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MARTINEZ, Alexis

CUBAN MUSICIAN FIND SUCCESS IN MISSISSAUGA

WALTERS MUSIC CENTRE INSTRUCTOR CAME HERE FROM CUBA

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Alexis Martinez won't think twice about taking chances.

That mentality is what brought him from Cuba to Canada where he's built a great life as a musician and a music instructor in Mississauga.

While he was a successful musician in Cuba and seemed to have several options when it came to landing a contract to perform internationally, there was something special that convinced Martinez to come to Canada on a whim 14 years ago.

"It's a Cinderella story I

would say," said Martinez, now the lead vocal instructor at Walters Music Centre.

"I was performing in a big show at a big hotel, and at that time, I wasn't really focused on leaving the country. I was focused on my career. I got lots of offers from Europe, but then I met my wife ... She happened to be staying at the same hotel and the rest is history, we fell in love."

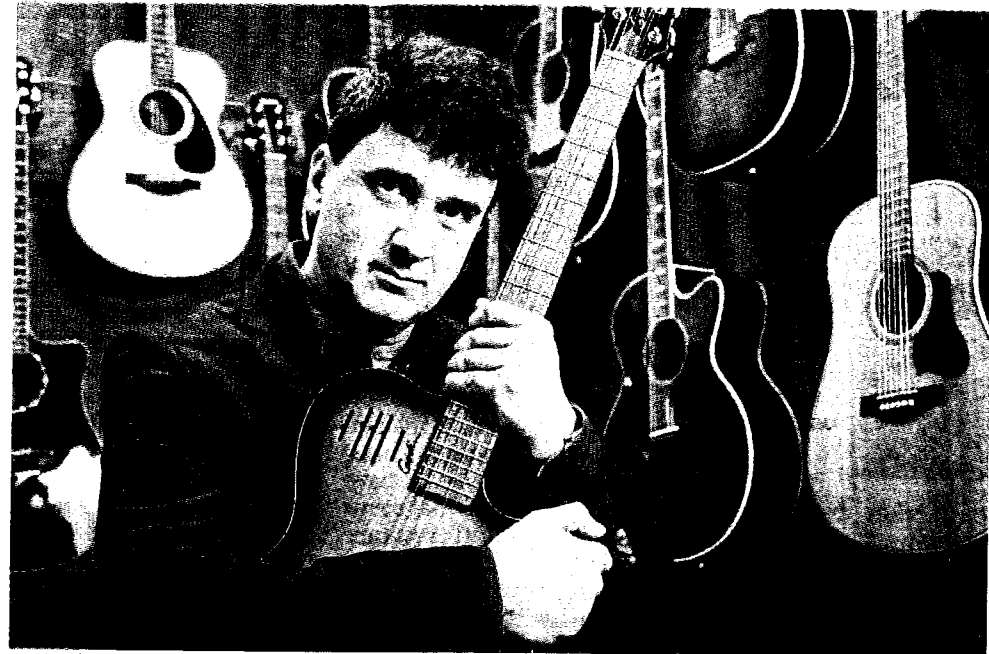
Growing up through the 1980s, Martinez, who plays guitar as well, was heavily influenced by heavy metal and bands like Metallica, Guns N' Roses and Mötley Crüe. His music career started off with rock, but

then he embraced other genres such as pop and opera.

The 47-year-old performs during weekends, mostly out of Cuba's Restaurant in Oakville, and tries to please fans of many genres.

"You may have a crowd that has different music tastes, but I try to connect all of them," he said. "That's what my shows are about."

Along with his musical endeavours, he is also a Wing Chun master. It's a martial art that he feels "breaks down all the rules of the classic dojo, the salutations and everything and goes straight to the point."



Riziero Vertolli/Metroland

Alexis Martinez, from Cuba originally is now a successful musician, teacher, producer and Wing Chun master.

When he first came to Canada, Martinez said he had trouble picking up a new language. He had trouble getting job interviews because of it, but in his first

year here, Walters Music School heard him sing and decided to take a chance on him.

"I like challenges, I'm always open to them," he

said.

"I started from being zero (in Canada), to being the head vocal instructor. Now, I'm the one interviewing people."