

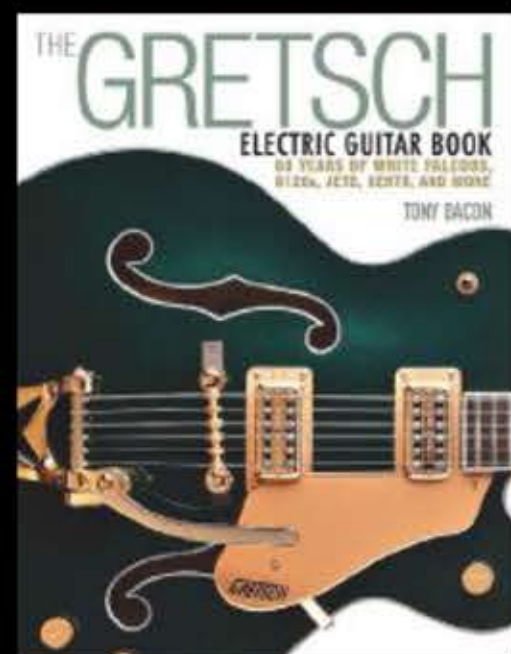
The Gretsch Electric Guitar Book

Author: Tony Bacon
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 (Hal Leonard)

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Of all the golden era electric guitars - let's say from 1950-1965 - and assuming you weren't motivated by monetary value alone - what would be the junk shop find that most set your pulse racing? An early Fender Telecaster? A '60s Les Paul? Well, they'd both be great guitars and your bank manager would love you forever, but for sheer cool could you hope for anything better than dusty old Gretsch? From the chunky 6120s of Eddie Cochran and Duane Eddy through a succession of Chet Atkins models, including the Country Gentleman made even more iconic by George Harrison, White Falcons (Neil Young), the cigar box shaped models designed for Bo Diddley, Malcolm Young's Jet Fire Bird, the Tennesseean used on House Of The Rising Sun, Gretsch can claim as big a part of electric guitar history as anyone. But beneath the surface of the Gretsches most players have at least some knowledge of, lie less famous models that make you think 'is that some kind of Epiphone?' (the '62 Corvette) or 'what were they smoking?' (the '67 Astro Jet). Then there are the uber cool White Falcons



and the exquisitely rare White Penguin (no, really). There's that word again - cool. Gretsches are cool: no doubt about it. Ask Jeff Beck, or Brian Setzer.

Which brings us to this latest well researched book from Tony Bacon and one that certainly scratches all the right itches. As always, it's written in Bacon's dry, humorous style ("Lou

Reed almost managed to get a Country Gent in tune on the early Velvet Underground records") and it doesn't batter you to death with facts and figures - though they're here for those that want them, with an exhaustive reference section at the back.

It does, happily, delve into the puzzles, too. The internals of Gretsch guitars are a little like Egyptian mummies. Everyone knows there is valuable information under the wrappings but who wants to take one apart to find out? It's a complex area, as Gretsch never quite 'got' solid bodied guitars (which is part of their charm) so they were almost all semi-hollow but records weren't exactly thorough - hence the decision recently to CAT scan some of the survivors, just to make sure what was going on inside. It's certainly made recent Gretsch re-issues even more attractive.

Whether it's the story of the company, some of the key artists and endorsers who played them, or a model by model breakdown, Bacon has it covered and, as always with Backbeat's books, the pictures are just about pornographic.

The great thing about this book is that unless you're the kind of person who owns several pairs of crepe soled shoes and sports a DA haircut, you probably won't already know most of what's in it. That means it's new territory and fascinating reading - not just for Gretsch collectors, but for the rest of us, who already know that Gretsches are as cool as a 1955 Wulitzer jukebox, but can't quite remember the difference between a duo Jet and a Jet Pro.

If you have an ounce of Rock 'n Roll in your soul, you need a copy of this book. And a Gretsch, of course. You need one of those, too.

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We have two copies of this fabulous new book to give away, completely free!

All you have to do is correctly answer the following questions online.

Q1. Famous Gretsch user Brian Setzer shot to fame with which band?

- A/ The Yardbirds
- B/ Shawaddywaddy
- C/ The Stray Cats

Q2. Gretsch guitars are strongly associated with which vibrato system?

- A/ Floyd Rose
- B/ Bigsby
- C/ Kahler

Two lucky winners with the correct answers will be chosen at random. The same rules apply as for our Hughes & Kettner competition elsewhere in this issue. •

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