

= Rhodes piano =

The Rhodes piano (also known as the Fender Rhodes piano or simply Fender Rhodes or Rhodes) is an electric piano invented by Harold Rhodes , which became particularly popular throughout the 1970s . It generates sound using keys and hammers in the same manner as an acoustic piano , but instead of strings , the hammers strike thin metal tines , which are then amplified via an electromagnetic pickup .

The instrument evolved from Rhodes ' attempt to manufacture pianos to teach recovering soldiers during World War II under a strict budget , and development continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s . Fender started marketing the Piano Bass , a cut @-@ down version of the piano , but the full @-@ size instrument did not appear until after the sale to CBS in 1965 . CBS oversaw mass production of the Rhodes piano in the 1970s , and it was used extensively through the decade , particularly in jazz , pop and soul music . It fell out of fashion for a while in the mid @-@ 1980s , principally due to the emergence of polyphonic and later digital synthesizers , especially the Yamaha DX7 , and partly through inconsistent quality control in production due to cost @-@ cutting measures . The company was eventually sold to Roland , who manufactured digital versions of the Rhodes without authorization or approval from its inventor .

In the 1990s , the instrument enjoyed a resurgence in popularity , resulting in Rhodes re @-@ obtaining the rights to the piano in 1997 . Although he died in 2000 , the instrument has since been reissued , and his teaching methods are still receiving active use .

= = Features = =

The Rhodes piano features a keyboard with a similar layout to an acoustic piano , but some models contain 73 keys instead of 88 . The touch and action of the keyboard is designed to be as close to an acoustic piano as possible . Pressing a key results in a hammer striking a thin metal rod called a tine , connected to a larger " tone bar " . The whole " tone generator assembly " acts as a tuning fork , the tone bar reinforcing and extending the vibrations of the tine . A pickup sits opposite the tine , picking up its vibrations and inducing an electric current in a similar manner to an electric guitar . The basic mechanical act of hitting tines does not need an external power supply and a Rhodes will make a sound even when not plugged into an amplifier , though like an unplugged electric guitar the sound will be weak .

The Suitcase model Rhodes includes a built @-@ in power amplifier and a tremolo feature that bounces the output signal from the piano in stereo across two speakers . This feature is mistakenly labeled " vibrato " (which is a variation in pitch) on some models to be consistent with the labelling on Fender amplifiers .

Although the Rhodes has the same mechanical operation as an acoustic piano , its sound is very different . The sound produced by the tines has a more mellow timbre , but varies depending on the location of the tine to the pickup . Putting the two close together gives a characteristic " bell " sound . The instrument 's sound has been frequently compared with the Wurlitzer electric piano , which used a similar technology , but with the hammers striking metal reeds instead of tines . The Rhodes has a better sustain , while the Wurlitzer produces significant harmonics when the keys are played hard , giving it a " bite " that the Rhodes does not have .

= = History = =

= = = Early models = = =

Rhodes started teaching piano when he was 19 . He dropped out of studying at the University of Southern California in 1929 to support his family through the Great Depression by full @-@ time teaching . As a teacher , he designed a method that combined classical and jazz music , which became popular across the United States , and resulted in an hour @-@ long nationally syndicated

radio show . Rhodes continued to teach the piano through his lifetime , and the piano method continues to be taught today by a team led by Joseph Brandsetter .

By 1942 , Rhodes was working for the Army Air Corps , where he was asked to devise a teaching program to provide therapy for soldiers recovering from combat in hospital . He was unable to supply enough acoustic pianos , so decided to develop a miniature electric model that could be made from surplus army parts . Rhodes won a service award for his piano design and subsequently put the model into production for piano teachers during the 1950s . These were retrospectively known as the " Pre @-@ Piano " .

In 1959 , Rhodes entered a joint venture with Leo Fender to manufacture the instruments . Fender , however , disliked the higher tones of the pre @-@ piano , and decided to manufacture a keyboard bass using the bottom 32 notes , known as the " Piano Bass " . The instrument introduced the design that would become common to subsequent Rhodes pianos , with the same tolex body as Fender amplifiers and a fiberglass top . The tops came from a boat manufacturer who supplied whatever color happened to be available ; consequently a number of different colored piano basses went into production .

= = = Under CBS = = =

Fender was bought by CBS in 1965 . Rhodes stayed with the company , and released the first Fender Rhodes piano , a 73 note model . The instrument consisted of two components ? the piano and a separate enclosure containing the power amplifier and loudspeaker , which was placed underneath the former . Like the piano bass , it was finished in black tolex , and came with a fiberglass top . During the late 1960s , two models of the Fender Rhodes Celeste also became available , which used the top three or four octaves , respectively , of the Fender Rhodes piano . The Celeste didn 't sell particularly well and examples are now hard to find .

The Student and Instructor models were also introduced in the late 1960s . They were designed to teach the piano in the classroom . By connecting the output of a network of student models , the teacher could listen to each student in isolation on the instructor model , and send an audio backing track to them . This allowed the teacher to monitor individual students ' progress .

In 1970 , the 73 @-@ note Stage Piano was introduced as a lighter and more portable alternative to the existing two @-@ piece style , featuring four detachable legs (used in Fender steel pedal guitars) , a sustain pedal and a single output jack . Although the Stage could be used with any amplifier , catalogs suggested the use of the Fender Twin Reverb . The older style piano continued to be sold alongside the Stage and was renamed the Suitcase Piano , with 88 note models also becoming available .

= = = Later models = = =

During the 1970s various internal changes and improvements were made to the mechanics . In 1969 the hammer tips were changed to neoprene rubber instead of felt , to avoid the excessive need for regular maintenance , while in 1975 harp supports were changed from wood to aluminum . Although this made production cheaper , it changed the resonance of the instrument slightly . In 1977 the power amplifier design was changed from an 80 to a 100 @-@ watt model . The Mk II model was introduced in late 1979 , which was simply a set of cosmetic changes over the most recent Mk I models . A new 54 @-@ note model was added to the range .

The Rhodes Mk III EK @-@ 10 was a combination electric piano and synthesizer instrument , introduced in 1980 before when CBS bought ARP Instruments in 1981 . It used analog oscillators and filters alongside the existing electromechanical elements . The overall effect was that of a Rhodes piano and a synthesizer being played simultaneously . The instrument was unreliable with a problematic production , particularly when a shipment of 150 units to Japan caused interference with local television reception . Compared to the new polyphonic synthesizers being marketed at the same time , it was limited in scope and sound , and very few units were sold .

The final Rhodes produced by the original company was the Mk V in 1984 . Among other

improvements , it had a lighter plastic body and an improved action that varied the dynamics with each note . The Mark V is the easiest of the original Rhodes pianos for touring musicians to transport to gigs .

One of the key problems with production of Rhodes pianos under the original company was the desire to mass @-@ produce the instrument , which caused a variation in quality . Collectors are advised to take care when buying a second @-@ hand instrument .

= = = After CBS = = =

In 1983 , Rhodes was sold to CBS boss William Schultz , who closed down the main factory in 1985 and subsequently sold the business to Roland in 1987 . Roland manufactured digital pianos under the Rhodes name , but Harold Rhodes disapproved of the instruments , which were made without his consultation or endorsement .

Rhodes subsequently re @-@ acquired the rights to the instrument in 1997 . However , by this time he was in ill health and died in December 2000 . In 2007 , a re @-@ formed Rhodes Music Corporation introduced a reproduction of the original electric piano , called the Rhodes Mark 7 . This was a version of the Rhodes housed in a molded plastic enclosure .

= = = Dyno My Piano = = =

During the late 1970s and 1980s , Chuck Monte manufactured an after @-@ market modification to the Rhodes , known as " Dyno My Piano " . It included a lever that moved the relative position of the tines to the pickups , modifying the sound , and fed the output signal through additional electronics . This sound was emulated by the Yamaha DX7 with a patch (known as the DX7 Rhodes) that was popular during the 1980s , and caused several players to abandon the Rhodes in favor of the DX7 .

= = Notable users = =

The Doors ' Ray Manzarek began using Rhodes instruments when the band was formed in 1965 . He played bass parts on a Piano Bass with his left hand , while playing organ with his right . He also played a full @-@ size Rhodes on later studio recordings , such as " Riders on the Storm " . Manzarek later said " if Mr. Rhodes hadn ' t created the keyboard bass , the Doors would never have existed " .

The Rhodes piano became a popular instrument in jazz in the late 1960s , particularly for several sidemen who played with Miles Davis . Herbie Hancock first encountered the instrument in 1968 while booked for a session with Davis . He immediately became an enthusiast , noting that the amplification allowed him to be heard much more easily in groups when compared to the acoustic piano . Hancock continued to experiment with the Rhodes over the next few years , including playing it through a wah wah . Another former Davis sideman , Chick Corea started using the Rhodes prominently during the 1970s , as did Weather Report founder Joe Zawinul . Zawinul favored the sound of the Rhodes over the Wurlitzer , because it had a fuller and rich tone . From 1969 's In A Silent Way and Bitches Brew onwards , the Rhodes became the most prominent keyboard on Davis ' recordings until the mid @-@ 1970s . Vince Guaraldi started using a Rhodes in 1968 , and toured with it alternating with an acoustic piano . He achieved particular prominence with his soundtrack music for A Charlie Brown Christmas and other Peanuts / Charlie Brown films .

Billy Preston has been described as " The Ruler of the Rhodes " by Music Radar magazine , and played one during The Beatles ' rooftop concert in 1969 , and on the group 's hit single " Get Back " . Many of Stevie Wonder 's recordings from the 1970s feature him playing the Rhodes , often alongside the Hohner Clavinet . Donny Hathaway regularly used the Rhodes . His hit single , " This Christmas " , which receives seasonal radio play on African American stations , makes a prominent use of the instrument . Although better known for playing the Wurlitzer , Ray Charles played a Rhodes on his performance of " Shake A Tailfeather " in the film The Blues Brothers .

The instrument features in " Angela " , the 1978 instrumental theme from the sitcom Taxi by Bob

James . The French band Air make regular use of the Rhodes piano in their recordings .