



Fender

A History of Fender Musical Instruments and Founder-Leo Fender

(As documented by Wikipedia)

Fender Musical Instruments Corporation of [Scottsdale, Arizona](#) is a manufacturer of stringed instruments and amplifiers, such as solid-body [electric guitars](#), including the [Stratocaster](#) and the [Telecaster](#). The company, previously named the **Fender Electric Instrument Manufacturing Company**, was founded in [Fullerton, California](#), by [Clarence Leonidas "Leo" Fender](#) in 1946. Leo Fender also designed one of the first commercially successful solid-body [electric bass](#), the [Precision Bass](#) (P-Bass), which has become known in rock, jazz, country, Motown, funk, and other types of music.

The company is a [privately held corporation](#), with the controlling majority of its stock owned by a group of its own company officers and managers. William (Bill) Mendello is Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer and James Broenen is Chief Financial Officer.

Fender's headquarters are in [Scottsdale, Arizona](#) with manufacturing facilities in [Corona, California](#) (USA) and [Ensenada, Baja California](#) (Mexico).

History

Fender offered the first mass-produced solid-body Spanish-style [electric guitar](#), the Telecaster (originally named the 'Broadcaster'; 'Esquire' is a single pickup version)^[1] the first mass-produced [electric bass](#), the [Precision Bass](#) (P-Bass); and popular [Stratocaster](#) (Strat) guitar. While Fender was not the first to manufacture electric guitars, as other companies and [luthiers](#) had produced electric guitars since the late 1920s, none was as commercially successful as Fender's. Furthermore, while nearly all other electric guitars then were either hollow-body guitars or more specialized instruments such as [Rickenbacker](#)'s solid-body Hawaiian guitars, Fender had created versatile solid-body electric guitars. These guitars were and still are popular for musicians in a variety of genres.

The company also makes and/ or distributes [acoustic guitars](#), electric basses, [mandolins](#), [banjos](#), and [violins](#), as well as [guitar amplifiers](#), bass amplifiers, and PA (public address) equipment. Other Fender brands include Squier (entry level/budget), [Guild](#) (acoustic and electric guitars and amplifiers), SWR (bass amplification), Passport Tacoma, Jackson, Charvel, Gretsch guitars and collaborated with Eddie Van Halen to make the EVH guitars and amplifiers.

On October 28, 2007, Fender announced its intention to buy [Kaman Music Corporation](#) (owners of Hamer Guitars, Ovation Guitars, Genz Benz amplifiers, Gibraltar Hardware, along with many others, and exclusive distributor for Sabian cymbals and Takamine Acoustic Guitars).

Other Fender instruments include the [Mustang](#), [Jazzmaster](#), [Jaguar](#), [Starcaster](#), [Duo-sonic](#), [Tele-Sonic](#), [Strat-o-Sonic](#), and Bronco guitars; basses such as the [Jazz Bass](#), the 'Telecaster Bass' reissue of the original 1950s Precision Bass; a line of lap steels; three models of [electric violin](#), and the [Fender Rhodes](#) electric piano.

Origins

The company began as **Fender's Radio Service** in late 1938 in [Fullerton, California, USA](#). As a qualified electronics technician, Leo Fender had been asked to repair not only radios, but phonograph players, home audio amplifiers, public address systems and musical [instrument amplifiers](#). (At the time, most of these were just variations on a few simple vacuum-tube circuits.) All designs were based on research developed and released to the public domain by [Western Electric](#) in the '30s, and used [vacuum tubes](#) for amplification. The business also sidlined in carrying records for sale and the rental of self-designed-and-built PA systems. Leo became intrigued by design flaws in current musical instrument amplifiers, and he began custom-building a few amplifiers based on his own designs or modifications to designs.

By the early 1940s, he had partnered with another local electronics enthusiast named [Clayton Orr "Doc" Kauffman](#), and together they formed a company named [K & F Manufacturing Corp.](#) to design, manufacture and sell electric instruments and amplifiers. Production began in 1945 with Hawaiian lap steel guitars (incorporating a patented pickup) and amplifiers, which were sold as sets. By the end of the

year, Fender had become convinced that manufacturing was more profitable than repair, and he decided to concentrate on that business. Kauffman remained unconvinced, however, and they had amicably parted ways by early 1946. At that point Leo re-named the company the **Fender Electric Instrument Company**. The service shop remained open until 1951, although Leo Fender did not personally supervise it after 1947.

The first big series of amplifiers were built in 1948. These were known as [tweed amps](#), because they were covered in the same kind of cloth used for luggage at the time. These amps varied in output from 3 watts to 75 watts. This period was one of innovation and changes; While Leo made a Tweed Princeton in 1948 for his Professional 8 string Lap Steel guitar [very short lived, as later he would focus on 6 string Student models] later the Princeton would become a push-pull class AB tube amp, in 1948 it was a single ended Class A amplifier similar to the [Fender Champ](#), with the output transformer mounted to the speaker frame and bereft of any negative feedback. Also, in 1964, the Tweed Champ amp would be reissued in [black tolex](#) in small numbers along with the newer model with the slant front panel and controls; the stacked plywood boxes Leo used often went uninventoried. In late 1963, he found a couple hundred Tweed Champ chassis boxes in these bins. He had had them chromed and printed in 1958; being frugal, he built them in black tolex with a chrome and black Champ nameplate, as he had money tied up in them already.

Fender moved to [Tolox](#) coverings for the [brownface](#) amps in 1960, with the exception of the [Champ](#) which kept its tweed until 1964. Fender also began using Oxford, Utah and CTS speakers interchangeably with the Jensens; generally the speaker that could be supplied most economically would be used. Jensens and Oxfords remained the most common during this period. By 1963 Fender amplifiers had a black Tolex covering, silver grille cloth, and [black forward-facing control panel](#). The [tremolo](#) was changed to a simpler circuit based on an [optical coupler](#) and requiring only one tube. The amps still spanned the spectrum from 4 watts to 85, but the difference in volume was larger, due to the improved, clean tone of the 85w [Twin](#).

Fender owed its early success not only to its founder and talented associates such as musician/product engineer Freddie Tavares but also to the efforts of sales chief, senior partner and marketing genius Don Randall. According to *The Stratocaster Chronicles* (a book by Tom Wheeler; Hal Leonard Pub., Milwaukee, WI; 2004, p. 108), Mr. Randall assembled what Mr. Fender's original partner Doc Kauffman called "a sales distributorship like nobody had ever seen in the world." Randall worked closely with the immensely talented photographer/designer Bob Perine. Their catalogs and ads — such as the inspired "You Won't Part With Yours Either" campaign, which portrayed people surfing, skiing, skydiving, and climbing into jet planes, all while holding Jazzmasters and Stratocasters — elevated once-staid guitar merchandising to an art form. In Fender guitar literature of the 1960s, attractive, guitar-toting teenagers were posed with surfboards and Perine's classic Thunderbird convertible at local beachside settings, firmly integrating Fender into the surfin'/hot rod/sports car culture of Southern California celebrated by the Beach Boys, beach movies, and surf music. (*The Stratocaster Chronicles*, by Tom Wheeler; Hal Leonard Pub., Milwaukee, WI; 2004, p. 108). This early success is dramatically illustrated by the growth of [Fender's manufacturing capacity](#) through the 1950's and 1960's.

Sale to CBS

In early 1965, Leo Fender sold his companies to the Columbia Broadcasting System, or [CBS](#) for \$13 million.^[2] This was almost two million more than they paid for The New York Yankees a year before. CBS entered the musical instruments field by acquiring the Fender companies (Fender Sales, Inc., Fender Electric Instrument Company, Inc., Fender Acoustic Instrument Company, Inc., [Fender-Rhodes](#), Inc., Terrafen, Inc., Clef-Tronix, Inc., Randall Publishing Co., Inc., and V.C. Squier Company), as well as Electro-Music Inc. ([Leslie speakers](#)), [Rogers drums](#), [Steinway](#) pianos, [Gemeinhardt](#) flutes, [Lyon & Healy](#) harps, [Rodgers](#) (institutional) organs, and [Gulbransen](#) home organs.

This had far-reaching implications. The sale was taken as a positive development, considering CBS's ability to bring in money and personnel who acquired a large inventory of Fender parts and unassembled guitars that were assembled and put to market. However, the sale also led to a reduction of the quality of Fender's guitars while under the management of "cost-cutting" CBS. Several cosmetic changes occurred after 1965/1966, such as a larger headstock shape on certain guitars. Bound necks with block shaped position markers were introduced in 1966. A bolder black headstock logo, as well as a [brushed aluminum face plate](#) with blue or red labels (depending the model) for the guitar and bass amplifiers became standard features, starting in 1968. These cosmetic changes were followed by a new "tailless" Fender amp decal and a sparkling orange grillcloth on certain amplifiers in the mid-1970s. Regarding guitars, in the early 1970s the usual four-bolt neck joint was changed to one using only three bolts, and a second string tree for the two middle (G and D) strings was added in late 1971. These changes were said to have been made to save money: While it suited the new 'improved' micro-tilt adjustment of the neck (previously requiring neck removal and shimmiing), the "Bullet" truss-rod system, and a 5-way pickup selector on most models, it also resulted in a greater propensity toward mechanical failure of the guitars.

During the CBS era, the company did introduce some new instrument and amplifier designs. The [Fender Starcaster](#) was particularly unusual because of its semi-hollow body design, still retaining the Fender bolt-on neck, and a completely different headstock.

The Starcaster also incorporated a new Humbucking pickup designed by Seth Lover. This pickup also gave rise to 3 new incarnations of the classic Telecaster. Though more recent use by [Jonny Greenwood](#) of [Radiohead](#) has raised the Starcaster's profile, CBS-era instruments are generally much less coveted or collectable than the "pre-CBS" models created by Leo Fender prior to selling the Fender companies to CBS in 1965.

The culmination of the CBS "cost-cutting" may have occurred in 1983, when the [Fender Stratocaster](#) received a short-lived redesign lacking a second tone control and a bare-bones output jack, as well as redesigned single-coil pickups, active electronics, and three push-push buttons for pickup selection (Elite Series). Additionally, previous models such as the Swinger (also known as Musyclander) and Custom (also known as Maverick) were perceived by some musicians as little more than attempts to squeeze profits out of factory stock. The so-called "pre-CBS cult" refers to the popularity of Fenders made before the sale.

After selling the Fender company, Leo Fender founded [Music Man](#) in 1975, and later founded the [G&L Musical Instruments](#) company, which manufactures electric guitars and basses based on his later designs.

Fender today

In 1985, in a campaign initiated by then CBS Musical Instruments division president [William Schultz](#) (1926-2006), the Fender Electric Instrument Manufacturing Company employees purchased the company from CBS and renamed it the **Fender Musical Instruments Corporation**. Behind the Fender name, the Fender Musical Instruments Corporation has retained Fender's older models along with newer designs and concepts.

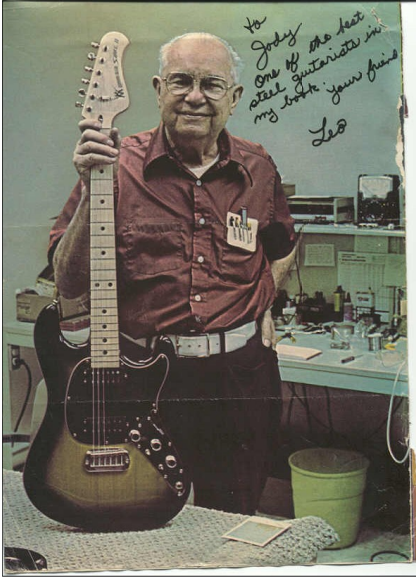
Fender manufactures its most expensive guitars at its Corona factory in California and manufactures a variety of cheaper mid to high quality guitars at its Ensenada factory in Baja California, Mexico. Channing Ward is the lead designer of the 2009 Stratocaster. Fender also contracts Asian guitar makers to manufacture Fender guitars and to also manufacture the lower priced [Squier](#) guitars. The older and American built Fender guitars are generally the most favoured, but pre-1990 [Fender Japan](#) guitars are now highly regarded as well. Fenders built in Ensenada, Mexico took over the main export role from the Japanese made Fenders and Japanese Fenders are now manufactured mainly for the Japanese market, with only a small number marked for export.

Squier was a string manufacturer subsequently acquired by Fender. The [Squier](#) brand has been used by Fender since 1982 to market inexpensive variants of Fender guitars intended to compete with the rise of Stratocaster copies, as the Stratocaster was slowly becoming more popular. Squier guitars have been manufactured in Japan, Korea, India, Indonesia and China. The Squier name adorns many inexpensive guitars based on Fender designs but with generally cheaper hardware, bridges and electronics.

In recent years, Fender Musical Instruments Corporation has branched out into making and selling [steel-string acoustic guitars](#), and has purchased a number of other instrument firms, including the [Guild Guitar Company](#), the [Sunn](#) Amplifier Company, and other brands such as [SWR Sound Corporation](#). In early 2003, Fender Musical Instruments Corporation made a deal with [Gretsch](#) and began manufacturing and distributing new Gretsch guitars. Fender also owns: [Jackson](#), [Charvel](#), Olympia, Orpheum, [Tacoma Guitars](#) (based in Seattle, WA), Squier and Brand X amps. The Californian guitar giant has recently purchased [Kaman Music Corporation](#), which owns [Ovation](#) acoustic guitars, LP and Toca hand percussion products, Gibraltar Hardware, Genz Benz Amplification, [Hamer Guitars](#) and is the exclusive U.S. sales representative for Sabian Cymbals and exclusive worldwide distributor of [Takamine Guitars](#) and [Gretsch](#) Drums.

In February 2007 Fender announced that it would produce an illustrated product guide in place of its traditional annual *Frontline* magazine. This change was made in large part due to the costs associated with paying royalties in both print and the Internet. With the new illustrated product guide, this removed print issues. The new guide contains its entire range of instruments and amplifiers along with color pictures and basic specifications. The New Fender Frontline In-Home will be produced during the year, keeping customers up to date with new products. These will be available through guitar publications and will be directly mailed to customers who sign up to the Fender website. As well as these printed formats, Fender Frontline Live was launched at the winter NAMM show in January 2007 as a new online reference point, containing information on new products and live footage from the show.

LEO FENDER BIOGRAPHY



Clarence Leonidas Fender (August 10, 1909 – March 21, 1991), also known as **Leo Fender**, was a [Greek-American](#) inventor who founded [Fender Electric Instrument Manufacturing Company](#), now known as [Fender Musical Instruments Corporation](#), and later founded [MusicMan](#) and [G&L Musical Products](#) (G&L Guitars). His guitar, bass, and amplifier designs from the 1950s continue to dominate popular music more than half a century later. [Marshall](#) and many other amplifier companies have used Fender instruments as the foundation of their products. Fender and inventor [Les Paul](#) are often cited as the two most influential figures in the development of electric instruments in the 20th century.

Fender and development of electric guitar

As the [Big Bands](#) fell out of vogue toward the end of [World War II](#), small combos playing [boogie-woogie](#), [rhythm and blues](#), [western swing](#), and [honky-tonk](#) formed throughout the United States. Many of these outfits embraced the electric guitar because it could give a few players the power of an entire horn section. Pickup-equipped [archtops](#) were the guitars of choice in the dance bands of the late-'40s, but the increasing popularity of roadhouses and dance halls created a growing need for louder, cheaper, and more durable instruments. Players also needed faster necks and better intonation to play what the country players called "take-off lead guitar". Custom-made solidbodies such as [Les Paul](#)'s home-made "Log" and the [Bigsby Travis](#) guitar made by [Paul Bigsby](#) for [Merle Travis](#) evolved from this need, but these were beyond the means of the average player.

Fender recognized the potential for an electric guitar that was easy to hold, easy to tune, and easy to play. He also recognized that players needed guitars that would not feed back at dance hall volumes as the typical arch top would. In addition, Fender sought a tone that would command attention on the bandstand and cut through the noise in a bar. By 1949, he had begun working in earnest on what would become the first [Telecaster](#) (which was called the Broadcaster in its earlier years) at the [Fender](#) factory in [Fullerton, California](#).

Although he never admitted it, Fender seemed to base his practical design on the [Rickenbacker](#) Bakelite.^[1] One of the Rickenbacker's strong points—a detachable neck that made it easy to make and service—was not lost on Fender, who was a master at improving already established designs. Not surprisingly, his first prototype was a single-pickup guitar with a detachable hard rock maple neck and a pine body painted white.^[1]

Esquire

[Don Randall](#), who managed Fender's distributor, the Radio & Television Equipment Company, recognized the commercial possibilities of the new design and made plans to introduce the instrument as "The Esquire Model". Fender supported the Esquire name, saying that it "sounded regal and implied a certain distinction above other guitars."

In April 1950, Radio-Tel started promoting the Esquire—the first Fender 6-string officially introduced to the public. The company prepared its Catalog No. 2, picturing a black single-pickup Esquire with a tweed form-fit case. Another picture showed [Jimmy Wyble](#) of Spade Cooley's band holding a blond Esquire. These debut models, with a planned retail price of \$154.95, exhibited the shape of thousands of Fender guitars to come.

Randall's primary marketing ploy was to establish the Esquire in music instruction studios, reasoning that the affordable, practical guitar would be a hot commodity in those circles. In addition, a healthy response for the one-pickup version would prime the market for the more expensive two-pickup model that Fender already had in mind.

Broadcaster

The factory went into full production in late 1950, initially producing only dual-pickup Esquires. Fender's decision compromised Radio-Tel's earlier marketing strategy, forcing Randall to hold orders for the single-pickup Esquire and come up with a new name for the two-pickup model, eventually naming it the Broadcaster. Dealers who insisted on Esquires had to wait until the single-pickup guitars went into full production in January 1951 and were delivered the following month.

Musical Merchandise magazine carried the first announcement for the Broadcaster in February 1951 with a full-page insert that described it in detail. The guitar was described as having a "modern cut-away body", a "modern styled head", and an "adjustable

solo-lead pickup" that was "completely adjustable for tone-balance by means of three elevating screws".

"Broadcaster" becomes "Telecaster"

Fender sold 87 Broadcasters on the guitar's initial release in January 1951. Many people took note—including Gretsch, who claimed the Broadcaster name infringed on the company's trademark "Broadkaster", which was the name of a model lineup of drums. Reacting to this, Randall informed his salespeople on February 21 that Radio-Tel was abandoning the Broadcaster name and requesting suggestions for a new name. On February 24 he announced that the Broadcaster had been renamed the "Telecaster".

The Broadcaster-to-Telecaster name change cost Radio-Tel hundreds of dollars, and derailed the initial marketing effort. Brochures and envelope inserts were destroyed, and the word "Broadcaster" was clipped from hundreds of headstock decals. For several months, the new twin-pickup guitars were marked only with the word "Fender." These early-to-mid-'51 guitars would eventually be referred to as "No-casters" by guitar collectors.

Stratocaster

Leo Fender regularly sought feedback from his customers, and, in preparation for redesigning the Telecaster he asked his customers what new features they would want on the Telecaster. The large number of replies, along with the continued popularity of the Telecaster, caused him to leave the Telecaster as it was and to design a new, upscale solid body guitar to be sold alongside the basic Telecaster instead. Western swing guitarist [Bill Carson](#) was one of the chief critics of the Telecaster, stating that the new design should have individually adjustable bridge saddles, four or five pickups, a vibrato unit that could be used in either direction and return to proper tuning, and a contoured body for enhanced comfort over the slab-body Telecaster's harsh edges. Fender and draughtsman [Freddie Tavares](#) began designing the new guitar in late 1953, which would address most of Carson's ideas and would also include a rounder, less "club-like" neck (at least for the first year of issue) and a double cutaway for easier reach to the upper registers.^[2]

Released in 1954, the Stratocaster (or "Strat") has been in continuous production ever since.

Other guitars

Other significant developments of this period include the [Jazzmaster](#) and [Jaguar](#), significant departures from the Strat and Tele in their introduction of complex pickup selection switches and volume controls. Although unsuccessful at their introduction, both would become popular with [Surf Rock](#) musicians (example: [Dick Dale](#)) due to their clean, bright, and warm tone. They became popular again, (to a much larger extent), in the early 90's due to their use by [alternative rock](#) artists such as [Dinosaur Jr.](#)'s and [Sonic Youth](#)'s famous hoard of vintage Jazzmasters and [Kurt Cobain](#)'s (of [Nirvana](#)) use of a heavily modified 1965 Jaguar.

Electric bass guitar

During this time, Fender also conceived an instrument that would prove to be essential to the evolution of popular music. Up until this time, bassists had been left to playing acoustically resonating [double basses](#), also known as "upright basses". As the size of bands and orchestras grew, bassists found themselves increasingly fighting for volume and presence in the sound spectrum. Apart from their sonic disadvantages, double basses were also large, bulky, and difficult to transport. With the [Precision Bass](#) (or "P-Bass"), released in 1951, Leo Fender addressed both of these issues. Unlike double basses, the Telecaster-based Precision Bass was small and portable, and its solid body construction and four magnet, single coil electronic pickup allowed it to be amplified at higher volumes without the feedback issues normally associated with acoustic instruments. Along with the Precision Bass (so named because its fretted neck allowed bassists to play with 'precision'), Fender introduced a bass amplifier, the [Fender Bassman](#); a 45 watt amplifier with four 10" speakers. Neither were firsts; [Audiovox](#) had begun advertising an "electric bass fiddle" in mid 1930s catalogs, and [Ampeg](#) had introduced a 12 watt "Bassamp" in 1949, but the P-Bass and its accompanying amplifier were the first widely-produced of their kind, and the P-bass was the first bass to be fretted like a guitar; arguably, the P-Bass remains one of the most popular basses in music today.

1960 saw the release of the [Jazz Bass](#), a sleeker, updated bass with a slimmer neck, and offset waist body and two single coil pickups (as opposed to the Precision Bass and its [split-humbucking pickup](#) that had been introduced in 1957). Like its predecessor, the Jazz Bass (or simply "J-Bass") was an instant hit and has remained popular to this day, and early models are highly sought after by collectors.

1970 - Music Man and G&L

Some of Fender's most widely known and loved contributions to music were developed in the 1970s: he designed guitars, basses and amplifiers for the [Music Man](#) corporation, and in 1976 designed and released another innovative instrument, the [StingRay](#). Though the body design borrowed heavily from the Precision Bass, the StingRay is largely considered to be the first production bass with active electronics. The StingRay's 2-band active equalizer, high output humbucking pickup and smooth satin finished neck went on to become a favorite of many influential bassists, including [Louis Johnson](#), [John Deacon](#) and [Flea](#). Later on a 3-band active equalizer was introduced. In 1979 he and old friends George Fullerton and [Dale Hyatt](#) started a new company called [G&L](#) (George & Leo)^[3] Musical Products. G&L guitar designs tended to lean heavily upon the looks of Fender's original guitars such as the Stratocaster and Telecaster, but incorporated innovations such as enhanced tremolo systems and electronics. Despite suffering several minor [strokes](#), Leo Fender continued to produce guitars and basses. While he continued to refine the fundamental designs he had created decades earlier, he also earned many new patents for innovative designs in [magnetic pickups](#), vibrato systems, neck construction, and other areas. Nevertheless, he never learned how to play the guitar.

A friendly, modest and unassuming man (his "coffee mug" was a styrofoam cup with the word "Leo" inked on it), he had the lifelong admiration and devotion of his employees, many of whom have remarked that the best working years of their lives were spent under Leo Fender. He died in 1991 from complications of [Parkinson's disease](#). His pioneering contribution to the genre has been recognized by the [Rockabilly Hall of Fame](#). The company which bears his name, [Fender Musical Instruments Corporation](#), is now one of the largest musical instrument conglomerates in the world.