

Apr 11th, 3:30 PM - 4:00 PM

# The Electric Guitar and Its Changing Role in Popular Music

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Orchard, Brendan, "The Electric Guitar and Its Changing Role in Popular Music" (2018). *The Research and Scholarship Symposium*. 10. [http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/research\\_scholarship\\_symposium/2018/podium\\_presentations/10](http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/research_scholarship_symposium/2018/podium_presentations/10)

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# The Electric Guitar and its Changing Role in Popular Music



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# Introduction/Thesis

- The electric guitar is a worldwide icon. It is widely renowned by cultures from every part of the world, and recognized by musicians and non-musicians alike. It has grown and adapted much through its lifetime, and continues to do so in order to stay relevant within pop music. It has transcended the world of musical influence, and has had a profound impact upon culture as well. The electric guitar has had a changing role throughout different time periods and genres of music, and continues to adapt itself in order to stay relevant within current popular music.

# History

- The form of the modern day classical guitar is credited to Spanish guitar maker Antonio Torres circa 1850
- Early 1920s bring about development and experimentation with electricity.
- Innovators such as Leo Fender and Walter Fuller sought to apply these principles to the guitar.

# Pickups

- “The energy from your fingers and pick is transmitted to your guitar strings, which disturb the pickup’s magnetic field, thus affecting a coil of copper wire within the pickup and generating an AC signal that trails out from the two ends of the coil to connect to any tone and volume controls your guitar may have. From there the signal heads to your guitar’s output jack and to your amplifier and speaker.” – Dan Formosa



# “The Log”

Les Paul among the first to apply this concept to the guitar.

He split an acoustic guitar in half, mounted pickups to a piece of wood, and glued it between the guitar.

Pickups mounted about an inch underneath the strings.





# 1920s-40s

- Big Band Jazz music popular
- Guitar could now be heard, and expanded its role to that of a melodic/solo instrument.
- Players such as Charlie Christian, Joe Pass, and Wes Montgomery



# 1950s

- Blues and R&B artists such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Buddy Holly make use of amplified guitar.
- “Rocket 88” is renowned as the first rock and roll song with distorted guitar.
- Elvis Presley known as “King of Rock and Roll”





# 1960s

- The 60s was the first full decade of rock and roll.
- Highlighted by The Beatles and The Rolling Stones
- One of the most lasting and influential artists of the 60s was Jimi Hendrix, specifically his performance of the National Anthem at Woodstock in 1969.



# Effects Pedals



- Effects pedals are used to alter the guitar's sound in unique and creative ways.
- Intertwining technology and music to create new advances
- Pedals can categorize specific genres and artists.
- The invention of pedals helped the guitar to reinvent itself and influence many genres.

# 1970s

- Guitarists made use of pedals and virtuosic techniques.
- Bands like Led Zeppelin and Aerosmith played rock littered with guitar virtuosity.
- Funk was very popular by artists such as Stevie Wonder, James Brown, and the Jackson 5.



# 1980s

- Arena Rock and Hairbands
- Big, huge, distorted guitar sounds.
- Van Halen, Scorpions, Poison, Journey, Guns N Roses,
- Took the guitar as a solo instrument to the next level. Prime focus of the song was often guitar.

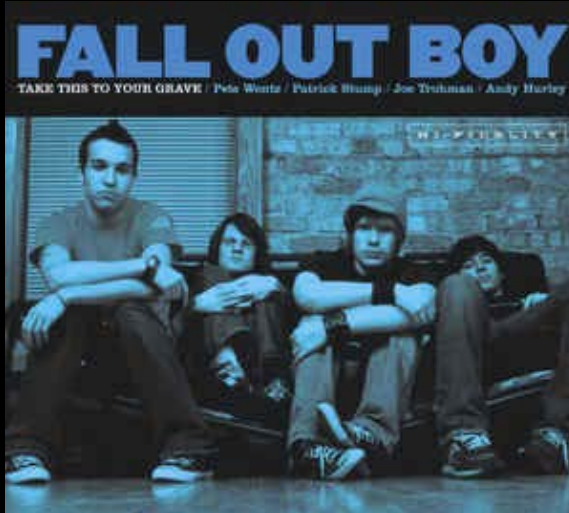


# 1990s

- Ushered in the grunge genre.
- Bands like Nirvana, Pearl Jam, and Weezer.
- Guitar is dialed back a little, but still very prevalent.
- New pedals and technology used in creating sounds and parts.
- New computer technology was used to create music.
- Tupac, Dr. Dre, and NSYNC rose in popularity.

# 2000s

- Early 2000s saw a rise in alt/pop rock bands
- Panic! At the Disco, The All American Rejects, Switchfoot, Fall Out Boy





# 2000s

- Solo artists and pop singers followed production trends of pop rock bands.
- Katy Perry, Taylor Swift, Pink
- New computer sounds and technology used to create songs and beats
- Rappers such as Jay-Z, Eminem, Kanye West



# Today

- Guitar has taken a reduced role, yet still very prevalent.
- Synthesizer sounds and 808 hip hop aspects prominent in music production.
- Guitar takes on a funk-esque role.
- Bruno Mars, Kendrick Lamar, Maroon 5

# Conclusion

- The Electric guitar has changed greatly throughout time.
- Versatility
- Technology plays a big part.
- Innovators pushing the frontier.
- Follows cultural trends, as well as impacting culture.