

Basic Detail Report



Harmony Stratotone Formerly Owned by Carl Perkins

Date

c. 1953

Primary Maker

The Harmony Company

Description

Carl Perkins (1932-1998) played this circa 1953 Harmony H44 Stratotone electric guitar as a teenager in his first musical group, the Perkins Brothers, along with his siblings Jay and Clayton. He bought the guitar for \$49.95 at Hardeman Music in Jackson, Tennessee, paying \$1 a week. Perkins claimed that once he put tape over the instrument's logo, as he was embarrassed by such a cheap guitar and hoped to convince audiences he had a Gibson Les Paul. The design for this solid-body, mail-order guitar grew out of a response by the Harmony Company to the growing post-war demand for affordable guitars. Such student-grade instruments helped launch many aspiring musicians who could scarcely afford basic necessities, let alone expensive, high-quality guitars. Perkins's Stratotone uses only a single pickup, a tone knob, a volume knob, and a high-low switch.

In the beginning of the 1950s solid-body guitars in general sold slowly, but nascent Rock 'n' Roll music heightened their profile and sales soared by mid-decade. Perkins became one of Sun Records' earliest artists along with Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Jerry Lee Lewis. "Blue Suede Shoes" alone would have ensured Perkins' place in music history, but in addition, guitarists such as George Harrison, Jeff Beck, Brian Setzer, and countless others owe a huge stylistic debt to Perkins' ground-breaking blend of Country, Pop, and Blues, which laid down the roadmap for Rockabilly and Rock'n'Roll. The Beatles also recognized Perkins' songwriting genius with their covers of "Matchbox," "Everybody's Trying to Be My Baby," and "Honey Don't." Perkins' gift for catchy phrases and musical hooks resulted in hits not only for himself, landing him near the top of the Rhythm & Blues, Country and Pop charts, but for Elvis Presley, Patsy Cline, and Johnny Cash as well.

Dimensions

Overall: 36 1/4 x 10 1/4 x 1 3/4 in. (92.075 x 26.035 x 4.445 cm)