



GRETSCH® CELEBRATES 15 YEARS OF THE GRETSCH CUSTOM SHOP MAGIC IN MASTERY.

Scottsdale, Ariz. (Jan. 23, 2019) – 2019 marks the 15th anniversary of the Gretsch Custom Shop, where time-honored legacy reaches its creative apex.

From modern versions of legendary Gretsch® instruments to artist tribute models and specially requested one-off guitars, the Gretsch Custom Shop takes “That Great Gretsch Sound!™” to an entirely new plane.

Shortly after Fender® acquired licensing for the manufacture, distribution and marketing of Gretsch guitars in 2002, the idea of a Gretsch Custom Shop surfaced, especially given the world-renowned success of the Fender Custom Shop.

Among the dozen or so master builders there at that time, only two—Stephen Stern and Chris Fleming—had significant arch-top hollow-body building experience. Stern had studied under two of the world’s greatest arch-top luthiers, Jimmy D’Aquisto and Robert Benedetto. He arrived at the Fender Custom Shop in 1993, working directly with D’Aquisto until the great luthier’s death in 1995, while also crafting fine Benedetto guitars. Fleming was an acclaimed Fender Custom Shop master builder who’d arrived at Fender in 2000 and quickly established a sterling reputation as one of the shop’s top craftsmen.

With Stern tied up with Benedetto, Fleming and Fender’s George Blanda were tabbed to build the first-ever custom U.S.-made Gretsch models, which debuted at the 2004 winter NAMM Show. The stunning new limited-edition versions of original-era classics—a

G6136CST White Falcon™ and G6120WCST Nashville® Western were warmly received and earned much acclaim, and with that the Gretsch Custom Shop was up and running.

Senior Master Builder Stephen Stern officially took the Gretsch custom design and production reins in 2005, and with a small crew, a little upstairs corner workshop at the Fender factory in Corona, Calif., became the Gretsch Custom Shop.

The G6136CST White Falcon and G6120WCST Nashville Western formed the nucleus of the Gretsch Custom Shop offering throughout the mid 2000s, joined each year by new limited-edition custom Gretsch guitars of impeccable style and build. These included the G6136TCST-R White Falcon LTD Custom Relic of 2007-2009, the G6120WCST-R Nashville Western LTD Custom Relic of 2007, the G6118T-R-CST Anniversary Relic of 2007-2009 and the G6128TDS-R Duo Jet™ Relic with Bigsby® of 2008-2009.

Further, it didn't take long for the Gretsch Custom Shop to turn its attention to some of the world's greatest Gretsch players.

The great Chet Atkins (1924-2001) is a central and seminal figure in the history of Gretsch, and the Gretsch Custom Shop wasted little time in honoring him. The original 2004 G6120WCST Nashville Western was re-christened the G6120WCST Chet Atkins® Hollow Body in January 2007 and remained so until the model was discontinued in December 2009. The gorgeous G6120-125 Chet Atkins 125th Anniversary Hollow Body enjoyed a single-year run in 2008, and the G6120DSW-R Chet Atkins Relic Hollow Body was offered from early 2009 through mid 2010.

In 2007, duly honored Stray Cats rockabilly icon Brian Setzer with the first Custom Shop "Tribute" model, the G6120SSC Brian Setzer Tribute Nashville®. Stern and his crew hand built 59 of the instruments, which were virtually indistinguishable from Setzer's beloved 1959 6120, right down to their thin nitro finish, dice control knobs, black cat and "Lucky Lady" body stickers, headstock skull sticker, and every last nick and scratch.

Another tribute model took form in 2008 with the G6129BZ Billy Zoom Tribute Custom Shop Silver Jet™, designed for X guitarist Tyson "Billy Zoom" Kindell.

In 2010, the Gretsch Custom Shop began building specially commissioned one-off instruments, starting when Morrissey guitarist and musical director Martin “Boz” Boorer contacted Stern with a special request—a custom pink Penguin guitar. Stern obliged, and Boorer delightedly received the beautifully crafted pink Penguin—the first Gretsch Custom Shop one-off model—in spring 2010.

Other great artists who loomed large in Gretsch’s legacy soon received the Custom Shop treatment. The first was Eddie Cochran, the rockabilly forefather who contributed influential classics such as “Summertime Blues,” “C’mon Everybody,” “Sittin’ in the Balcony” and “Twenty Flight Rock.”

Working closely with Cochran’s family throughout 2009, Stern was granted access to spec out Cochran’s distinctively modified 6120 guitar. The meticulously crafted result, the G6120EC Eddie Cochran Tribute Hollow Body, was (once again) all but indistinguishable from the original. Fifty of the guitars were offered in 2010.

As the 10th anniversary of George Harrison’s November 2001 passing approached, Gretsch worked closely with the late guitarist’s estate in developing a Tribute model replica of his first Gretsch guitar—an all-black 1957 Duo Jet that Harrison bought second-hand at age 18 in summer 1961. It was the guitar that Harrison played during the historic three-year period when the Beatles went from local favorites to U.K. sensations to worldwide phenomenon; the guitar used to record first Beatles album *Please Please Me* and the title song that was the group’s first No. 1 hit.

Stern examined Harrison’s guitar and noted its specs with customary thoroughness and meticulous attention to detail. After many months of work, the G6128T-GH George Harrison Tribute Custom Shop Duo Jet was introduced in January 2011 in a limited edition of 60 guitars and immediately drew great acclaim and glowing press.

2016 saw the creation of the monstrous G6136B-TP Custom Shop Tom Petersson Signature White Falcon 12-string bass. As the bassist for Rock and Roll Hall of Fame power-pop outfit Cheap Trick, Petersson pioneered the use of a 12-string, multi-octave instrument and his stamp on the classic White Falcon bass design resulted in a truly jaw-dropping model.

At long last, 2017 brought the world the G6131MY-CS Custom Shop Malcolm Young “Salute” Jet in honor of the AC/DC rhythm guitar legend, who passed away in November of that

year. As early as 2008, the Gretsch Custom Shop team had begun to painstakingly examine Young's iconic No. 1 guitar, a battle-worn well-traveled '63 Jet Firebird. Nicknamed "The Beast," Young famously removed two of the three pickups and stripped the original red finish away, revealing the wood grain. This guitar would march on to create some of the most iconic riffs in rock 'n' roll history.

Limited to a 40-piece run, the G6131MY-CS Custom Shop Malcolm Young "Salute" Jet faithfully paid homage to Young's beloved instrument, right down to every last nick, scratch and dent acquired over his long and raucously illustrious career.

Despite its prolific success, the Gretsch Custom Shop remained a remarkably small operation over the years—just Stern and two other builders by the end of 2012.

"Our shop is small and it is very old-world like," said Stern. "We have our own tooling and machines, a close-knit group of guys and we pretty much do everything up here."

The shop received its biggest personnel boost in 2013 with the arrival of five more builders including Chad Henrichsen and Gonzalo Madrigal. Madrigal was elevated to Master Builder in 2018 and sits as the shop's only other craftsman besides Stern to don the Master title.

"Gonzalo is a very talented and dedicated guitar builder and is my 'right hand' man in the Gretsch Custom Shop," said Stern. "Gonzalo takes great pride in his work and I am so proud to call him Master Builder. He has certainly earned it."

Today, the Gretsch Custom Shop team is rounded out with the skills and talents of Bill Jancar and Kyle Keesler, who joined Stern's team in late 2017. Together, the five-man team remain hard at work. From crafting small productions of extraordinary instruments, striking one-off models and various special projects that are the envy of guitar aficionados and Gretsch fans all over the world, the emphasis remains the same.

"It's the attention to detail," Stern said. "It's the feel of it. With a Gretsch Custom Shop instrument, you can tell the difference when it's in your hands. I think what is also so special about Gretsch guitars is that they lend themselves to this crazy and diverse palette of

options — from all kinds of different colors to different woods to sparkle binding and finishes. It just all works in a way that doesn't with other brands."

To commemorate the anniversary, the Custom Shop is proud to announce the Gretsch G6134-GCS15 Custom Shop 15th Anniversary '59 Penguin™ NOS model. Since ruby is the precious stone that designates a 15-year milestone, this Penguin features a mahogany body with curly maple top dressed in a magnificent Trans Ruby Red finish with white back, sides and headstock, all tied together with ruby red sparkle body and neck binding.

Ray Butts Full Fidelity pickups power this radiant instrument with plenty of sparkly notes and dynamic tones, tighter bass and a touch more top end.

Limited to an exclusive 15-model run, the G6134 Custom '59 Penguin also features an ebony fingerboard with 22 vintage-style frets and pearloid Neo-Classic™ thumbnail inlays, Gretsch Custom Shop 15th Anniversary headstock plate, Adjusto-Matic™ bridge with pinned ebony base, classic Penguin-adorned gold pickguard and shimmering gold hardware including the banjo armrest, "G" jeweled knobs, Grover® Imperial tuners and Gretsch Cadillac tailpiece.

It's yet another example of the magic in mastery that the Gretsch Custom Shop is known for.

"We are successful because every person in this shop takes pride in what they do; they love being here, and that shows in the product," said Keesler. "Every single guitar we make is with love and are among the most beautiful guitars in the world."

For more information, visit www.gretschguitars.com.

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ABOUT GRETSCH®: With roots in the past while maintaining an eye to the future—from the cavernous clubs of Liverpool to the main stages of festivals around the world, Gretsch has been the voice of inspiration, personal expression and musical invention. It's no accident that the sound of a Gretsch has been heard loud and proud on some of the most pivotal recordings ever created. The instrument of choice for musical revolutionaries due to their rich, full sound, smooth playability and boldly classic visual style, Gretsch and rock 'n' roll have been—and always will be—inseparable partners.

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ABOUT FENDER

Since 1946, Fender has revolutionized music and culture as one of the world's leading musical instrument manufacturers, marketers, and distributors. Fender Musical Instruments Corporation (FMIC)—whose portfolio of owned and licensed brands includes Fender®, Squier®, Gretsch® guitars, Jackson®, EVH®, Charvel®, Bigsby®, and PreSonus® – follows a player-centric approach to crafting the highest-quality instruments and digital experiences across genres. Since 2015, Fender's digital arm has introduced a new ecosystem of products and interactive experiences to accompany players at every stage of their musical journey. This includes innovative apps and learning platforms designed to complement Fender guitars, amplifiers, effects pedals, accessories, and pro-audio gear, and inspire players through an immersive musical experience. FMIC is dedicated to unlocking the power of musical expression for all players, from beginners to history-making legends. In 2026, Fender celebrates 80 years of giving artists “wings to fly,” carrying on the vision of its founder, Leo Fender, and connecting players through a shared love of music.

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