

ABOUT GUITAR

INTRODUCTION

The guitar is perhaps the most honored instrument of the 21st century. In popular music, it is the hallmark of performance: open mic concerts host pianists, vocalists, but the guitar always dominates the night, whether it is the soloist or merely accompanies one. With such a strong presence you might think you know a lot about the guitar. I hope this speech makes you think again.

BODY

A six-stringed instrument, the guitar is actually classified as percussion, because you have to strike the strings for them to make sound. In addition, the body of the guitar can be hit and tapped to create and keep rhythms. As a classical instrument, the guitar was not very popular until the 17th century, though the earliest versions of the instrument date back to the 1400s.

The acoustic guitar was very popular as a folk instrument in America in the 1800s. Because of its relatively small size and large, full sound, railroad workers and traveling musicians could carry the guitar around with them quite easily. The electric guitar was not invented until around 1930. It made rapid progress and became a staple of jazz music in the late '30s, and only has continued to rise in popularity from then. The way an electric guitar works allows its sound to be distorted. This grungy, harsh distortion that once offended ears has become one of the primary sounds in rock, punk, and metal music genres.

Other than its distinctive sound and tone, what sets a guitar apart from other portable stringed percussion instruments is its standard shape and size. The modern guitar body has the shape of a widened figure 8. While electric guitars do not adhere strictly to this shaping, most of them still fit within the 8 shape (a notable exception being the "Flying V" guitar, which was invented in 1957 and made popular by the use of such musicians as Kirk Hammet and others.) Consider the single and double cutaway shapes of electric

guitars. Replace the part that is cutaway, and you have that standard shape.

In acoustic and classical guitars, the shape does a lot to help determine sound. The strings of the guitar produce the actual noise, but their reverberations echo over the sound hole and bounce around inside the body, producing the rich, full sound of a guitar. Shortening or lengthening the strings by pressing on frets changes the pitch, and therefore music can be made. With so many different pieces working together to make sound, it follows quite easily that the better each part is made, the better the guitar sounds. From the strings to the fretboard to the sound hole to the shape of the body to the wood it is made from, each element comes together to create a beautiful sound.

Electric guitars make sound in a similar way. The primary difference is that instead of a sound hole, the strings are played over pickups, which detect the sonic disturbance in a magnetic field they create. This disturbance is translated into an electric signal, which goes to an amplifier. The amplifier recreates the sonic disturbance, and we hear music

CONCLUSION

Learning any instrument is highly beneficial to your mental, physical, and emotional health. Studies have shown that playing an instrument -- guitar or not -- can improve your memory by up to 34%, help you relax and unwind, and improve your hand-eye coordination and rhythm. As simple and prevalent as the guitar is, there's probably a lot you didn't know about the instrument. Thank you for your attention

DISCUSSION

- Do you play an instrument? How much do you know about its history?
- What other benefits do you think playing an instrument might give someone?
- If you could instantly learn how to play any instrument, what instrument would you learn and why?

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