

MUSEUM

A Private Showing of *Dangerous Curves: The Art of the Guitar*



Obviously, *GP* readers consider the guitar to be a magical and powerful icon. It's the most popular musical instrument in the world, after all, and also one of the most versatile. In fact, only the human voice surpasses the guitar in its ability to draw people in with its expressive, emotional qualities. The guitar is also a constantly evolving instrument. The trumpet, for example, has changed only marginally since the 1800s, but a Parker Fly is light years from the acoustic guitars of two centuries ago—and a far cry from the electrics of just

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two decades ago. Despite all these cool facts, however, society at large has not exactly embraced the guitar as high art. Thanks to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, this may change.

The museum's *Dangerous Curves—The Art of the Guitar* is perhaps the most comprehensive exhibition of guitar history and craft ever mounted, and its sheer scope elevates the guitar to its rightful status as an *objet d'art*. Featuring 130 instruments and spanning four centuries,

Dangerous Curves encapsulates the guitar's proud history as never before. The exhibit includes an audio tour narrated by James Taylor, video footage of dozens of top players, and instruments from several famous collections (including those of Scott Chinery, Steve Howe, and Elderly Instruments). Visitors can gaze at a 17th century 10-string, a guitar built by famed violin maker Antonio Stradivari (one of only two known to exist), lyre guitars from the 1800s, breathtaking instruments adorned with ivory and silver—and that's just in the first hall!

The next part of the exhibit

spotlights guitars from the late 1800s to the mid 1900s. Here, patrons can behold pristine Martins, Gibsons, Guilds, Washburns, and many other fine acoustics from this classic period. The final hall ushers in the electric era with all the usual suspects—Fenders, Gibsons, Rickenbackers, and so on. In addition, visitors can see guitars owned by such famed players as Chet Atkins, Jimi Hendrix, Joe Perry, and Les Paul. All the instruments are well chosen, tastefully displayed, and just plain cool.

Of course, *Dangerous Curves* has already rankled some of the upper crust of the arts community, who feel this workingman's tool has no place in the world of fine art. But then, that's what they told Segovia. ■



PIECES

This 1920 contraption—employing an aluminum diaphragm and horn for more directional sound dispersion—was the brainchild of John Stroh. In the days of single-microphone recording, the design was thought to be better suited for recording the guitar in an ensemble situation.



A 1971 Rickenbacker 331 with a twist—colored lights beneath frosted plastic flash on and off when the guitar is played.



A Sonic Blue Stratocaster from 1963.



Art deco elegance: This 1954 D'Angelico New Yorker epitomizes high-end archtop design.

