

## Electric Guitars Have Come a Long Way!

If you think you know the electric guitar, think again! Today's guitars are varied in style, size, and capability and are used by all kinds of musicians

The electric guitar uses 'pick-ups' to convert vibration from its strings into electrical current that is amplified to produce sound. Today's electric guitars can produce an electronic sound or a sound that is more acoustic in tone and timber.

The hollow body electric guitar can be an archtop with a full sound box or it can have a thin body.

While steel guitars are electric, they are not really considered 'electric guitars' by most musicians. Musicians use electric guitars to play everything from rock and roll to country, pop, blues, jazz, and rap. Today's classical composers and orchestrators even include electric guitars among their instruments of choice.

The electric guitar was originally designed in the 1930s by the Electro String Instrument Corporation. That electric guitar was made out of solid wood. One of the most famous and well-renowned guitarists of the forties and today, built a solid body electric guitar for his own use, after working at the Gibson Guitar Factory. Les Paul's famous invention was built with handmade pick-ups and hardware, and a four by four wooden post to which the neck was attached. He finished the body with hollow Swedish body halves and the rest is history!

It is interesting to note that there was a lot of research and experimentation going on during this time period by guitar manufacturers and musicians alike.

It wasn't until the 1950s that the electric guitar really came into its own! The first Fender electric guitar was called the 'Broadcaster'. But that name was changed to the 'Telecaster' when the Gretsch drum manufacturer challenged Fender's use of their 'Broadcaster' copyright.

In the mid-1950s, Fender introduced its 'Stratocaster', a deluxe model of the original electric guitar it had produced earlier. The 'Stratocaster' is still one of the most respected and copied electric guitars. In the early 1950s Fender also produced the Fender Precision Bass, which was to become the first commercially successfully electric bass guitar.

In addition to Les Paul's time working at Gibson, he went on to influence the Gibson brand and its success by helping to design the Gibson Les Paul Guitar in the early 1950s.

With its burgeoning success in the electric guitar market, Gibson developed the 'Tune-o-Matic' bridge and by the late 1950s it put the finishing touches on the Les Paul Guitar it still produces today.

Today's electric guitars are still designed much like the Gibson and Fender guitars of the 1950s.

In the 1960s, effects boxes or stomp boxes became popular, adding effects like reverberation, delay, fuzz and the famous 'wah wah' sound to the repertoire of the rock and roll musician. Using a foot pedal to turn the box off and on, the electric guitarist could create and use sounds audiences had never heard before!

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the computerized age of electric guitars arrived, and musicians began to use software and digital sound to create effects. Gibson introduced the first digital guitar in 2002. This guitar can deliver digital signals using an Ethernet cable and is capable of processing independent signals from each string. The guitar is equipped with its own integrated computer and it can modify sound to mimic many old and new electric and acoustic guitar models.

This new capability has opened up a new world of creativity and innovation for musicians and orchestrators to explore!

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### About the Author

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