



The GRAMMY Museum® At L.A. LIVE Acquires Largest Collection Of National Guitars

Shine Like A National Guitar is on display now on the Museum's Fourth Floor and Will be a Permanent Part of the Museum's Collection

LOS ANGELES, CALIF. (April 25, 2016) — The GRAMMY Museum® at L.A. LIVE has acquired the largest collection of National guitars in the United States. The collection, titled *Shine Like A National Guitar*, is on view now on the Museum's fourth floor and marks the first-ever collection donated to the Museum as part of its permanent archives. The guitars were received as a gift to the Museum from New York-based realtor Todd Cooper. *Shine Like A National Guitar* marks the first exhibit to solely feature artifacts from the Museum's permanent collection.

"I have owned these guitars for many years," said Cooper. "I have had countless hours admiring their beauty and unique artwork. These pieces are more than instruments, they are art that should be displayed for people to admire, and hopefully they will give the same joy to folks as they did for me. My appreciation and admiration goes to the GRAMMY Museum for seeing the value in these instruments, and the Museum should be supported by all of us for its efforts."

The collection features nearly 50 stringed instruments made by the National company, and includes a Style O Resonator Tenor (1938), an Aragon Deluxe Archtop Resonator (1940), and a "Don" Style 1 Single-Cone Resonator (1934), the latter of which is one in only 150 made.

Artists who have used National guitars include blues legends such as Tampa Red, Son House, Bukka White, and, more recently, Taj Mahal, Johnny Winter, and Mark Knopfler. The examples seen in the Museum's latest special display, *Shining Like a National Guitar*, demonstrate the remarkable design and creative beauty of these instruments.

The display also features documentary footage of the production process of a National guitar, as well as an interview with Marc Schoenberger, whose National Guitar Repair company is devoted to repairing and setting up resonator instruments, specializing in those made by the National and Dobro companies.

"A National guitar is sonically superior than any other guitar." Marc Schoenberger

A History of the National Company

The National company has a long and complex history in American string musical instrument design and manufacture, dating back to the mid-1920s. Their unique, original development was the acoustic resonator instrument using a spun aluminum cone instead of a wooden top to amplify the vibrating strings.

The firm was founded by John Dopyera, a musical instrument designer and repairman, and George Beauchamp, a Vaudeville Hawaiian guitar player. Beauchamp was frustrated by the limited volume available with even the best conventional guitars and wanted a steel guitar loud enough to play a melody over other instruments in a theater setting. In approximately 1926 John Dopyera and his brother Rudy were running a small Los Angeles instrument sale and repair shop when Beauchamp approached them with the idea to create a Hawaiian guitar that sat on a stand with a phonograph-style resonating disc and a horn attached to the bottom.

John Dopyera built a similar instrument for Beauchamp, but knew from the outset it would not work as well as his customer hoped. When Beauchamp tried his new "phono-guitar" on the vaudeville circuit, its outrageous look drew instant attention but the sound was weak. In the meantime, John Dopyera had become fascinated with the concept of using amplifying cones to create a louder guitar, trying many different materials but settling on a very thin, conical-shaped aluminum resonator driven directly by the string vibrations. He also decided on a metal body to minimize the contribution of the guitar's top and back to the overall tonality. The brothers, with Beauchamp's input and support, produced a number of handmade prototypes and applied for a patent on this "Tricone" guitar in 1927.

In a short time, the National String Instrument Company began factory production of this remarkable new guitar, going on to build an outstandingly varied and creative line of acoustic resonator instruments up until the advent of WWII. Despite the success, within a year problems between the founders emerged. John Dopyera soon left the company, and he and his brothers continued to develop their ideas, founding the Dobro company, eventually merging the National and Dobro brands and moving the company to Chicago.

The Resonator instruments pioneered by the National guitar company were generally forgotten some years after World War II when many were discarded or set away for years. Many Nationals are even believed to have been handed in for scrap drives during the war, as they were built of critical materials like brass, steel and aluminum. The revival of acoustic blues in the 1960s brought a renewed interest in the resonator guitar, and since that time the original instruments have been highly sought after by discerning players. The National company was successfully revived in the late 1980s, creating both recreations of old styles and new designs. Similar resonator instruments are also currently produced by numerous other makers, and the resonator guitar as pioneered in all forms by the Dopyera brothers has become a complete family of fretted instruments unto itself.

About the GRAMMY Museum

Paying tribute to music's rich cultural history, this one-of-a-kind, 21st-century museum explores and celebrates the enduring legacies of all forms of music, the creative process, the art and technology of the recording process, and the history of the premier recognition of excellence in recorded music — the GRAMMY® Award. The GRAMMY Museum features 30,000 square feet of interactive and multimedia exhibits located within L.A. LIVE, the downtown Los Angeles sports, entertainment and residential district. Through thought-provoking and dynamic public and educational programs and exhibits, guests will experience music from a never-before-seen insider perspective that only the GRAMMY Museum can deliver. For more information, please

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