

ovation guitar models history

Ovation guitar models have a storied history that reflects innovation and artistry in the world of music. Since their introduction in the late 1960s, Ovation guitars have become synonymous with high-quality acoustic performance, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern technology. The unique design of these instruments, especially their use of composite materials and rounded backs, has set them apart in an industry dominated by wooden-bodied guitars. This article delves into the history of Ovation guitar models, examining their evolution, unique features, and the impact they've had on musicians and the music industry.

The Birth of Ovation Guitars

Founded in 1965 by Charles Kaman, an aeronautical engineer and guitarist, Ovation was established with a vision to create a guitar that could withstand the rigors of performance while delivering superior sound quality. Kaman's background in aerodynamics and materials led to the innovative use of composite materials in guitar construction.

Early Innovations

- 1. Round Back Design:** The most notable feature of early Ovation guitars was their round back, which was inspired by the design of Kaman's helicopter blades. This shape allowed for greater resonance and projection of sound.
- 2. Synthetic Materials:** Instead of traditional wood, Kaman utilized a synthetic material called Lyrachord for the guitar bodies. This material was not only durable but also resistant to changes in humidity and temperature, making the instruments more stable than their wooden counterparts.
- 3. Neck Construction:** Ovation guitars featured a unique neck joint design that allowed for easy access to higher frets, a significant advantage for lead guitarists.

The 1970s: The Rise to Fame

Ovation guitars gained significant popularity in the 1970s, thanks in part to their use by prominent artists of the era.

Iconic Artists and Their Contributions

1. James Taylor: Taylor was one of the first major artists to embrace Ovation guitars, using them extensively in his performances. His endorsement helped solidify the brand's reputation.
2. Glen Campbell: Known for his virtuosic guitar skills, Campbell showcased the Ovation's capabilities in his live performances, further introducing the brand to a wider audience.
3. Don McLean: The folk singer-songwriter used an Ovation guitar to perform his hit "American Pie," contributing to the brand's association with folk and popular music.

Introduction of the Legend Series

In 1968, Ovation introduced the Legend Series, a line of guitars that combined the innovative features of the original models with elegant appointments and finishes. The Legend guitars became iconic for their aesthetic appeal and high-quality sound, further establishing Ovation's place in the market.

The 1980s: Continued Innovation

The 1980s saw Ovation continue to evolve, introducing new models and technologies that would shape the future of acoustic guitars.

New Models and Features

1. Adamas Series: Launched in 1974, the Adamas line featured a carbon fiber top, which provided enhanced projection and tone. The Adamas guitars were known for their bold sound and sleek design, appealing to both performers and collectors.
2. Electronics Integration: Ovation was among the first to incorporate advanced electronics into their guitars, allowing for better amplification and sound control. This innovation made them particularly popular among performing artists who relied on live amplification.
3. Custom Shop: In the 1980s, Ovation established a custom shop that allowed musicians to create personalized guitars tailored to their specific needs and preferences.

The 1990s: Challenges and Changes

Despite its innovations, Ovation faced challenges in the 1990s as the music industry underwent significant transformations.

Market Dynamics

- Increased Competition: The rise of boutique guitar manufacturers and a renewed interest in traditional acoustic guitars created stiff competition for Ovation.
- Changing Musical Trends: The shift towards electric and alternative music genres led to a decline in the popularity of acoustic guitars, impacting Ovation's sales.

Brand Evolution

In response to these challenges, Ovation began to diversify its product lineup and explore new markets. They reintroduced classic models and focused on maintaining the quality that had made them popular in the first place.

The 2000s: A New Era

In the 2000s, Ovation underwent a series of ownership changes, which brought about new opportunities and challenges.

Acquisition and Revitalization

- **Acquisition by Fender:** In 2005, Ovation was acquired by Fender Musical Instruments, which provided the brand with additional resources and distribution channels. This acquisition aimed to revitalize the Ovation brand and introduce it to a new generation of musicians.
- **New Models Released:** During this period, Ovation released several new models, including the Celebrity and Applause series, aimed at budget-conscious players who sought quality instruments without breaking the bank.

Modern Ovation: Innovation and Tradition

Today, Ovation continues to thrive, combining traditional craftsmanship with modern technology to produce a diverse range of guitar models.

Current Models

Some of the most popular modern Ovation guitar models include:

1. **Celebrity Series:** Aimed at beginner and intermediate players, this series offers quality instruments at an affordable price.
2. **Adamas Series:** Still regarded as the flagship line, Adamas guitars are known for their unique construction and superior sound quality.
3. **Ovation Standard Series:** These guitars blend traditional Ovation features with modern aesthetics, appealing to a broad range of players.

Technological Advancements

Modern Ovation guitars incorporate several technological advancements, including:

- **Advanced Electronics:** Ovation continues to push the envelope with onboard electronics that allow for precise sound manipulation and amplification.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** In light of environmental concerns, Ovation has begun exploring sustainable materials and practices in their guitar production.

The Legacy of Ovation Guitars

Ovation guitars have left an indelible mark on the music industry, influencing countless musicians and shaping the sound of modern acoustic music. Their unique design and innovative features have set a standard for quality and playability.

Influence on Musicians

Many artists continue to gravitate towards Ovation guitars, appreciating their distinct sound and reliability. From singer-songwriters to rock musicians, Ovation guitars have been a staple on stages around the world.

Community and Support

Ovation has cultivated a dedicated community of players who share their love for the brand through forums, social media, and local events. This sense of community further enhances the brand's reputation and fosters a culture of support among musicians.

Conclusion

The history of Ovation guitar models is a testament to innovation, adaptability, and artistry in the world of music. From their inception in the 1960s to their modern iterations, Ovation guitars have continually evolved while maintaining the quality and sound that made them popular in the first place. As they move forward, Ovation remains committed to their roots while embracing new technologies and trends, ensuring their place in the hearts of musicians for generations to come.

Frequently Asked Questions

What year was the first Ovation guitar model introduced?

The first Ovation guitar model, the Ovation Balladeer, was introduced in 1966.

What is unique about the design of Ovation guitars?

Ovation guitars are known for their round backs made from composite materials, which enhance projection and reduce feedback.

Who founded Ovation Guitars?

Ovation Guitars was founded by Charles H. Kaman, an aeronautical engineer, in 1965.

What was the innovative feature of the Ovation Adamas model introduced in the 1970s?

The Ovation Adamas model featured a carbon fiber top, which provided improved tonal qualities and durability.

How did Ovation guitars become popular among musicians?

Ovation guitars gained popularity due to their unique sound, comfortable playability, and endorsement by high-profile artists in the 1970s and 1980s.

What role did Ovation guitars play in the folk and rock music scenes?

Ovation guitars were widely used in the folk and rock music scenes, thanks to their amplification capabilities and popularity among artists like Glen Campbell and Johnny Cash.

Are Ovation guitars still being produced today?

Yes, Ovation guitars are still being produced today, although the brand has gone through various ownership changes and continues to evolve its designs.

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