and other well known players agreed to check one out. I made deals. If someone gave me an order, made a deposit, and then didn't love the finished guitar, I'd give them their deposit back even if I couldn't make my rent the next day.

After getting a small following and orders for more than 50 guitars, we built two prototypes. I popped them in the back seat of my truck and cranked it up, calling on guitar dealers up and down the East Coast. After many days and many miles I came back with enough orders to start a company. With the support of my wife, skilled assistants, engineers, lawyers, top salesmen, artists, machinists, and friends who emptied their bank accounts to help me get started, we developed a strong team. We've come a long way, with steady growth in factory capacity, employees, distribution, and the number of prominent artists using our instruments. We're not stopping here. Every inch of your PRS guitar is based on decades of testing, rethinking, and reinventing. We continue to push the curve beyond what others would consider perfection. With experts to make sure the technology is unsurpassed, and dedicated craftspeople who guarantee a finished product you can't keep your hands off of, we make no compromises. That's the story of the beginning of the journey. Not so short, but very sweet. The moral? Believe in your dreams.