

# A Short History of the Electric Guitar [B1]

Divertente, potente e molto facile da suonare, la chitarra elettrica è uno degli strumenti musicali più popolari del momento. Da chi è stata inventata e quando? Gli strumenti a corda esistono da molto tempo, ma la chitarra elettrica è un'invenzione moderna nata da un'esigenza specifica: un suono più forte.



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The electric guitar was the natural evolution of the acoustic guitar. However, while the first attempts at creating an electrified [string instrument](#) date back to the 19th century, it wasn't until the 1930s that an electric guitar was developed. In the early 20th century, acoustic guitars were very popular in American rural music, especially thanks to African-American blues musicians. But they had an important limitation: volume. In an [ensemble](#) of [brass](#), [woodwind](#) and other [string instruments](#), the acoustic guitar was [noticeable](#). As jazz and swing music exploded and young people [crowded](#) the dance floors, guitarists needed to amplify their sound [somehow](#). A microphone just wasn't enough to make a guitar stand out in a big band.

## A SOUND INVESTMENT

The electric guitar was patented in 1937 by George Beauchamp, who had developed the instrument with the help of Adolph Rickenbacker at the Electro String Instrument Corporation of Los Angeles. The revolutionary element in Beauchamp's guitar was the electromagnetic [pickup](#), which used technology similar to that of the telephone: by placing a vibrating string near a magnetic field, the sound waves created by the string's vibrations were converted into electric signals that could be amplified. Rickenbacker made the guitar, and in August 1937 Beauchamp got the patent for his instrument, known as the Rickenbacker [Frying Pan](#), as it was a round-bodied [steel](#) guitar.

## A SHORT WAY TO THE TOP

The first electric guitars were, like acoustic guitars, [hollow-bodied](#). This was an issue, since the [pickup](#) amplified unwanted vibrations. Guitarist Les Paul found a solution for this problem in 1941, when he created the iconic solid-bodied guitar. But by the time Les Paul's prototype was ready to be sent to production, another guitar pioneer, Leo Fender, was already selling his Fender Broadcaster. With rock and roll, rockabilly and rhythm and blues emerging in the 1950s, the electric guitar transformed popular music in the hands of musicians like Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly, and gave rise to a wide spectrum of new music genres. The sound of the new generations had arrived.

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# Glossary

- **ensemble** = insieme
- **brass** = ottoni (strumenti musicali)
- **woodwind** = strumenti a fiato di legno
- **crowded** = affollare
- **somehow** = in qualche modo
- **Frying Pan** = padella
- **hollow-bodied** = cavo
- **string instrument** = strumento a corda
- **pickup** = magnete
- **steel** = acciaio
- **noticeable** = percettibile