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## Guitars: Rock and Roll Never Dies!

**It happens every year, and it's the ultimate guilty pleasure.**

The Eurovision Song Contest this year was hotly anticipated in the wake of last year's cancellation of the annual parade of the great (and not so great) in European pop, and it certainly didn't fail to get the viewers talking. Our entry suffered a rather incredible snub from the public of an entire continent which was possibly an achievement in itself. However, the obvious and clear winner on the night was in fact a rock band hailing from... Rome, Italy.

Maneskin, with their entry 'Zitti e buoni' stole the hearts of Europe and despite the political voting from the vast majority of the judging panels, took their overwhelming score from the public vote. Now, what made this win special was the band's clear love of the rock image, which over the decades has defined itself as: lots of guitars, not a lot of shirts.

During their acceptance speech their lead singer Damiano David declared that "Rock and Roll Never Dies" and that comment could never be truer than now. The eternal icon of Rock has to be the electric guitar. It has made heroes, millionaires, and icons, so why are old guitars making incredible prices across the globe?

The electric guitar started out in the 1930s as a way for jazz musicians and some country acts to amplify their sound when performing to an audience and this was the case for the next couple of decades. Rickenbacker, (more about them later), developed a pick-up for a slide guitar made by National, and this was dubbed the 'Frying Pan' due to its culinary outline.

The 1950s were really the start of the solid body electric. Leo Fender brought out the 'Broadcaster', whilst Gibson, who were already well known for their big-box jazz guitars, brought out the 'Les Paul', which was designed by Les Paul, alongside Ted McCarty, who was probably one of



A late 1950s Les Paul

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the most important people in the music industry that you have never heard of. His innovations at Gibson during this period really can't be overlooked.

During this golden era of guitars, more models would evolve such as the Stratocaster – which possibly, alongside the Les Paul, is the most recognisable instrument of all time. The Gibson 335 - undoubtedly the most versatile guitar one can play - and lots of other models like the SG, Explorer, Jaguar, Jazzmaster and two of my personal favourites – the Gretsch 6120, and the Rickenbacker 360/12.

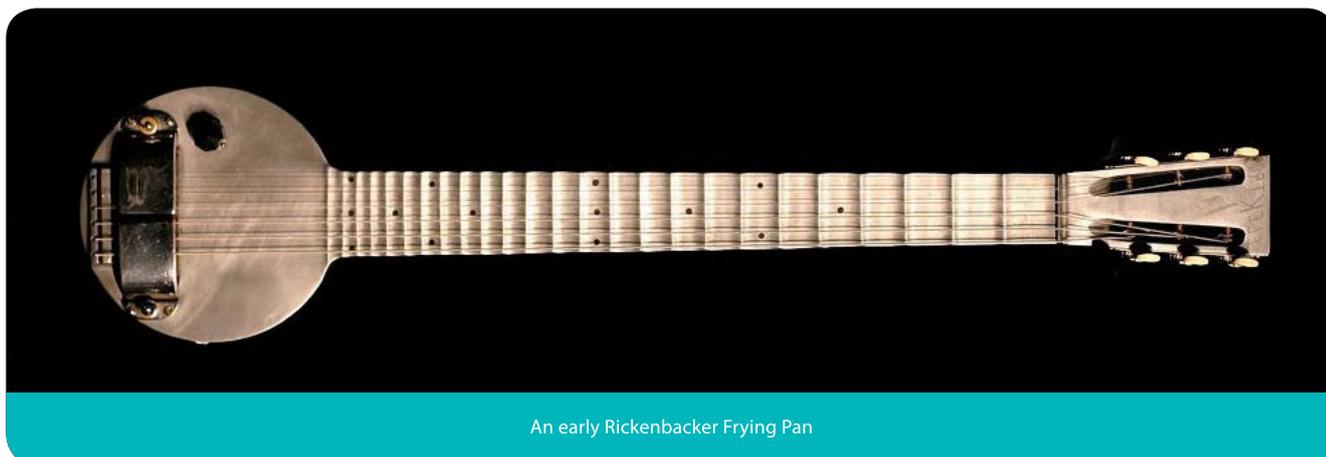
Fast forward to 2021 and what are the most popular guitar models right now? Well, it's exactly the same as it was in the 50s, 60s, 70s (not the 80s - blame hair metal) and 90s. They got it right first time.

This leads us into why vintage guitars command so much money. While a modern USA Stratocaster can be bought for under £1000 why does a guitar that looks exactly the same from 1958 cost maybe 40 times as much? Well, whilst my learned friend David Dallas would rightly comment that some artists produce better paintings during certain parts of their career – it's the same with guitars. The early ones were made with far better components; the pick-ups were wound by hand and the amount they produced in a year was probably lower than gets produced in a day in 2021. The other big factor that simply can't be accounted for is "feel" .... hardly a technical term, but I was very fortunate enough to once play a 1958 Les Paul Standard, which is now a £500,000 guitar and there are simply no words to describe how different the weight, fingerboard, sound or just overall 'feel' are. That's why musicians and collectors are happy to pay the big money for these items.



A mid 1950s Fender Stratocaster

So, alongside Rock and Roll, the electric guitar is certainly a survivor and has outlasted the formats it was designed to be played on many times, and no doubt, when downloads are old technology, the guitar will still be at the forefront making the music.



An early Rickenbacker Frying Pan

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