



GAETSCH®

125

YEAR ANNIVERSARY

1883 - 2008

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125TH Anniversary Fact Sheet The Gretsch Company Overview

- ◆ Company founded in 1883 in Brooklyn, N.Y. as banjo, drum and tambourine manufacturer.
- ◆ Privately held company; four generations of family ownership.
- ◆ Headquartered in Savannah, Ga.
- ◆ President Fred W. Gretsch; CFO Dinah Gretsch.
- ◆ Gretsch products sold in the United States and 112 countries worldwide.
- ◆ Recipient of the 2003 "Heroes Award" from the Atlanta Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS)
- ◆ Recipient of the 2007 Century Award, designated for family businesses at least 100 years old, from the Cox Family Enterprise Center (at the Georgia Family Business Awards).

That Great Gretsch Sound

- ◆ Gretsch drums and guitars are the preferred instruments of many studio musicians and recording artists looking for unique tonal quality and hand-made craftsmanship.
- ◆ Notable Gretsch endorsees include Chet Atkins, Charlie Watts, Neil Young, Brian Setzer and Phil Collins.
- ◆ Gretsch Custom drums manufactured at production facility in Ridgeland, S.C.
- ◆ Kaman Music has been the exclusive distributor of Gretsch drums since 2000.
- ◆ Fender Musical Instruments Corporation has been exclusive guitar distributor since 2002.
- ◆ Gretsch owns and manufactures other popular and historic music industry products and brands including Bigsby® Vibratos and Sho-Bud® Pedal Steel Guitars.

In the Community:

- ◆ GuitarArt charity art program started by Gretsch Co. in 2002; company donates guitars to non-profit organizations, which then decorate them to be sold at auction. Company also donates higher-quality instruments to be decorated by celebrities and auctioned for charity.
- ◆ Major sponsor of the Georgia Music Hall of Fame since museum's founding in 1996.
- ◆ Gave four major scholarships to Georgia Southern University, Elmhurst College, and University of West Georgia in 2006.

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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 Broadkaster 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-O-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.

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- 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.

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The People Behind the Gretsch Name

Fred W. Gretsch, President, and Dinah Gretsch, CFO

The professional life of Fred W. Gretsch reads like the Great American Novel – at once a story of determination, trial and triumph. Born in Chicago, Ill. to Bill and Sylvia Gretsch, Fred began learning the family business at a very early age. Before he was 10 years old, Fred was working part-time as an office boy at The Gretsch Company's Brooklyn manufacturing plant. At a starting wage of 25 cents an hour, the job was by no means an introduction to the comforts of nepotism. But the experience and knowledge gained through working closely with his grandfather, Fred Gretsch Sr., would aid the future company president throughout his life in the music manufacturing industry.

In 1965, Fred joined The Gretsch Company full time as an industrial engineer. Two years later, Fred's uncle and then company president Fred Gretsch, Jr. announced that he was selling the family business to the Baldwin Piano Company. While Fred was surprised and disappointed by the announcement, he didn't take the news lying down. As a declaration of his passion for the business, which had been in the Gretsch family since 1883, Fred vowed to one day buy back The Gretsch Company.

After years of making offers that were repeatedly turned down by Baldwin, Fred seized an opportunity to make good on his promise in 1985 during a period of financial struggle within the Baldwin Company. Baldwin finally accepted the offer, and Fred returned The Gretsch Company to family ownership. He soon moved operations to Savannah, Ga., where the revitalized company began to offer new, vintage-styled Gretsch drums and classic Gretsch guitars. The success of the new products was immediate, and The Gretsch Company once again became a leading force in the musical instrument industry.

An integral part of The Gretsch Company's success has been the visionary talent and technical skills of the company's current "first lady" and CFO, Dinah Gretsch. Born in South Carolina, Dinah grew up in an Air Force family, living in a number of U.S. states and in England for six years. She attended schools in the U.S. and England and purchased her first business at age 20.

Dinah joined the company in 1979 and brought with her experience in banking, credit bureau operation and computer software design. Dinah's analytical and computer skills positioned Gretsch as an industry leader in electronic business transactions in the 1980s. Today Dinah handles The Gretsch Company's finances and much of the company's artist relations. Through the years, she has helped foster endorsement deals with some of the world's top drum and guitar artists. Dinah was the first person at The Gretsch Company to make contact with George Harrison and ultimately the rest of the Traveling Wilburys.

Fred and Dinah Gretsch have consistently supported a variety of music education initiatives in an attempt to "enrich people's lives through participation in music" – the stated purpose behind The Gretsch Foundation, the charitable arm of the family. They became early contributors to the Save the Music Foundation in conjunction with VH1 and regularly contribute musical instruments to charity auctions benefiting education. Recognizing the potential of the burgeoning Georgia Music Hall of Fame, Dinah signed Gretsch up as a major sponsor of the museum in 1994, two years before it opened.

Fred serves on the advisory board for the Salvation Army, Savannah Corps. Dinah devotes much of her spare time to board work at Loyola High School in NYC, UGA Music Business Program, Sacred Heart Church in Savannah, Ga. Savannah Country Day School & the Georgia Musical Hall of Fame Foundation.

A devoted husband and wife team, Fred and Dinah have ensured that the Gretsch family tradition will continue for another 125 years or more. They are very proud of their six children and fourteen grandchildren. Their oldest daughter, Lena, has worked in the company for eleven years.

Celebrating 125 years as a family business, the Gretsch name is a testament to the spirit, passion and determination of the people who lived and those who continue to carry on its legacy. From humble beginnings at a small Brooklyn, N.Y. shop in 1883, Gretsch was built on a foundation of hard work and a dedication to making a quality professional product without sacrificing ideals. This vision still rings clear today.

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