



### **Ten Terrific Telecaster® Guitars**

Here are ten of the most famous, desirable and valuable Telecaster® guitars in the world. The collective 'mojo' of these guitars would be enough to power a large nation for many months!

#### **1. The One That Started it All**

This Fender® Esquire® guitar has never been played by anyone famous. It doesn't have a fender logo, has no truss rod and has a body made of pine, yet in 1994 it sold for the highest price ever paid for an electric guitar. So what made this very ordinary-looking instrument such a valuable item?

##### **Prototype**

In 1949, Leo Fender and his colleague George Fullerton built their first ever solidbody electric guitar prototype. This rather crude-looking and experimental instrument had a laminated two-piece pine body which was cut by Fullerton. The body was then given a heavy coat of white enamel.

##### **Neck**

The wood for the neck was chosen by Leo. He decided to use a piece of strong and even-textured hard rock maple, the type of which had long since been used in the manufacture of bowling pins and dance floors. This particular type of wood had a proven record of being unaffected by heat from the sun or stage lights, unlike Bakelite necks which were favoured by some manufacturers at the time.

##### **'The Snakehead Esquire®'**

The headstock was shaped like a snake head (hence its subsequent nickname, the 'snakehead' Esquire®), which was similar in shape to Fender®'s steel guitars. As on the steels, the strings pulled straight across the nut instead of turning towards the tuning keys. As with the steels, straight string-pull made the guitar easier to tune and stay in tune. There was, however, no truss rod and although the neck proved incredibly tough, the benefits of a truss rod were soon discovered the following year when the first Esquire® models were made.

##### **Pickup**

Another wise adaptation from the steel guitars was the lead pickup. To further boost the bass, Leo slanted the pickup under the strings. The pickup had fixed pole pieces and was protected by a simple, sliding pickup cover.

**Also Known As.** The name given to this prototype by Fender® was the Electric Spanish guitar prototype, although it also, rather unkindly, became known as the Paddle Stock Telecaster®.

##### **A Record Bid**

The original prototype was never displayed at any Music Trade fairs and remained unseen by the public as further, improved prototypes took shape.

After many years in storage, the guitar was displayed to the public for the first time in 1994 as part of the Fullerton Museum's "50 Years of Fender®" exhibit. After the exhibition, this simple prototype was sold to a private collector for a staggering \$375,000, the highest price ever paid for a guitar at that time.



#### **2. Keith Richard's Micawber**

##### **Why Micawber?**

Micawber is the name of Keith's main Fender® Telecaster®, named after one of the central characters in the Charles Dickens novel, David Copperfield. However, in an interview a few years ago, Richards denied this, adding, "There's no reason for my guitar being called Micawber, apart from the fact that it's such an unlikely name. There's no one around me called Micawber, so when I scream for Micawber everyone knows what I'm talking about."

##### **Specs**

Micawber is a 1952 butterscotch-coloured model with a black pickguard & a stock 3 way switch. The sixth string is removed, it's always tuned to open G, with the following gauges: .011, .015, .018, .030, .042. It has replacement tuners & a brass replacement bridge with individual saddles, and the nut is cut to accommodate 5 strings-they aren't evenly spaced across the fingerboard, but the first string is moved a bit to keep it from going over the edge.

Micawber is modified with a humbucker in neck position and an original Tele pickup in the bridge position. It is warm & thick sounding & can be heard on such live tracks as Before They Make Me Run, Brown Sugar, Mixed Emotions, and Honky Tonk Women.

##### **Keith's Significant Others**

Although Keith owns a number of other similar models, two of which are named Malcolm and Gloria, Micawber is his main guitar and accompanies him on tours and studio sessions.

#### **3. Muddy Waters' Red Telecaster®**

Legendary Bluesman Muddy Waters created many classic blues songs on his red 1958 Telecaster®. The guitar with its ash body and Candy Apple Red finish was worn from many intensive years of playing.

##### **A Couple of Modifications**

According to interviews, Muddy had a custom neck fitted to his Telecaster®. With the obvious exception of the Fender® amplifier knobs used in place of the standard Tele® controls, the guitar's other features are mostly stock, or were stock 40 years ago.



### Neck Width

Talking about the neck of his guitar, Muddy Waters once said in an interview, "I got a heavy hand and my strings are heavy, like a .012 or .013 for the first one. A guy in Chicago made me a neck, a big stout neck with the high nut to raise up the strings for slide. I needed to strengthen it up because of the big strings, and I think that the big neck has a lot to do with the big sound." After his death in 1983, his Telecaster® became the property of his family and is, to this day owned by his estate.

### Muddy's Guitar Goes On Display

Between 18th-24th of September 2000, Muddy's Telecaster® was displayed at the The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, Ohio at an exhibition called Got My MojoWorkin': Muddy Waters and Modern Blues.

The Muddy Waters Telecaster® is available through your local Fender® authorised dealer.

### 4. George Harrison's Rosewood Telecaster®

#### A Gift From CBS/Fender®

In December 1968, George Harrison was presented with a Rosewood Telecaster® by Fender®. The guitar with its serial number of 235594 was made by Phillip Kubicki, a young guitar maker, who worked for Fender® from 1964 until 1974. The handcrafting process was overlooked by master builder Roger Rossmeisl.

#### The Making Of The Guitar

Kubicki recalls, "The bodies for the guitars were made with a thin layer of maple, sandwiched between a solid rosewood top and back. I spent hours sanding the bodies to perfection."

"Eventually, a clear polyurethane finish was applied and allowed to dry. George's guitar was to have a particular hand-done satin finish. To achieve this, the body and neck were hard-block sanded with 500-grit paper, following the grain, until the surface was carefully rubbed with a fine cloth until it became highlighted. The guitar was set up, checked and re-checked to Roger's satisfaction, placed in a black hardshell case, and delivered to marketing. I never saw the guitar again - not in person, at least. The Telecaster®, made in 1968, was then flown to England in its own seat, accompanied by a courier, and hand-delivered to the Apple offices in London's Saville Row, where it was presented to George Harrison.



### Famous Appearances

The guitar was played by Harrison on the Beatles' famous rooftop performance at the Apple building, in what was to be the last ever live performance by the fab four. It was also used in the 1970 movie documentary Let It Be , which charts the recording of the album of the same name, as well as being played on parts of Abbey Road and, famously, on the Beatles' track Get Back .

#### A Gift From A Beatle

On December 1st 1969, George Harrison and Ringo Starr attended a performance by the American act Delaney and Bonnie at London's Royal Albert Hall. The next day, Harrison joined the band onstage and afterwards, he presented his Rosewood Telecaster® to the guitarist, Delaney Bramlett. Bramlett recalls the moment the guitar was presented to him:

"When I went back to the back - when I went to the dressing room - George Harrison presented me with this guitar. And he said, 'This is to you for what you just did for me last night.' And I went, 'WHAT?!' And he said (again), 'This is for you for what you just did for me.'

"I had a meeting with Leo Fender before he died, and I told him, 'I got that George Harrison guitar.' He said, 'How'd you get that?' And I said, 'He gave it to me.' Leo said, 'Why would he do that? That's a one-of-a-kind.' I said, 'I don't know! I just don't know, man!' I guess he liked me, you know! Leo says, 'God, I guess he must have!'"

#### Guitar For Sale

Some time in 1999, Bramlett put the guitar up for sale in the States through Dave Kyle , an expert dealer in famous and vintage guitars (including the fabulous leather-inlaid Waylon Jennings Telecaster®). Bramlett later withdrew the Rosewood Tele®, putting it up for auction instead.

The date for the auction was set for August 19th, 1999 at Bonham's auction house in London. Although it was expected to raise £200,000 (320,000 Euros), the Telecaster® failed to reach its reserve price and was taken off the block when bids topped out at £100,000 (160000 Euros).

George Harrison's sister-in-law tried to take steps to reclaim the guitar on George's behalf, claiming that as it was a gift, it shouldn't be sold on the open market. This attempt at retrieval was unsuccessful and the guitar remains with Bramlett to this day.

According to guitar dealer Dave Kyle, who has had the privilege of playing and examining the guitar, "The Harrison/Bramlett Tele® was also pretty well worked over. It had been routed for Humbucking pickups, which were gone by the time I saw it and had what looked to be the original pickups back in place. The back of the neck had been sanded off but the fretboard still had the original finish".

#### Recent Appearance

More recently, the guitar can be seen gracing the cover of the David Ralston album (produced by Bramlett), called Nail It Down.

Despite the guitar's failure to reach its asking price, it remains one of the most glamorous and valuable celebrity Telecaster® guitars in the world.

#### Update 2003

On Saturday, September 13, 2003, the guitar was put up for sale by Bramlett at Odyssey Auctions in Hollywood. The winning bidder paid \$434,750. Although the identity of the West Coast collector was not revealed, rumours persist that the bidder was none other than U.S T.V actor Ed Begley, Jr. who was apparently bidding on behalf of George Harrison's widow Olivia Harrison, who now owns the guitar.

The guitar is now one of the most valuable in the world.

### 5. Bruce Springsteen's '52 Esquire®



In 1969, Bruce Springsteen bought what was to be his main guitar throughout his long and glorious career, and one that still serves him well today.

#### 1950's Esquire®

The axe in question is a well-worn 1952 Fender® Esquire®, which is basically a single-pickup Telecaster®. There is some debate as to the year of this guitar. Articles on the subject state that the guitar may have been a 1953 or 1954 model.

A popular theory is that the headstock decal was placed incorrectly at the Fender® factory and the guitar became a factory 'second'. Consequently the serial number was rubbed out. However, the common story is that in 1969 when Bruce

purchased the guitar, the guitar was invoiced as a 1952 Fender® Esquire®.

#### Wear and Tear

A close inspection of the guitar reveals that the back of the body is heavily worn from years of playing, making it look like a piece of driftwood. Flip the guitar over to the front and something even stranger appears.

#### Tricks of the Trade

Among Bruce's stage secrets is the application of household sealants over all the guitar's cavities (including the gaps between the pickups and the body) to make it waterproof. This is due to the fact that, during a performance, 'the Boss' contently likes to dip his head in a full water butt (located at the back of the stage) to cool down, saturating his entire upper body. The sealant protects the pickups and wiring from any subsequent water damage. Interestingly, Bruce likes to 'seal' all of his new guitars and tests out their resilience by pouring a two litre bottle of Evian all over the instrument and then plugging it in! The sealant is changed frequently on each guitar, including his trusty Esquire®.

The guitar has been used on the majority of Bruce's famous recordings and tours and it is unlikely that he will ever part company with it.

#### **6. The Jeff Beck/Seymour Duncan Fender® Esquire®**

This axe has the distinction of being owned by not only one, but THREE famous people - a very impressive heritage indeed!

#### Walker Brothers

This single-pickup 1950's Fender® Esquire® guitar, with its serial number, 1056, was originally owned by John Maus, the guitarist with famous West Coast trio The Walker Brothers, whose hits included The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore and Make It Easy On Yourself . Maus modified the guitar by contouring the front and back of the body to make it feel more like a Strat®. This included carefully shaping the wood to leave the original paint and exposed Swamp Ash body.

#### Beck's Modifications

In the mid 60's, whilst the Walker Brothers were on tour in the U.K, Maus sold the instrument to guitar wizard Jeff Beck for \$60. Jeff set to work making modifications to the guitar. First off, he

changed the pickguard from a white single-ply to a black phenolic one. Then he took off the original bridge saddles that were well rusted, replacing them with 52' Telecaster® brass saddles from another of his Telecaster® guitars. To top it off, Jeff used a white lever knob from a 55' Stratocaster® (this is still in the case). A recessed 53' Telecaster® black bakelite knob was put on it the late 60's.

#### Seymour Duncan

In 1974, pickup guru Seymour Duncan was working as a technician at the newly opened Fender® Soundhouse in London where he worked for such artists as The Stones, The Who, Gerry Rafferty, Roy Wood and Wizzard, Supertramp and Jeff Beck. Around this time, Jeff was recording the second album with Beck, Bogert and Appice at the CBS Studios that was just around the corner from the Fender Soundhouse.

Seymour Duncan started work on a hybrid guitar for Jeff. (The guitar was a Telecaster® with two Humbuckers. And a homemade pickguard, fashioned from dark chocolate vinyl plastic. The lever switch knob was from an old telephone switchboard). When the guitar was finished, Seymour gave the guitar to Jeff as a present. Several days after giving Jeff the guitar while Jeff was recording in the studio, his then-guitar tech Ralph Baker visited Beck at the Fender® Soundhouse with a cloth bag with three guitars in it. Ralph said "Jeff wanted you to take your pick." In the bag were a '51 Telecaster®, a mid 50's Stratocaster® and Jeff's 54' Fender® Esquire®. Needless to say, Seymour picked the Esquire®. Later on Seymour said "I picked the Esquire® because Jeff used it! I remembered the songs like Heart Full Of Soul, I'm A Man, Train Kept A Rollin' and Mister You're A Better Man Than I .". Seymour seems to have made little or no modifications to the guitar (which is still in his possession) whatsoever. The strings (.009-.042's) have been on the instrument since 1974 are kept de-tuned to reduce tension and eliminate breaking. The tuning keys are stock 1955 Klusons and the neck is dated 1955 with stock frets and fingerware.

The pickup height has not been modified since it was used by Jeff, whilst the neck has a nitrocellulose lacquer finish in orange and yellowish and is worn thin. The top edge of the fingerboard is rounded towards the edge from both sanding at the factory and extensive wear from playing.

Pickup configurations are as follows:

Front Position: Mellow sound due to capacitor connected to ground. Tone control inactive in this position.

Middle Position: Variable tone control adjustment. Only position tone control works. You can have maximum treble or maximum bass. Swells and Wah Wah effect.



Bridge Position: Full treble in this position and tone control inactive.

#### Famous Appearances

This historic axe can be seen on several Yardbirds albums and CD covers including; The Yardbirds, Rave Up, The Yardbirds' Greatest Hits Vol. 1 and Spanish release The Yardbirds Play The Blues.

#### **7. Jimmy Page's Dragon Telecaster®**



In June 1965, the Yardbirds were about to leave for America to tour and support their next record, Heart Full of Soul. Before they left, the group's guitarist Jeff Beck showed up at Jimmy Page's doorstep and presented Jimmy with a rare cream-coloured 1958 Telecaster®, with the words, "It's yours". This guitar was one of Beck's main axes during his Yardbird years. Page set to work customising the guitar by painting an orange and green psychedelic dragon on the body.

The guitar was used almost exclusively on the first Led Zeppelin album as well as Page's stint with the Yardbirds. It was also used on Zeppelin's early tours (1968-9) and on the studio version of Stairway to Heaven .

Page is said to still own the guitar.

#### **8. James Burton's Pink Paisley Telecaster®**

Accomplished guitarist James Burton has worked with a variety of top musicians, including John Denver, Buffalo Springfield, Gram Parsons, Emmylou Harris and Elvis Costello. It is, however, his stint with the other, more famous Elvis - Elvis Presley - that James Burton is most famous for.

James and Elvis

Between 1969 and the Presley's death in 1977, Burton was the King's number one axeman, playing on numerous tours and records.

In 1969, Fender gave him a gift of a brand new Pink Paisley Telecaster®. Burton explains: "Chuck Widener [former vice-president] of Fender® called and said, 'I have a guitar here that's yours.' And I said, 'Really? It's got my picture on it, huh?' He said, 'Well, no, not exactly, but I think you'd like to have one.' So I went down to Fender® and picked it up and played it. It just felt great, and I knew that was it."

Asked what the King's reaction to his flamboyant new guitar was, Burton recalls, "I took it to Vegas, but I played my original Tele® for two weeks. Finally, I got up enough nerve to bring that pink paisley out. I was like, 'Man, what's Elvis going to say if he sees this guitar on stage?' So I took it out and he came over to me. 'Johnny B. Goode,' he says, and I kick it off. He went out and was singing, then I played the solo, and he turned around and did a double-take when the lights hit me and that guitar. After the show, he came up to me and he said, 'Man, where did you

get that guitar?' I said, 'Well, I was worried about playing it because it's a little bright.' But he liked it and that was that."

#### Some Changes

Burton has had some small modifications made. "The front pickup is stock, but the back pickup is a dual winding that Red Rhodes did for me," he explains. "I was looking for just a boost, but not necessarily a change in the sound of the guitar."

#### Resting Place

Despite owning well over 150 guitars, the pink Tele® remained his favourite studio instrument until it was replaced with a black and gold Paisley model. The original Pink axe now resides in the Elvis Presley collection at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, Ohio.

The James Burton Telecaster® and James Burton Standard Telecaster® are available through your local Fender authorised dealer.

#### **9. Roy Buchanan's "Nancy"**

The late Roy Buchanan was one of America's most soulful masters of the electric guitar. The Buchanan sound was totally unique: heartbreaking, searing solos, trademark shimmering tone, and a mixture of snarls, wails and squeals that marked him as a wizard of the instrument. He was a pioneer in the use of controlled harmonics, and although this technique has been used by rock's greatest guitarists, especially Jeff Beck, Robbie Robertson and Z.Z. Top's Billy Gibbons, all acknowledge Buchanan as the true master.

When Roy Met Nancy

Roy's instrument of choice throughout his career was a 1953 Fender Telecaster®, serial number 2324. Buchanan once told an interviewer that one day, someone with a battered old Telecaster® under his arm walked past the barbershop where he worked by day.

Buchanan recalled, "I walked out, right in the middle of a haircut, and I said, 'Where'd you get that guitar?'. I just told him, 'I want it'. I said, 'I'll get you the most beautiful guitar you've ever seen, and I'll trade you straight across.'"

"I left work that day and went to a friend of mine with connections and said, 'I want a purple Telecaster.' He had it before the sun went down. We swapped guitars, man. That was it. It was like he knew it was my guitar, too."

#### Nancy's Parts

The guitar's body had the date '3/11/53' written on the neck cavity, while the inside of the neck (where it meets the body) is dated '3/26/53'

Other features include a replacement Bakelite switch tip, ash body and an aged Butterscotch Blonde finish.

#### Nancy Was A Battleaxe!

Interestingly enough, Roy didn't have a case for his guitar and literally carried it under his arm from gig to gig. Legend has it that one night, he was attacked in New York City while walking





to where he was staying. Onlookers reported seeing him use the guitar like an axe to club the would-be mugger! No doubt this accounts for some of the hard life this guitar endured. This could also be one of the reasons why guitars are known as 'axes'!

#### Nancy Retires

By the early '80s Buchanan's fortunes had ebbed. He travelled from gig to gig, playing with different pickup bands, sometimes with rockabilly singer Scot Anderson. His wife Judy was now booking the gigs and his beloved '53 Telecaster®, or "Nancy" as he called it, had survived numerous attempts at theft. After one theft attempt too many, Buchanan decided to retire

Nancy, in favour of a 1983 model fitted with Bill Lawrence pickups.

There is an unconfirmed story that he also decided to stop playing Nancy after he lent the guitar to another player or tech for repairs, and received it back with the pickups damaged.

#### Where Is Nancy Now?

After Buchanan's tragic suicide in 1988, there is much speculation as to the whereabouts of his beloved Nancy. Some say that it is owned by a collector in Japan, while others maintain that it is owned by his family.

### **10. The Status Quo Telecaster® Guitars**

Our last entry is not one guitar, but two.

#### Rockin' All Over The World

With worldwide sales of over 100 million and rising, Status Quo have been rockin' all over the world since 1967. The two founder members (and sole survivors from the original line-up) Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt are familiar figures with their twin Fender Telecaster® guitars, played legs apart, belting out their much-loved brand of uncomplicated, unpretentious and infectious rock music.

Although the Quo never really broke the States in the way that they deserved, their music remains as popular as ever in Europe, the Far East and Australia, where their fans rank alongside the most devoted and enthusiastic in the world.

#### Francis Rossi's Green Telecaster®

Francis Rossi's main axe is a Green 1965 Fender Telecaster®, which he bought for £70 (99 Euros) in 1968. It has a serial number of 110959 and an ash body with its back and sides finished in black.

#### Wood Stain

The green colouring on the body's front is not paint, but a British wood staining product called Cuprinol, used largely on garden

fences and sheds. The story goes that Rossi was in the garden of his south London home one day, treating his garden fence with the aforementioned product when he decided that he liked its dark green hue. He then proceeded to sand the original finish off and paint the Cuprinol onto his guitar. Whatever the thinking behind this act, the guitar's colour is central to its image. Well, apart from the big hole in its body of course!

#### A Hole In The Body

The 22m-wide hole, which goes all the way through to the other side was the result of another moment of madness/genius on Rossi's behalf. One day, he decided that he would drill the enormous hole in his Telecaster®, close to where the jack socket is located, to stop the cable flying out during one of his frenzied performances. (Although why he didn't just tuck the lead behind the strap like everybody else is anyone's guess!)

#### Neck

Rossi also hand-shaved the back of the neck down to make it thinner and replaced the Telecaster® pickups with Lace Sensor™ Stratocaster® pickups.

#### Rick Parfitt's White Telecaster®

A familiar figure alongside Francis Rossi, Rick Parfitt has branded his image in the hearts and minds of his fans, playing his Vintage White 1965 Telecaster®. Originally blue, this axe has a serial number of 156101 and has all of the original Fender® specifications apart from the bridge, which has been changed to a Badass bridge. This modification was made after Rick injured his hand a number of times while thrashing away at the top end of the strings during a number of impassioned performances.

It is quite clear that Rossi and Parfitt would never consider parting with their instruments, but with a worldwide army of adoring fans, there would be no shortage of bidders should

