

Made with that miracle material - PLASTIC

I am totally obsessed with Mario Maccaferri. Here are some brief highlights of his life.

- As a teenager working for the Selmer Company he designs the guitar that Django Reinhart uses.
- Is a well respected Classical guitarist and friend of Segovia.
- Immigrates to America ahead of the Nazi invasion of France and buys a plastics factory.
- Owing to wartime shortages he invents a plastic “reed” for woodwind instruments that is endorsed by Benny Goodman and others.
- Invents the plastic clothespin! (Really!)
- In response to Hawaiian music fad he creates a plastic ukulele that is endorsed by Arthur Godfrey and sells 9 million in first year.
- Expands instrument line to include guitars. The G-40 is endorsed by Segovia!
- Helps to design 8-Track case. (Don't hold it against him.)
- Redesigns machine to make cassette cases which causes them to immediately eclipse 8-Tracks.
- Though nearing 90 he creates a plastic violin which debuts at Carnegie Hall.

There is a wonderful article from Vintage Guitar Magazine at

<http://www.vintageguitar.com/brands/details.asp?ID=59>. And the company he founded is still in business and run by his daughter. <http://www.frenchamericanreeds.com/>

Maccaferri G-40



Maccaferri G-30



Looking at these two you can see that they were designed by the same guy who did the Django guitars. The G-40 is an arch top and has a very Selmer like tailpiece. The G-30 has a flat top. The necks are amazingly flat and nice to play with position marks on front and back. Should you need to adjust the neck there is a screw under the tailpiece, visible on the G-30, hidden by a pop-out button on the G-40. The tuners are more like those you'd expect on a banjo. They were designed by Maccaferri himself. There are a lot more

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bodies for these guitars floating around than there are necks. There is a company that makes electric guitars using the G-30 body and their own necks.

http://www.campbellguitars.com/model_sc.html

Islander Guitar



Made to accompany the popular Islander line of Ukes. It is basically a G-30 with no cutaway and a round sound hole fitted with bridge and tailpiece of a G-40. Can't say much more as I'm still trying to track one of these babies down but the neck, which is superficially similar to the f-hole models has 2 spots on the 3 and 7 fret. Whether there are other difference remains to be seen.

The Romancer



Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. Once again I don't have any experience (yet!) but this looks like an Islander fitted with a G-30 bridge. What he was thinking when he added all the pictures and such I'll never know but on the other hand The Romancer was included by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in the exhibit Dangerous Curves: the art of the guitar.

The Showtime



You can think of this as a Romancer without all the crap or an Islander with a romancer bridge. Either way the neck is slightly different at least superficially with a single dot at the 5, 7 and 9 fret. Still looking for one of these puppies too.

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The Violin



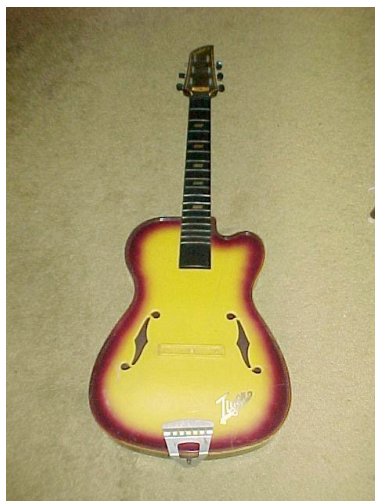
Even after mine arrived, I'm still having trouble believing this one. According to Maccaferri's daughter, her dad assembled, numbered and dated each one of these himself. She says that there were approximately 300 made. The highest number I've been able to document is 309. Mine is number 121 and was manufactured on 8/17/89. It was, presumably, boxed at that time and warehoused for almost 16 years before it was shipped to me. Though in the box it had slipped out of its cardboard restraints and was rattling around loose, only the low string had slipped badly.

Just one of Dave's obsessions

The other three strings were close to concert pitch! You'd probably consider this a good student violin. Very playable with a nice, if not exquisite, tone. I may be a little weak on the base end but that could be due to the fact that I'm not much of a player. Should the neck ever need adjusting there is a screw head just below the tailpiece attachment. There are still a few for sale.

<http://www.reedstore.com/>

Emenee Tiger Guitar



The Emenee company was a leading manufacturer of plastic toys in the 1950s and 60s. Perhaps their best known product was the Mr. Peanut peanut-butter maker.

They also had a large line of toy instruments. There is a rumor that the M of Emenee was Maccaferri himself but I don't buy it. All of the string instruments they made appear to be cheap toy knock-offs, loosely based on his designs. Take for example the Tiger Guitar. It looks like a small, garish G-40. Unlike many toy instruments, it was actually playable to an extent. They seem to have marketed the two colors shown and sold it with or without amp. When I track 'em down I let you know if there are other differences. Sears marketed a similar guitar under the Wing-Ding name. It may be the same guitar with a different name plate. I'll let you know when I capture one.

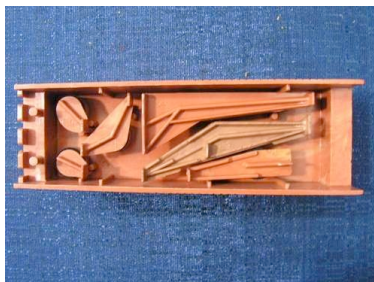
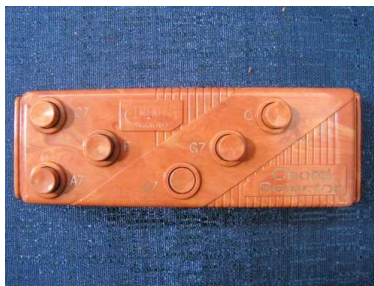
Gene Autry



<http://folktraks.com>

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Cowboy Guitar



Western Guitar



I wonder which of these came first. These are kind of the Romancers of the Emeene family. Notice that both use the Tiger tailpiece. The main difference is that the Autry/Cowboy is a 4-string! And came not only with a songbook but a Chord Maker box that strapped to the neck and allowed you to make 6 chords with the press of a single button.

The only difference between the Autry and the Cowboy is the fact that Gene's name has been removed from the peg head and the song book. The Western, however, is a 6-string using the same body without the two-tone effect. Look closely and you'll see that that's our old friend Gene starring at you on the front of the Western. My guess is that the Autry came first with the Cowboy hitting the market days after their contract with him expired and the Western following when the interest in tenor guitars (and baritone ukes) faded.