**Mills Brothers Guitars Content:**

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*Electric Guitars*

Here at Mills Brothers Guitars, electrics are our specialty. The first ever electric guitar is attributed to Charlie Christian in 1936 when he attached a “pickup” to his acoustic guitar which he began playing solos with in his band. A pickup is most commonly a series of small steel posts wrapped together with very fine copper wire with a magnet base. This combination allows the transmission and amplification of the vibration of steel strings. The first marketed electric guitars were made in the 1940s by an individual by the name of Leo Fender, the founder of the most famous guitar manufacturing company in the world. These were the first solid body guitars which were uniquely shaped planks of wood with cutouts for the pickups and electronics along with a bolted-on neck. This began the saga of the greatest instrument in musical history: the Electric Guitar.

**Instrument History**

*History*

The guitar is one of the oldest stringed instruments and has been around in some form for hundreds or even thousands of years. The Lute is an early form of the guitar. However, the guitar we think of today, originated in the early 16th century in Spain. This early guitar only had four strings, as opposed to the most common six-stringed guitars today. Before the addition of the two extra strings, the original four were tuned C-F-A-D; whereas, the six strings were then tuned E-A-D-G-B-E. This tuning sequence is referred to as standard tuning because most guitars are now set to this standard.

From the 16th to the 19th century, many changes to the instrument occurred including the orientation of the headstock, the size of the body, the number of strings, and the tuning of these strings. The body became broader, hollower, and thinner to allow the sound to reverberate louder. The frets that are used to pinch the string against and shorten the vibration to allow the playing of ‘notes’ were once sinuous guts from animals wrapped and tied around the neck. These were replaced with ivory and are now metal pressed and glued into the neck of the guitar. The headstock is the top of the guitar where the strings are tied to tuning pegs. On a lute, the headstock is positioned perpendicular to the neck of the instrument, pointing back towards the player. This new, straightened position allowed for easier string management and more stable tuning. Originally, the strings on early stringed instruments were sinews from animals. Later, the rising guitars were strung with nylon and silk strings before eventually being strung with steel.

**Pop-Culture**

*Music Evolution*

Especially over the last few centuries, music has evolved in many ways. From the writings of Bach and Mozart in the 17th and 18th centuries to hard rock and modern pop in the 20th and 21st centuries. 12-stringed nylon guitars became popular in the Mexican culture. Then 6-, 7-, and even 8-stringed guitars became popular in the late 20th century with the rise of rock music and the birth of the electric guitar. From the invention of the first electric guitars in the 40s, the instrument has continued to adapt and evolve with the changing music. Semi-hollow and hollow body electrics were designed specifically for Jazz and Blues music which became popular in the 50s. Rock and Roll became huge in the late 1950s with Chuck Berry’s hit titled “Johnny B. Goode” which featured a leading hollow body guitar backed by a small rhythm section. Later in the 1960s and 70s, hard rock emerged with the psychedelic movements of artists like Jimi Hendrix and The Rolling Stones.

One of the most influential bands in guitar history is Van Halen, an American rock group formed in the 1970s and popular throughout the 90s. Lead by guitarist Eddie Van Halen and his signature guitar, they performed a number of hits including Jump, Eruption, Panama, and Ain’t Talkin’ ‘Bout Love. The hard rock is not as popular today as it was then, but many pop artists still use it in their most popular songs. Taylor Swift, Ed Sheeran, and Harry Styles have played the guitar in their songs. The guitar has grown in popularity over time and continues to be one of the most popular and influential instruments in the world.