

The changes of guitars history essay



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Thesis Statement: Guitars have changed drastically over the course of time, and it started out with the early types of acoustic guitars to the acoustic guitar we now know, later the electric guitar was invented, and then the bass guitar.

Guitars Beginning A. Theory on how guitars came to be B. Guitars Ancestors
a. Bowl Harps b. Tanbur

Acoustic Guitar A. What is an acoustic guitar? B. Who invented the first acoustic guitar? C. The first acoustic guitars a. The Lute/Oud b. Renaissance Lute c. Dotar/Dutar d. Indian Sitar e. Chatar D. Acoustic guitar evolution and who invented them a. Four Stringed b. Five Stringed c. Six Stringed (modern)

Electric Guitar A. What is electric or steel stringed guitar? B. Who invented it?

Bass Guitar A. What is a bass guitar? B. Who invented it?

Conclusion

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History of the Guitar

Did you ever come to think how guitars came to be, or maybe how long has this unique instrument been around? Well guitars have practically been

around for a long time, to be exact guitars have been traced back over 4000 years ago. But over the course of time guitars have changed drastically, by its appearance, and also the sound quality. It all started with early versions of acoustic guitars that later became to the acoustic guitar we know now. Centuries when by and the guitar changed not only by appearance but also the sound quality change with high screeches and pitches, that were known as the electric guitar, then later on the bass guitar was invented.

There are many theories on guitars ancestry. The one that is mostly known is the kithara theory. The only evidence of the kithara theory is how similar the Greek word kithara and the Spanish word guitarra are very alike. Even though, the kithara was a seven-stringed harp like instrument, and a completely different instrument, than that of the guitarra which was the early Spanish name given to the four stringed guitars. These two instruments had more in common than many thought. They both came to be almost the exact same way. In the beginning, kitharas only had 4 strings when it was first introduced to the Greeks, and it was played distiguishly the same way the guitarra was. That is why many believe that the kithara theory is the real deal of how guitars came to be. (Guy, 1)

The earliest stringed instruments known to archaeologists are the bowl harps and the tanburs. In prehistoric times, people didn't have the means that we have now days to fabricate a proper guitar. They made their guitars with tortoise shells and calabashes as resonators, and the bent stick was meant for the neck and one or more gut or silk strings. (Guy, 1)

World's museums contain many such harps like the bowl harp, from the ancient Sumerian, Babylonian, and Egyptian civilizations. Around 2500 - 200 CE the more advanced harps, like the opulently carved 11-Stringed instrument had a nice decoration. It was just like the one found in Queen Shub-Ad's tomb, in the Royal Cemetery in Ur. (Guy, 1)

The two stringed Kudish/Persian tanbur which is the forefather of all stringed instruments. A characteristic of the tanbur is the deep pear shaped body with a long neck, and for many centuries the pear shaped body of the instrument was carved from a single piece of wood. The tanbur and its name date back before recorded history. Historians don't know the exact origin of the tanbur all they know is that its existence came from the ancient Babylon. The only bad thing was that the name tanbur, had applied to many instruments worldwide at the time creating a great deal of confusion. Tanbur had also been used by the Zoroastrians and in the Sassanian courts in 224-651 AD. The derivatives of the tanbur include the Greek buzuki, the guitar, the Romanian tamburitza, the Indian sitar and tambura. In the 20th century, the tanbur's method of playing became much more advanced than known in the ancient times. (Tanbur)

The tanbur is also one of the oldest preserved guitar-like instruments. It had belonged to the Egyptian singer, Han-Mose. His guitar was estimated to be 3500 years old, which makes it the ultimate vintage guitar. He was buried with his tanbur near him in his tomb. He was one of the employers of Sen-Mut, the architect Queen Hatshepsut, who was crowned in 1503 BCE. (Guy, 2)

But, really what is a guitar, anyways. A guitar is an instrument with a long, fretted neck, flat wooden soundboard, ribs, and has incurved sides. The name guitar comes from the ancient Sanskrit word for string that is “ tar”. They used to name the guitars with a “ tar” at the end and a prefix that signified the number of strings. The oldest known iconographical representation of an instrument has the same features as a guitar, in many ways. In stone carvings in Alaca Huyuk, Turkey of a 3300 year old Hittite guitar, with the same striking features of a modern guitar.

There are many mysteries concerning who invented the acoustic guitar. Many believe that the earliest account of the acoustic guitar was in Italy. Many historians believe that an Italian gentleman with the name of Gaetano Vinaccia is the main inventor of the acoustic guitar. The Vinaccia’s family was famous for being exceptional luthiers and produce high quality violins that were available in Europe at the time; they had also been credited to have invented the mandolin. But the one responsible for the first modern classical guitars was a man in Spain named, Antonio Torres Jurado. He was universally acknowledged for designing and making the first classical guitar. He had produced many guitars till his death in 1852. The early guitars are the Lute, the Renaissance Lute, Dotar, Indian Sitar, and the Chatar.

(Accounts)

The origins of the lute are unsure and historians disagree what a lute is. But it is said there were many types of lutes available in the ancient times. It is also said that the Moors brought the lute or Oud to Spain. The lute or oud had been defined, with a short-neck instrument with many strings, a large pear body, highly vaulted back, and an elaborate and sharply angled

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peghead. In many countries the image of the lute was distinct. When the Europeans added frets to the Oud, they called it a lute, which in Arabic "Al'ud" means the wood and Spanish name laud.

During the Renaissance the lute or at the time called Renaissance lute, had held a high respectful place in behavior of all musical instruments. The lute was often used to accompany voice or other soft instruments, and also had its own solos. In paintings and art work of the time, had associated the lute with Apollo, angels, or Orpheus, it was often mentioned at climactic points of tragedies, and held a prominent role in comedy as well. Even though there was a great report for lute makers were from England, the best were Germans who lived in Italy. The Renaissance lute music had mirrored the light construction of the instrument. The only negative thing about the lute and the renaissance lute was that they went out of tune real easy, and many complained they took most of their time tuning rather than actually playing the instrument.

The Dutar, is a two-stringed pear shaped long-necked lute from Western China. It was played mostly by the Uighur and Uzbek people of Xinjiang Province. Western ethnomusicologists state that this instrument has a lot of similarities to the Persian Dutar or Dotar. The Persian Dotar originally was two stringed but then evolved to a four stringed. The dutar is a very singular instrument that made a very beautiful sound as it was being played.

The Indian sitar has many theories on how it came to be. But, there is really no mystery on how the sitar came to be or was developed. By its name any one can really guess that the sitar came from the Indian back around 1300

AD. One how developed the sitar in modern times was a fakir named Amir Khursu in the 18th century. It was very different to the sitar in the 1300, but it still had the qualities of a sitar, just better. The job to continue the sitar was up to Khusru's family. His grandson Masit Klan was one of the most influential musicians in the development of the instrument.

Tanburs and harps were passed on constantly by ancient world travelers, merchants, and seamen. The four-stringed Persian Chatar had a very unique characteristic, a very narrow waist. When it arrived to Spain, the Chatar went through some changes. The new Chatar acquired a pair of unison-tuned strings instead of single strings and became known as the guitarra or chitarra, after its transformation.

Early acoustic guitars were very interesting and eventually evolved over the course of time. From four, to five, to six's strings for the guitar. As we have seen the guitars ancestors came from Egypt and Mesopotamia. These early instruments all had something in common - they all had four strings. Many instruments and variations were three to five strings, and we have seen them in medieval illustrations and manuscripts. In the beginning of the Renaissance time the four course guitar (four stringed guitars) was really the most dominant kind of guitar in Europe. The earliest known music for the four courses was the "chitarra" it was written in the 16th century Spain.

The five course guitarra battente first appeared in Italy at around the same time that the four course guitar had been around, and gradually replaced the four course instrument. The standard tuning was already settled for the five courses it was A, D, G, B, E, like the top five strings of the modern guitar.

This guitar was made thanks to Antonio Stradicarius in 1680, who decided to evolve the four course guitar.

The six course string or guitar was added to the Italian “guitarra battente” (five course guitar) in the 17th century, and guitar makers all over Europe followed the new trend. The transition from five courses to six courses had a new and more modified pattern. By switching the guitar to a new pattern was fairly simple, it only entailed in replacing the nut and the bridge, and plugging four of the tuning peg holes. The modern or “classical” guitar took its present look when Spanish guitar maker Antonio Torres Jurado increased the size and the body of the portions, and made an evolutionary design around 1850. His design radically improved volume, tone and projection of the instrument. It later became accepted as the standard construction of the acoustic guitar. It has remained unchanged and unchallenged to this day.

The electric guitar is one of the greatest breakthroughs in music. Because if it weren't for the electric guitars or the bass guitar there would not be any good rock music. In the history of steel string acoustic guitars, is a German immigrant that experimented with designs that revolutionized the instrument. Guitar maker Christian Fredrich Martin moved to America in 1833, and made guitars with the features that local musicians were looking for. Many guitarists complained that the classical guitar that Torres produced in Spain, because they lacked volume and couldn't be heard as well in American bands. In early 20th century, Martin began putting steel strings in his guitars to address the issues that locals had complained about. He designed a more robust internal bracing system and to compensate the increased tension that the steel strings had on the guitar's body. The

prototypical steel string acoustic guitar and played by millions around the world today.

The inventor of the first modern amplifiable electric guitar was Adolph Rickenbacker. His guitar was semi-hollow body guitar with sound holes. The first complete setup was 1931, but it all started in Los Angeles, California. It all started with Rickenbacker and a man in his company George Beauchamp, looking for louder guitars. Beauchamp went out and found a violin repairist named John Dopyera. Dopyera experimented with the with elements that could project a sound similar to the guitars or similar to it and he was later able to put a resonator that was attached to the bridge of the guitar.

Once Beauchamp had succeeded with the electric part of the guitar he went in search of Adolph Rickenbacker. Who later put together a metal body for the guitar and manufacture the new invention, electric guitar. Once the idea for the electric guitar picked up speed, Beauchamp asked his friend Harry Watson, for help to create the neck and the body for the wooden guitar and this led to the manufacture of the wooden electric guitar. Many speculate that if it weren't for Adolph Rickenbacker and his team, numerous genres that exist now wouldn't have existed, and now thanks to them we can express ourselves acoustically or as electrically as we please.

There are three types of bass guitars, there is: the bass guitar, the fretless bass guitar, Steinberger bass guitar. The original bass guitar has thicker strings and is lower in pitch. It was designed for double bass players, with a portable fretted instrument. The fretless bass is played very similar to the double bass, but it obviously doesn't have any frets. It allows sliding and

gives the musician the abilities of the double bass and the regular bass. The Steinberger bass guitar is very unique looking and has a very different sound than that of the bass. Its body is not made of wood it's really made of dispensable plastic. This instrument has a very clear and hard tone to it.

Like the electric guitar it took many to come up with the initial idea for the bass guitar. Many say that Leo Fender was the one responsible for the invention of the bass guitar but really there are 3 other prototypes before Fender submitted his modern bass guitar in 1951. The modern bass is the descendant of the double bass, which sates back to the 17th century, but the design hadn't change until the early 20th century. The 1st to make a change of appearance to the bass guitar was Lloyd Loar. He had designed the first electrode double bass, but the amplification was yet not developed, and there was no practical way to hear the instrument. By the early 1930s Paul Tutmarc was the first to refine the bass and make it lighter and more practical while the first bass was way too heavy and was the size of a cello. Later around 1940s Paul Tutmarc Jr started manufacturing guitars and basses the difference was that the older basses has to played standard vertically while his guitar could be played horizontally.

Over the course of time many things change and have a story to tell, no matter how old it is. As we have seen guitars have been around for a long time. There is no better way to thank those people who made guitar possible for all us to enjoy now. Than to appreciate what they have done, by letting us have diversity in the music we listen to and by letting us express ourselves in a way with out speaking.