

Daniel Doce post on Mandolin Café website – 1 May 2026

The Revival of Hugo D'Alton Strings

Dear all,

It is well known that the influential English mandolinist Hugo D'Alton made his own strings. After his retirement and eventual passing, his student Barry Pratt continued producing them. Unfortunately, due to illness, Barry has been unable to continue this work in recent years, and production of these strings ceased - until now.

Through a series of providential circumstances, I have inherited Hugo's original string-making machine, along with Barry's remaining raw materials from his family. Since then, I have been working to recreate these strings and have been experimenting with various methods.

For those unfamiliar with their unique qualities, Hugo's strings differ significantly from those currently available on the market. Notably, they feature a roundwound A string and a G string that does not require bridge compensation to maintain proper intonation. At present, no major manufacturers offer a roundwound A string - only flatwound options, such as those from Thomastik and Optima. Flatwound strings, however, produce a markedly different tone compared to roundwounds, with a darker sound and fewer high partials - qualities that may not appeal to all players. In contrast, roundwounds are typically bright and have more complex and richer partials.

The plain steel A string has long been considered the "problem string" of the mandolin, as it tends to go sharp when struck at forte. Wound A strings offer significantly greater tuning stability than their unwound counterparts and should be the new standard for the modern mandolinist (whether roundwound or flatwound).

I am not offering these strings for sale just yet, as I am still refining the technique and am not fully satisfied with the results so far. That said, if you would like to be part of the development process and try the strings (currently only the wound A), please feel free to email me. I would be happy to send you a pair for a small fee (to cover shipping and my snacks). Email below:

dandoce12@gmail.com

I am still working out the technique to make the G string, though I already have a working theory on how Hugo did it.

Currently the strings are made with a different machine (one that I built) though in the future I hope to use both mine and Hugo's machine as I move between two different addresses.

Originally, Hugo and Barry's strings do not feature thread on the strings, but I added them.

That is all for now,

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Daniel H. Doce