

Title:

Harmonicas: French Harps with International Appeal

Word Count:

526

Summary:

Learn why harmonicas are so popular and what different styles and types are available...

Keywords:

harmonicas, harmonica, harps, harp, tabs, tablature, music, cases, amplifiers, players, events,

Article Body:

The harmonica, also known as the French harp, is a small wind instrument held in hand while playing. It can be played by inhaling and exhaling through several air slots. Kids love playing these because they're easy to learn and provide fun entertainment and lively music. Also, harmonicas are small so they can easily be carried in a shirt pocket or pants pocket. Many adults love them for these same reasons!

The most common key on the harmonica is C. Harmonicas that are played in the Appalachian South only play a diatonic scale, but not chromatic intervals that are between diatonic scale tones. Therefore, these harmonicas are typically sold in various models based on keys. For instance, there are G-harmonicas, D-harmonicas, C-harmonicas, and so forth.

Harmonica Construction and Sound

In the past, harmonicas were usually made of wood. Today, many harmonicas are constructed from injection-molded plastic. There are also high-end harmonicas that are built from metal alloys, silver, or Lucite. The harmonica's sound is often based on the materials it is made of, with each material giving its own unique sound. For example, blues harps or marine band harps are made of soft wood that resists moisture and create a rich, unique sound.

Types of Harmonicas

Harmonicas come in many different types and styles. These are often chosen by players according to the type of music they would like to play. Some harmonica

players enjoy performing at events as soloists or with a group or band. The cross harp is often used in blues music, but can also be used in many types of music. It is a diatonic harmonica that is played in a key that is actually seven half-steps up from the harmonica's main key. For example, if the harmonica were tuned in C, it would actually be played in G.

A diatonic major harp is the most common type of harmonica. It has all the "Major Scale" notes such as C, D, E, F, G, A, B. The chromatic harmonica has the same notes as the diatonic major harp, but with a half-step between each major note.

Common brand names of harmonicas include Hohner, Hering, Suzuki, Bushman, Lee Oskar, and BTI. Tremolo and octave harmonicas are offered by Hohner. Different styles of orchestral harmonicas are also available for those who perform with orchestras.

Find Harmonicas and Accessories Online

There are many harmonica resources online today that sell harmonicas and accessories. There is free tablature (with tabs and symbols) to help beginners and experienced harmonica players learn new songs. Accessories such as amplifiers, cases, sheet music, microphones, CDs, and more are available online at reasonable prices. Beginners can research online to find out how to care for their harmonica. From tuning to cleaning, there are a few definite "dos and don'ts" to follow.

The beautiful music that flows from the harmonica can never be matched. Harmonicas are so diverse that they can be played alone while sitting on a porch swing, at a family gathering for singing and fun, or in a professional concert. They can be played around the world no matter what the country. These hand-held instruments bring joy to any setting!