



Timeline – 125 Years of That Great Gretsch Sound

- 1883 Friedrich Gretsch, 27, who emigrated from Germany at 16, opens a small music shop in Brooklyn, N.Y., making banjos, drums and tambourines.
- 1895 Friedrich Gretsch becomes ill while traveling in Germany and dies at age 39. Fifteen-year-old son, Fred Gretsch, Sr., takes over family business.
- 1916 Company moves to 10-story building at 60 Broadway in Brooklyn, N.Y.
- 1918 Fred Gretsch, Sr. develops revolutionary multi-ply drum lamination process resulting in the world's first "warp free" drum hoop.
- 1920 Gretsch's manufacturing facility expands to become the world's largest music instrument manufacturing factory.
- 1927 Company introduces historic Gretsch-American drum series, featuring the industry's first multi ply drum shell. Gretsch uses its own name on guitars for the first time, rather than just selling to wholesalers.
- 1935 Broadcaster drum line introduced. Duke Kramer begins his 70-year career at Gretsch. Known as "Mr. Guitar Man," Kramer would become pivotal in making Gretsch electric guitars what they are today.
- 1937 Historic partnership with master drummer and inventor Billy Gladstone begins. The Gretsch-Gladstone drum line is introduced.
- 1939 Gretsch introduces its first electric guitar – the Electromatic – and the Synchronomatic archtop guitar series. Jimmie Webster, guitar innovator and player, joins Gretsch. Distinctive triangle sound hole appears on Gretsch acoustic guitars.
- 1942 Fred Gretsch, Sr. retires from the company, leaving the day-to-day operations to his sons, Fred Gretsch, Jr. and William "Bill" Gretsch, both of whom had been active in the business since 1927. Gretsch stops instrument production to assist in war efforts. After a brief term at the company's helm, Fred Gretsch, Jr. leaves the company to serve as a commander in the U.S. Navy. Bill Gretsch becomes president.
- 1946 Gretsch resumes instrument production. Phil Grant, master percussionist and innovator, joins Gretsch. Gretsch and Louis Bellson team up to introduce first production double bass drum kit.
- 1947 Gretsch forges relationship with legendary Birdland Jazz Club in New York, N.Y.
- 1948 Bill Gretsch dies from illness. Fred Gretsch, Jr. assumes control of the business, kicking off a new age of prosperity for the company--the age of rock 'n' roll.
- 1951 First cutaway bodies appear on Electromatic and new Electro II guitar models.
- 1953 Duo-Jet production starts, sparking the entire Jet line of Gretsch solid-body guitars.
- 1954 Jimmie Webster strikes a deal with guitarist Chet Atkins to develop a Chet Atkins-designed Gretsch guitar. Gretsch begins its eye-catching "color revolution" by introducing sparkling Silver Jet and famous Western Orange, Cadillac Green and Jaguar Tan finishes. First Bigsby® vibratos offered on Gretsch electrics.
- 1955 Gretsch introduces White Falcon and 6120 Chet Atkins models.
- 1957 Gretsch begins production of Chet Atkins Country Gentleman guitar model. The model would soon rise to popularity with other legendary guitarists.
- 1959 Project-0-Sonic stereo guitar system introduced. Gretsch builds Bo Diddley his futuristic Jupiter Thunderbird guitar. Gretsch drum endorsee Jimmy Cobb records "Kind of Blue" with Miles Davis.
- 1960 George Harrison buys a used '57 Gretsch Duo Jet, the guitar featured during The Beatles' earliest recordings and tours. "Gretsch Drum Night at Birdland" is recorded by four legendary Gretsch drum endorsees: Art Blakey, Charlie Persip, Elvin Jones and "Philly" Joe Jones.



Timeline – 125 Years of That Great Gretsch Sound

- 1962 Double-cutaway Electrotone thinline series introduced.
- 1964 "Beatlemania" is born on The Ed Sullivan Show. George Harrison's use of a Gretsch Chet Atkins Country Gentleman guitar ignites frenzy among aspiring guitarists.
- 1965 George Harrison adds a Gretsch Tennessean to his guitar collection. The Rolling Stones tour the U.S. with Charlie Watts playing Gretsch drums.
- 1967 Fred Gretsch, Jr. retires and sells The Gretsch Company to Baldwin Music Company. His nephew, Fred W. Gretsch, vows to buy the company back.
- 1970 Baldwin moves Gretsch drum & guitar production to Booneville, Ark.
- 1972 Baldwin moves Gretsch's New York business offices to Chicago. Chet Atkins' "Super Chet" guitar introduced.
- 1973 Baldwin signs over production duties to Bill Hagner and his newly formed Hagner Musical Instrument Corp. Two major fires damage Arkansas guitar & drum plant.
- 1977 Chet Atkins' "Super Axe" guitars introduced.
- 1978 Gretsch drum & guitar production reverts from Bill Hagner back to Baldwin.
- 1979 Baldwin moves Gretsch sales and administration offices to Chanute, Kan.
- 1980 An attempt by Baldwin to re-launch guitar production in Juarez, Mexico fails after only a handful of guitars are built. Baldwin shuts down Gretsch guitar production.
- 1982 Rockabilly returns with Gretsch guitar slinger Brian Setzer and The Stray Cats releasing their first U.S. single, "Rock This Town." The group also features Slim Jim Phantom on Gretsch drums.
- 1985 Eighteen years after the company was sold to Baldwin, Fred W. Gretsch, great-grandson of the company founder, fulfills his promise to buy the company back and return it to the family fold. Gretsch establishes drum manufacturing center in Ridgeland, S.C.
- 1988 George Harrison collaborates with Gretsch to produce the unique Traveling Wilburys collector guitar.
- 1989 Modern Gretsch guitar production begins in earnest. Gretsch introduces professional line of Gretsch electric and acoustic guitars.
- 1993 Gretsch begins production of Brian Setzer signature guitar model.
- 1998 Gretsch announces budget-priced "Electromatic," "Synchronatic" and "Historic" guitar lines. Vinnie Colaiuta signature drum series introduced.
- 1999 Gretsch purchases Bigsby Accessories from owner and former Gibson CEO Ted McCarty. Bo Diddley signature rectangular guitar re-introduced.
- 2000 Kaman Music becomes exclusive Gretsch drums worldwide distributor.
- 2002 Gretsch grants Fender Musical Instruments Corporation exclusive rights to develop, produce, market and distribute Gretsch guitars worldwide.
- 2006 Gretsch teams up with legendary Bo Diddley and Billy F. Gibbons to design the "Billy-Bo" Jupiter Thunderbird guitar. Stephen Ferrone signature series drums introduced.
- 2007 Chet Atkins' name once again adorns extensive line of Gretsch electric guitars.
- 2008 Gretsch celebrates 125th company anniversary.