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MEMPHIS
CURRENT





BARTENDER

Eric Martin

BAR HUSTLE at the ARRIVE HOTEL

Photographed by Houston Cofield

Eric Martin is a life-long Memphian, musician and bartender. He is a founding member of Memphis psych-rock band Spaceface, where he serves as one of the group's vocalists and guitarist, and is also one of the city's most reputable bartenders. Currently, Martin works at both Bar Hustle in the Arrive Hotel, and at Ryan Trimm's 117 Prime. Outside of work he shares a home with his long-time partner, and often co-worker, Evangeline Teague and their lovely dog Roosevelt.

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When I was in college I did a couple of semesters for hospitality and resort management. I guess there's always been something that's drawn me to hospitality and what drew me to bartending. I would say that I've always been a natural host. I've always liked to have friends over, make drinks and have good times.

But as you know, when you're in college, and you start to become political for the first time — you become a bleeding heart. Which is something that happened to me and I got a liberal arts education and majored in sociology, which landed me a job at the Malco Ridgeway four.

After I graduated in 2012 I actually applied for grad school. But around that same time, my band Spaceface was about to go on a really long tour. I met with one of the professors I

really respected to talk about it. I wanted their honest opinion and they encouraged me to do what I wanted to do. I really thought about it and realized I really didn't want to end up becoming an educator.

So, I went on tour and got a job at Malco Ridgeway Four movie theater. It was a really dumb fucking job at a movie theater, though it was probably the most fun movie theater you could work at. I was also too old to be working at a movie theater, but a lot of my friends and bandmates worked there too.

I had never really considered working as a server or in the restaurant industry, but my partner Evangeline had been working at Hog & Hominy. We're a package deal at a lot of bars these days. But, back then she was working at Hog and so was my bandmate Peter. I guess they both kind of greased the wheels for my interview

when I applied for the job. It was right after Andrew Ticer and Michael Hudman opened Porcellino's in 2015, so they sent me there.

Working there was my first real introduction to craft cocktails and the culture that surrounds them. I was working as a server for the first couple months, but I started becoming more interested in the bar side of the restaurant.

There was a Penicillin on the menu then. And I remember it being the first time I ever enjoyed a scotch cocktail. That kind of lit my fire, and the general manager at the time, Matt Farmer, gave me a chance. He basically gave me a crash course into the service industry. Everything from waiting tables to bartenders. Then he gave me a packet of probably like 100 classic cocktails to learn over the weekend and said that we'll get started next Friday.

I think I was going out of town on a little tour that weekend with Spaceface. I texted him the day before we got back to town because I was supposed to start bartending that Friday, and he asked if I knew all of those drinks yet.

I didn't, and told him I knew the six main ones, and he responded with, 'Well, I guess that'll have to do.'

At Porcellino's you were pretty much working by yourself. My friend Mitchell Marabale, who had pretty much started at the same time as me, was diving more into the cocktail world and moved over to Hog & Hominy. When Andy and Mike announced that they were opening Catherine and Mary's downtown, I asked to be transferred there and work with the team they were putting together.

At the time Colby Jones was going to be the bar manager at Catherine and Mary's, so they sent me to Hog to train with him and the other bartenders that were moving downtown. I had never really worked behind the bar with someone before so it was a whole new experience for me.

Since Catherine and Mary's was still under construction we were learning service at Andrew Michael's and cocktails at Hog & Hominy.

All at the same time, I was learning the new Catherine and Mary's cocktails, Andrew Michael's cocktails and the cocktails at Hog & Hominy. I remember they pretty much just threw me to the wolves on a Friday night.

To this day I don't think I've worked a busier shift in my life. I didn't put down the shaker tin for at least three hours. I remember looking down and seeing my hand were starting to prune and know I still had three hours left of that shift.

Hog & Hominy changed my perspective on bartending. Everything I knew before, I had just kind of stumbled upon since I was mainly working alone.

When I got to Catherine Mary's I ended up finding myself constantly throwing out the rulebook of what I thought that I knew about bartending. But that's what's so fun and rewarding about bartending — you're constantly learning.

Bartending can put you in a dangerous spot with your ego. You can easily become big headed because you make drinks that people google over. You start thinking, 'I'm a pretty decent bartender,' and at a certain point something clicks and you realize you don't know anything. That's when I really started finding my style, which I feel really boils down to simplicity.

It's not that I'm lazy, I just find that it's an easier conversation to have with your guests. Less ingredients means a faster drink, and you can really pay more attention to the ingredients' flavors.

That's probably why I love Daiquiris so much. They're so easy and only have three ingredients: spirit, sugar, and citrus. Even though they're all the same formula, they can be so vastly different.

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In fall of 2016 I went to help open the bar at Catherine and Mary's and worked there until the end of 2018 when I had the opportunity to work with my friend Bart at Crosstown Art Bar.

I really wanted to start working in Midtown. I had lived in Midtown for the past 10 years and I'd never worked in it before. So I thought it would be a nice change. Art Bar ended up being such a fun experience. It had its own little microcosm of culture and had a

very wild west bar ideology.

In 2019, I started exercising a lot more and not drinking as much. I had just finished doing the Whole 30 diet, which made me cut out alcohol for a month. One particular night I allowed myself to go out. I went to Nagasaki on Summer Avenue and did this giant hibachi thing. We were all drinking these comically sweet Singapore Slings all night, and after that we bar hopped a bit.

I remember waking up in the middle of this hospital room with Evangeline and our friend next to me. I had surgery, but it was still a life changing injury. I still have numbness in my index and middle finger, as well as my thumb.

It was an eye-awakening experience. I don't know what field I would go into if I wasn't able to bartend anymore. I'd find something to do, but I have never really considered it. I was scared I wasn't going to be able to play guitar ever again.

I'd find something to do, but I had never really considered it. Luckily I was able to get back to bartending and I even relearned how to play guitar.

Evangeline and I were going to move to L.A. to be closer to the other half of Spaceface in March of 2020. We had everything arranged and I had already put in my three weeks at Art Bar.

At the same time, I had been keeping up with COVID on Reddit. I was basically watching as it crept across the world. I remember thinking, 'Maybe this move isn't going to work out.' Everyone at the time still wasn't sure if it was going to blow over in a couple weeks. So, we ended it up postponing moving, and as we all know, it lasted longer than we all thought. Thank God we didn't move because it would have just been a nightmare.

We ended up having to sign a lease for a studio apartment because we had moved out of our old house already. It was a weird time. I didn't know if I was going to work behind a bar again in Memphis before I would move. It just felt like everything had been thrown in the air.





So after Art Bar I went to work at Joe's Wines and Liquors for the COVID Summer.

Pablo, who I worked with at Catherine and Mary's is the beverage director for the hotel. He oversees Long Shot downstairs and Bar Hustle. At the time Bar Hustle wasn't open seven days a week, but they wanted to be. So I offered to come on and work those extra days so that I wouldn't be messing with anyone's schedule. A couple of months later I got a job at 117 Prime bartending and have been working at both places since then.

I had never worked in a hotel before I started at Bar Hustle, but the Arrive has such a beautiful lobby and cool clientele. Since I only work Sunday and Monday nights, it's really just me and the front desk attendant. As a bartender you kind of act as an ambassador for your city. This is especially true for working downtown because even though you do have some locals, the majority of your customers are tourists or out-of-towners. You're telling them where to go and what to see, and they rely on you for good advice. Even though they may only be in town for two days, and I may never see them again after that, I'm their bartender for those two days and I think that's a really cool thing.

Since I work at night, most of the time people have already hit the Civil Rights Museum and the other more notable tourist spots. So, I always recommend taking a sunset stroll on Riverside or checking out Wise-acre. If they're hungry I always send them to Central BBQ or Gus's Fried Chicken.

I also always tell people to ride the trolley. As cheesy as it sounds, I love riding the trolley. I never really needed it before, but now that I work at opposite ends of South Main its become really convenient and it's just a

fun downtown thing to do.

I never really appreciated it when I worked at Catherine and Mary's, but I really love spending time on Main Street. You get that sort of micro-metropolitan city atmosphere, where like the wind is gushing around the very few large buildings that we have.

I think my favorite part about working downtown is you just feel like you're actually a part of Memphis. You're working where the tourists are and it's refreshing to see people who want to come to Memphis

One time Pablo told me, and I believe he had heard it from someone else, that 'Bartending is one of the best jobs you can have. You're on your feet and you get to throw a party every night.' You just get to craft this really unique and special experience for the guests. I think that's what I really love about this job.

Another reason I think bartending has always been so attractive to me as a job is because it allows me to have a flexible schedule for my band, Space-face. Some years we can be gone a collective two or three months, and it's really hard for most places to accommodate that, but luckily all of the bars I've worked at have been really understanding.

People will always ask me what's my favorite drink to make. My response is always, 'What is your favorite drink to have?' And then they'll say, 'I don't know, I don't really drink cocktails,' so I'll ask them what they do drink. They'll say, 'I'm a bourbon drinker.' My next question is, 'Do you prefer Manhattan's or Whiskey Sours?' Whatever they answer I'll try my best to make them something they'll enjoy.

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THE PERFECT FOLD

It's a riff on a Paper Plane, with the main difference being I substitute the Amaro Nonino for Bräulio. The name itself is a play on the original as well. It's just as easy as a drink could be. I came up with it years ago when I was working at Catherine & Mary's. It was when Bräulio first showed up in the Memphis market, so I was kind of just playing around with it. I really was into Paper Planes at the time because I had just had my first one a little before at a bar in Boston that Spaceface had a show at. Amaro Nonino wasn't in the city yet, so I thought Bräulio would be a cool substitute to recreate that drink. Almost everything in craft bartending boils back down to these classic cocktails, and the Paper Plane itself is essentially a riff on a Whiskey Sour, which itself is a riff on a Daiquiri. For this drink specifically the viscosity of the Bräulio creates the illusion of a froth you would get from an egg white. It's just one of those drinks I've kept in my back pocket for years. At this point it's kind of my cheesy go-to cocktail that I can just whip out for people, and I don't see it going away anytime soon.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 OZ RITTENHOUSE RYE
- 1 OZ BRAULIO AMARO
- 1 OZ APEROL
- 1 OZ LEMON JUICE

INSTRUCTIONS

COMBINE ALL INGREDIENTS INTO A SHAKER TIN. SHAKE FEROCIOUSLY. DOUBLE STRAIN THE COCKTAIL INTO A ROCKS GLASS OVER ICE AND GARNISH WITH A LEMON PEEL. ENJOY.

ALL PRODUCTS ARE AVAILABLE AT JOE'S WINES AND LIQUOR. PRICES AND AVAILABILITY ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. YOU MUST BE 21-YEARS-OR-OLDER TO CONSUME ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES. DRINK RESPONSIBLY.

RITTENHOUSE RYE \$27.99

Rittenhouse Straight Rye Whisky has a storied past with a heritage that commemorates Philadelphia's famous Rittenhouse Square. Bottled-in-Bond, today's Rittenhouse carries the distinct, spicy flavor that is long associated with the brand. Rittenhouse is the Rye Whisky of choice for both mixologists and whisky aficionados alike.

BRAULIO AMARO \$49.99

Bräulio was born in Bormio 140 years ago. Now as then, it is made with care and dedication using selected mountain herbs, for a strong, unique flavour – like the Valtellina itself. The flavor could be described as being spicy, yet bitter-sweet, with flavors of clove, cola and bitter tree bark.

APEROL \$25.99

Aperol first debuted a century ago, in 1919. Known for its orange hue, and today for the ubiquitous and eponymous Aperol Spritz, Aperol is flavored with ingredients including cinchona, rhubarb, and gentian. The bittersweet liqueur has been a part of the Campari portfolio since 2003. The liqueur has intense orange flavor with herbal and woody notes as well. This pleasantly bittersweet product is a must have for any aspiring bartender's arsenal.