

# CHET ATKINS



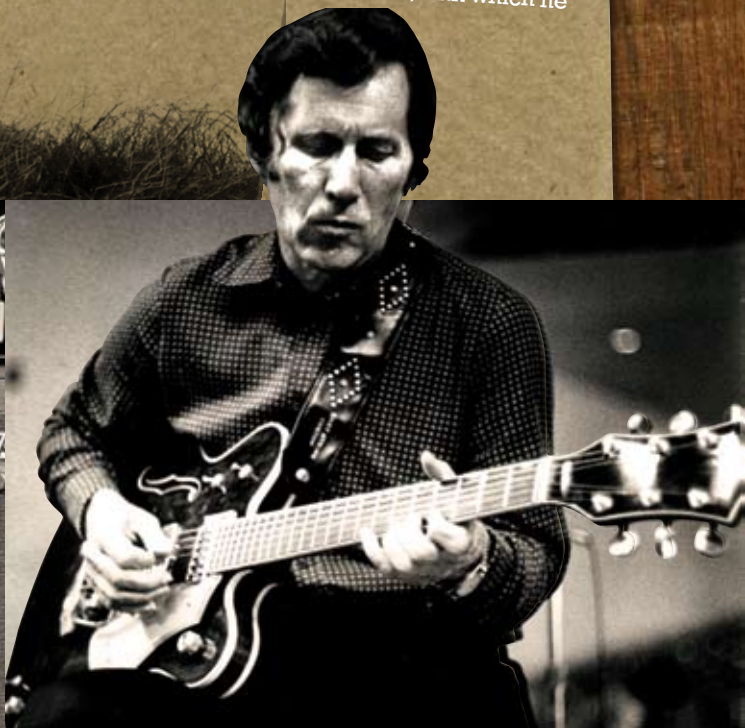
**Chet Atkins** was already a successful, respected and extraordinarily busy artist and producer by the time Gretsch® approached him in 1954 with a singularly enticing offer.

The youngest of four children in a very musical family, Chester Burton Atkins became enthralled with the guitar at age six, and had become a talented and accomplished self-taught guitarist by the time he left high school in 1942. At age 15, while living in Georgia, he had heard the great Merle Travis

on Cincinnati's WLW radio, but couldn't figure out how to play like that; he consequently invented his own way of playing using the thumb and three fingers of his picking hand (unbeknownst to Atkins, Travis used only his thumb and index finger). It was an intricate and complex playing style, but Atkins mastered it.

Atkins moved from radio station gig to gig in the mid-1940s; the shy guitarist was actually fired often because his sophisticated playing style was frequently deemed "not country enough." Nonetheless, he always found work, and Atkins became adept at pop and swing styles during this period, and he absorbed the playing of Django Reinhardt and Andres Segovia. Atkins didn't consider himself solely a country/hillbilly guitarist; he considered himself a guitarist, period.

After stints with WNOX in Knoxville, Tenn., WLW (where he replaced Travis) and WPTF in Raleigh, N.C., Atkins went to Chicago and joined Red Foley's band, with which he







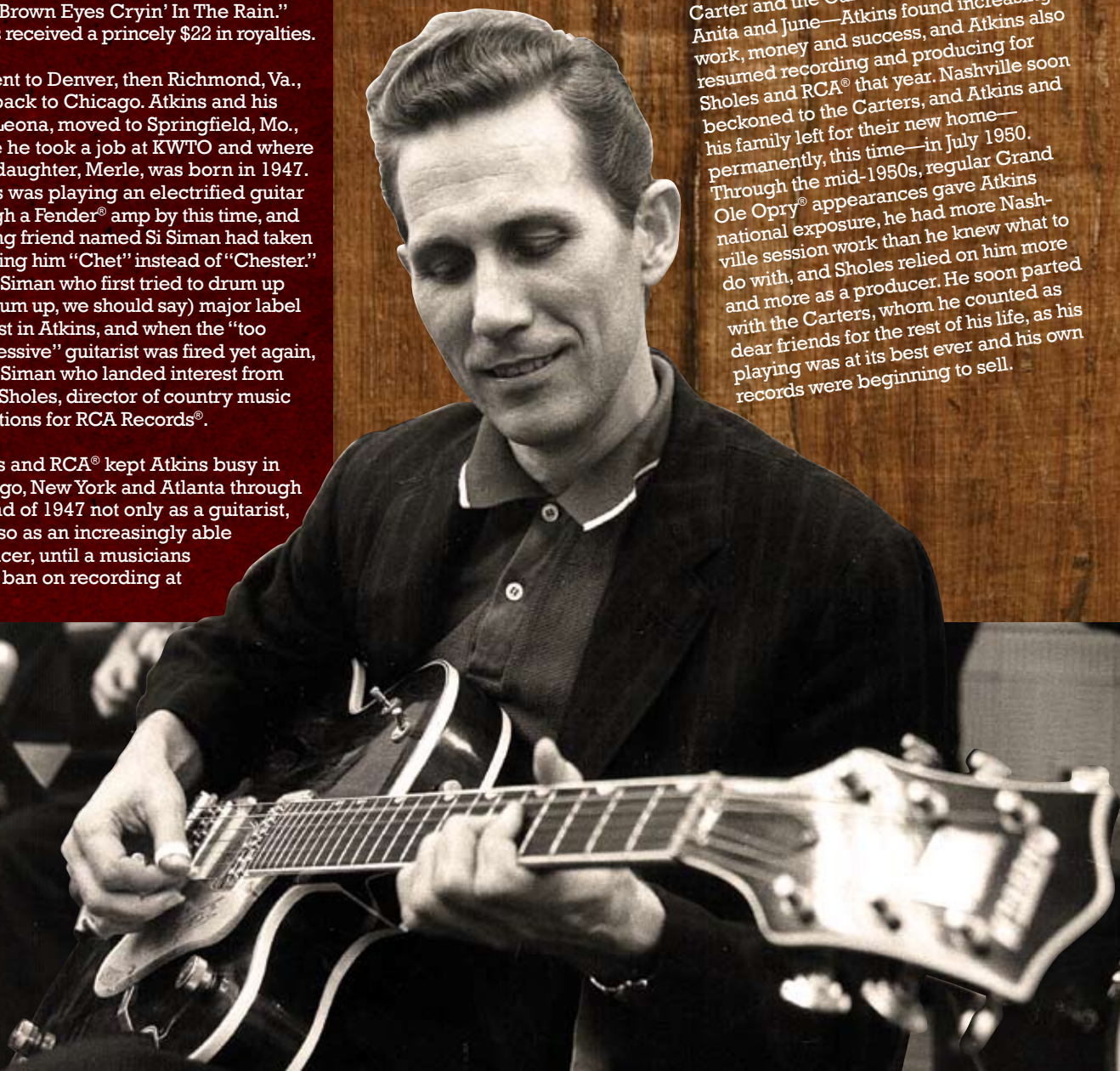
went to Nashville and made his debut at the Grand Ole Opry® on April 13, 1946. The Foley/Opry® gig lasted six months, after which Atkins made his first record, "Guitar Blues," an instrumental he wrote with his brother, Jim, who had played in the Les Paul Trio in New York, backed with "Brown Eyes Cryin' In The Rain." Atkins received a princely \$22 in royalties.

He went to Denver, then Richmond, Va., then back to Chicago. Atkins and his wife, Leona, moved to Springfield, Mo., where he took a job at KWTO and where their daughter, Merle, was born in 1947. Atkins was playing an electrified guitar through a Fender® amp by this time, and a young friend named Si Siman had taken to calling him "Chet" instead of "Chester." It was Siman who first tried to drum up (or strum up, we should say) major label interest in Atkins, and when the "too progressive" guitarist was fired yet again, it was Siman who landed interest from Steve Sholes, director of country music operations for RCA Records®.

Sholes and RCA® kept Atkins busy in Chicago, New York and Atlanta through the end of 1947 not only as a guitarist, but also as an increasingly able producer, until a musicians union ban on recording at

the end of 1947 stopped Atkins' session work. Dispirited, he returned to WNOX in Knoxville in early 1948. It was a rough year, and Atkins was considering a new career as a piano tuner until, in early 1949, he met the Carters.

As guitarist with "Mother" Maybelle Carter and the Carter sisters—Helen, Anita and June—Atkins found increasing work, money and success, and Atkins also resumed recording and producing for Sholes and RCA® that year. Nashville soon beckoned to the Carters, and Atkins and his family left for their new home—permanently, this time—in July 1950. Through the mid-1950s, regular Grand Ole Opry® appearances gave Atkins national exposure, he had more Nashville session work than he knew what to do with, and Sholes relied on him more and more as a producer. He soon parted with the Carters, whom he counted as dear friends for the rest of his life, as his playing was at its best ever and his own records were beginning to sell.





Jimmie Webster had been criss-crossing the United States for quite a while when he came through Nashville once again in 1954.

Webster—a Gretsch® sales rep, guitar designer and fine player in his own right—met Atkins there that year and tried to persuade him to play a Gretsch guitar. Atkins resisted, insisting that he was already happy with what he was using at the time. Why should he change?

Finally, one day that year at the Grand Ole Opry®, Webster made Atkins an offer he couldn't refuse: a Chet Atkins-designed Gretsch guitar. Atkins had some strong ideas about guitar design, and, eager to have his own model—his idol Les Paul recently had one with another maker—jumped at the chance. He quickly inked a deal with Gretsch in Brooklyn, where he met Fred Gretsch Jr. and the company's designers.

The guitar would be a single-cutaway hollow-body instrument with two DeArmond® pickups, a signed pickguard, a metal nut and bridge to improve sustain suggested by Chet and a striking orange finish suggested by Jimmie Webster. Interestingly, Gretsch evidently perceived Atkins as mainly a country and western artist, and so the finished guitar—dubbed the “Streamliner Special”—bore a big “G” brand on the upper bout, “belt buckle” tailpiece, steer horns on the headstock and western-style engravings in the pearl block fingerboard inlays, none of which appealed to Atkins.

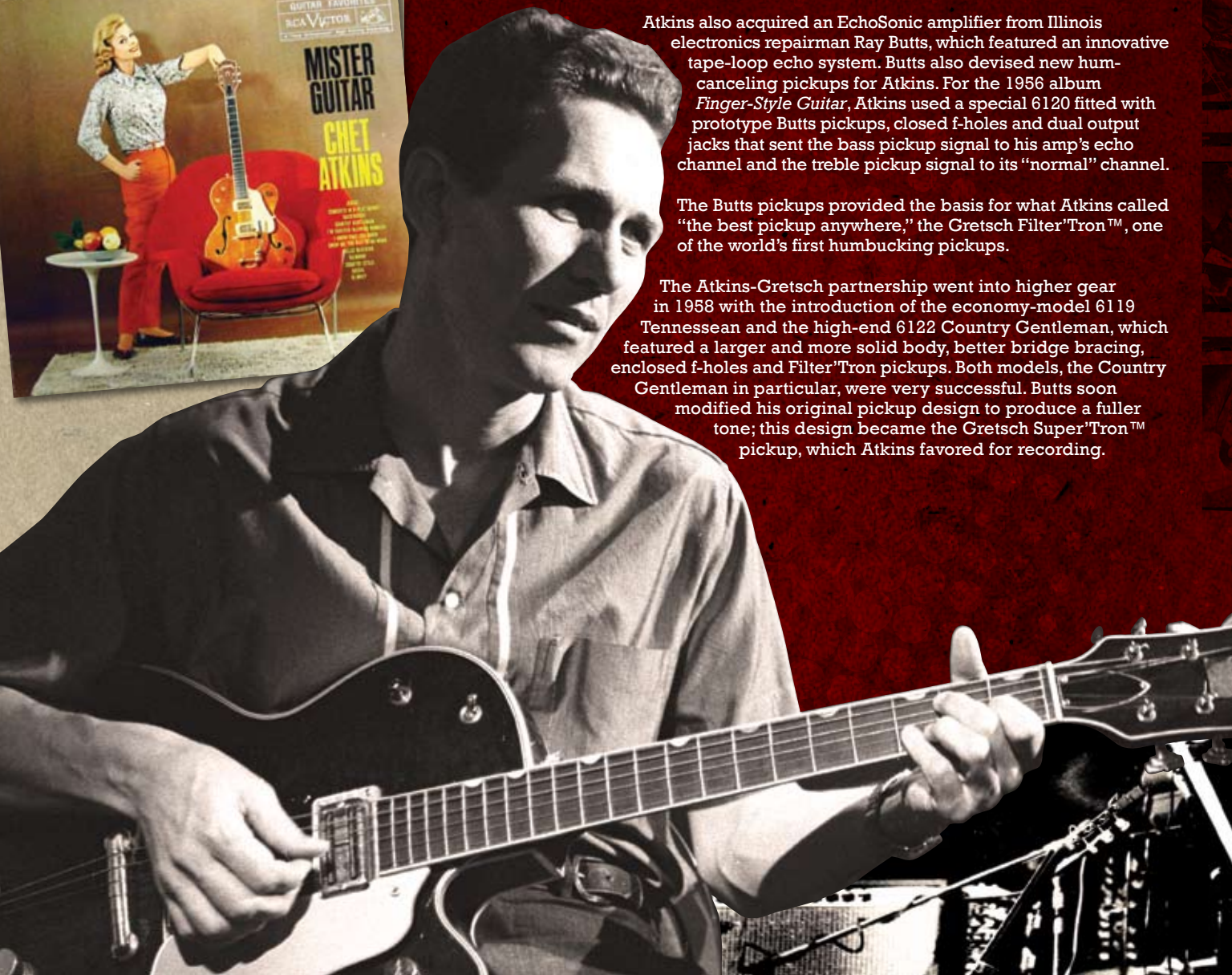
Technically, this guitar was the first of what, for Gretsch, would become a most successful and strikingly iconic model: the 6120. The *second* of these guitars made for Atkins was actually the first one officially designated as the 6120; he almost immediately added a swivel-arm Bigsby® tailpiece.

Within weeks, Gretsch 6120 Chet Atkins Hollow Body guitars went on sale. They appeared in Gretsch sales brochures in 1955, and sales took off. A solid-body version (chambered, more accurately), the 6121, also appeared in 1954, but Atkins had little to do with its design and it fared less well in the marketplace. The popular 6120 soon lost its cowboy trappings, and a Bigsby tailpiece was added (fixed at first; then swivel-arm). Significantly, the Gretsch model bearing Atkins' name was present at the birth of rock 'n' roll, and popular and influential players such as Eddie Cochran, Duane Eddy rocked their 6120s onto the charts and into the hearts of 1950s America. The Chet Atkins Hollow Body model quickly found itself at the very forefront of rock 'n' roll and rockabilly—a potent look, sound and tradition that, happily, continues to this day. Later, in the '60s, the 6120 was used by the Who's Pete Townshend and Buffalo Springfield's Neil Young. Today, the 6120 is put to great use by rockers including Brian Setzer, the Reverend Horton Heat and Legendary Shack Shakers guitarist David Lee.

Atkins also acquired an EchoSonic amplifier from Illinois electronics repairman Ray Butts, which featured an innovative tape-loop echo system. Butts also devised new hum-canceling pickups for Atkins. For the 1956 album *Finger-Style Guitar*, Atkins used a special 6120 fitted with prototype Butts pickups, closed f-holes and dual output jacks that sent the bass pickup signal to his amp's echo channel and the treble pickup signal to its “normal” channel.

The Butts pickups provided the basis for what Atkins called “the best pickup anywhere,” the Gretsch Filter'Tron™, one of the world's first humbucking pickups.

The Atkins-Gretsch partnership went into higher gear in 1958 with the introduction of the economy-model 6119 Tennessean and the high-end 6122 Country Gentleman, which featured a larger and more solid body, better bridge bracing, enclosed f-holes and Filter'Tron pickups. Both models, the Country Gentleman in particular, were very successful. Butts soon modified his original pickup design to produce a fuller tone; this design became the Gretsch Super'Tron™ pickup, which Atkins favored for recording.





Gretsch® was sold to Baldwin® Manufacturing in 1967; an unhappy marriage that saw quality suffer through the 1970s. Atkins, always loyal to Fred Gretsch Jr., stayed as long as he could, through the introduction of the Super Chet guitar in 1971 and the Super Axe solid-body model in 1976. Finally, in 1979, shortly after the passing of Fred Gretsch Jr., Atkins and Gretsch parted ways after 25 years together. As he modestly put in his 2001 biography, *Chet Atkins: Me and My Guitars*:

*“Getting the endorsement deal with Gretsch back in the '50s was a major step in my career. I think it was a good thing for the Gretsch company as well ... Having my own personalized guitar on the market and being featured in Gretsch's national advertising put me on the map as a guitar player, and I felt a strong loyalty to Mr. Gretsch and the company because of that.”*

Although the great Chet Atkins passed on in June 2001 after a lifetime of incredible musical achievement and innovation, his musical legacy will live forever.

Now, in 2007, a new chapter opens in the history—the legacy—of one of the guitar world's most celebrated, most revered partnerships: Gretsch and the Chet Atkins Trust are very proud indeed to announce the return of Chet Atkins' name to Gretsch guitars.

Chet's signature will once again grace the pickguards of the legendary Gretsch models with which he was originally so indelibly connected. When the clock rings in 2007, Gretsch's famous 6120 Nashville® guitars will once again become known as what they truly are—Gretsch 6120 Chet Atkins Hollow Body guitars\*, Gretsch 6122 Country Classic™ guitars will once again be known by the name that made them famous in the beginning—Country Gentleman®, and the elegant 6119 Tennessee Rose™ guitars will become the Gretsch Chet Atkins Tennessee Rose guitars.

Join us as we say “welcome home” to the historic musical legacy of Chet Atkins. We couldn't be more proud and excited, and you will be too when you play one of these fantastic Gretsch guitars that bears the name of the only man in history who can rightfully and affectionately be known by the entire world as exactly what he is: **Mr. Guitar.**





# 6120

## CHET ATKINS

### **G6120 CHET ATKINS HOLLOW BODY**

240-1250-812

### **Also Available: Left-Handed Model**

240-1220-822

The Gretsch® 6120 Chet Atkins Hollow Body is the one that started it all. When Gretsch approached Atkins—already well on his way to “legendary” status—in 1954 about designing his own model, the 6120 was the result, and it quickly became one of the company’s most popular models. The 6120 was present at the birth of rock ‘n’ roll, and remains a favorite to this day among players of all ages and musical genres. Today, Gretsch is proud to offer a stable of 6120 Chet Atkins Hollow Body guitar models that are fully equipped and ready to rock!



### **G6120BK CHET ATKINS HOLLOW BODY**

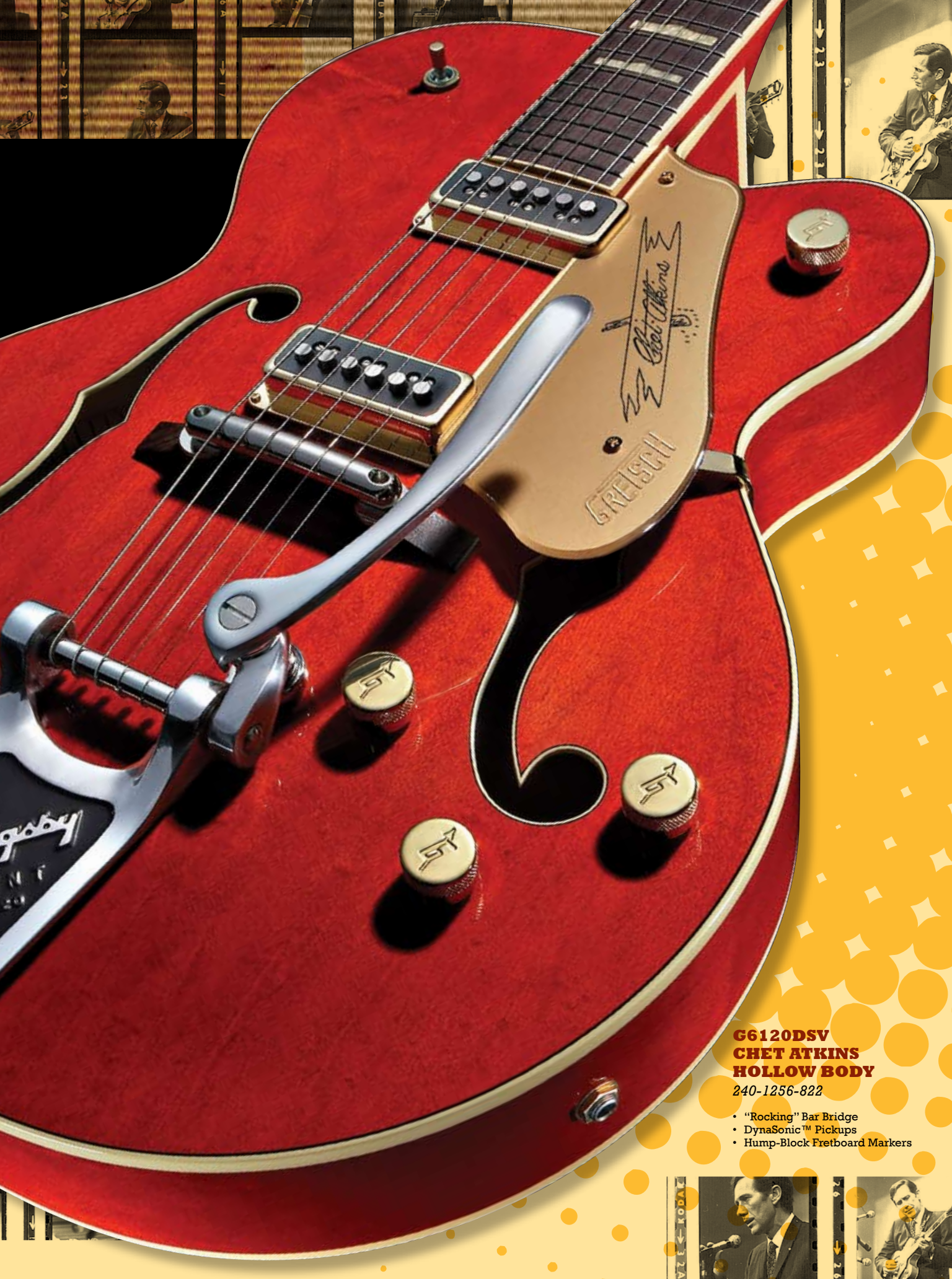
240-1250-806 (Black)

### **G6120BS CHET ATKINS HOLLOW BODY**

240-1250-827 (Blue Burst)

- “High-Sensitive” Filter’Tron™ Pickups
- Adjusto-Matic™ Bridge
- Grover® Rotomatic™ Machine Heads





**G6120DSV  
CHET ATKINS  
HOLLOW BODY**

240-1256-822

- "Rocking" Bar Bridge
- DynaSonic™ Pickups
- Hump-Block Fretboard Markers





# G6120

## CHET ATKINS

### G6120TM CHET ATKINS HOLLOW BODY

240-1250-850

- Tiger Flame Maple
- "High-Sensitive" Filter'Tron™ Pickups
- Grover® Rotomatic™ Machine Heads

### G6120WCST-1955 CHET ATKINS HOLLOW BODY

240-1254-822

- Seymour Duncan® DynaSonic™ Pickups
- Deep Orange Lacquer Finish
- Full Western Appointments
- Grover® Sta-Tite™ Machine Heads



### G6120AM CHET ATKINS HOLLOW BODY

240-1250-820

- Tiger Flame Maple
- "High-Sensitive" Filter'Tron™ Pickups
- Adjusto-Matic™ Bridge
- Grover® Rotomatic™ Machine Heads

### G6120DSW CHET ATKINS HOLLOW BODY

240-1257-822

- DynaSonic™ Pickups
- Bigsby® "B6BVF" Vibrato Tailpiece w/Vintage Narrow Handle
- Polished Aluminum Compensated Bridge
- Full Western Motif





**G6120DC  
CHET ATKINS  
HOLLOW BODY**  
240-1255-822

- "High-Sensitive" Filter'Tron™ Pickups
- Flip-Up Muffler System
- "Rocking" Bar Bridge

**G6120-1959  
CHET ATKINS  
HOLLOW BODY**  
240-1251-822

- "High-Sensitive" Filter'Tron™ Pickups
- "Rocking" Bar Bridge
- Trestle Bracing

**G6120-1959LTV  
CHET ATKINS  
HOLLOW BODY**  
240-1253-822

- TV Jones® Classic Pickups
- Lacquer Finish
- Trestle Bracing

**Also Available:  
Left-Handed Model**  
240-1252-822

**G6120W-1957  
CHET ATKINS  
HOLLOW BODY**  
240-1258-822

- Lindy Fralin "Dog Ear" Pickup (Neck)
- DynaSonic™ Pickup (Bridge)
- Grover® Stay-Tite™ Machine Heads
- Full Western Motif





# 6119

## TENNESSEE ROSE™

The sweetheart of the Gretsch® line and yet another classic Atkins-inspired design. Our versatile 6119 Chet Atkins Tennessee Rose guitars effortlessly evoke a variety of eras and styles—from '60s Britpop on through to today's rock, pop, jazz and country. Classic Gretsch/Chet Atkins design meets modern styling.



### G6119 CHET ATKINS TENNESSEE ROSE

240-1312-859

- "High-Sensitive" Filter™ Tron™ Pickups
- Adjusto-Matic™ Bridge
- Grover® Rotomatic™ Machine Heads
- 2.5" Deep Body



### G6119-1962HT CHET ATKINS TENNESSEE ROSE

240-1314-866

- Hilo™ Tron™ Pickups
- "Rocking" Bar Bridge
- Grover® Sta-Tite™ Machine Heads
- 2" Deep "Electrotone" Body w/Simulated F-Holes

#### Also Available: Left-Handed Model

240-1324-866







**G6119-1962FT CHET ATKINS  
TENNESSEE ROSE™**

240-1313-892

- "High-Sensitive" Filter'Tron™ Pickups
- "Rocking" Bar Bridge
- 2" Deep "ElectroTone" Body w/Simulated F-Holes



# G6121

## SOLID BODY

The G6121 Chet Atkins Solid Body guitar model first appeared in 1954 as the solid sibling (chambered, really) of the wildly successful G6120 Chet Atkins Hollow Body guitar. True to its name in more ways than one, the G6121 always delivered solidly rockin' sound, looks and feel, and today's models are no exception.

### G6121-1955 CHET ATKINS SOLID BODY

240-0540-822

- DynaSonic™ Pickups
- Arched Maple Top, Mahogany Chambered Body w/ Western Leather Trim
- Bigsby® B3GBVN Vibrato Tailpiece w/Vintage Narrow Handle
- Full Western Motif

### G6121-1959 CHET ATKINS SOLID BODY

240-0541-822

- "High-Sensitive" Filter'Tron™ Pickups
- Arched Maple Top, Mahogany Chambered Body
- Grover® Sta-Tite™ Machine Heads





# 6122

## COUNTRY GENTLEMAN®

Gretsch® introduced the famous Chet Atkins 6122 Country Gentleman guitar in 1958 as a high-end complement to the popular 6120 Chet Atkins Hollow Body model. The Country Gentleman became an immediate hit, and was heard on many hits in the late '50s and throughout the '60s (and beyond) not only by Atkins himself, but by legions of players who emerged from the British Invasion and '60s guitar boom who revered it for its terrific and elegant sound, look and feel. It was so big, so luxurious — and so rockin'! In single- and double-cutaway models, the Country Gentleman has left an indelible imprint on the history of popular music, and today's 6122 Country Gentleman guitars continue that great Gretsch tradition — and "That Great Gretsch Sound!™"



### G6122II CHET ATKINS COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

240-1136-892

- "High-Sensitive" Filter'Tron™ Pickups
- Rock Maple Neck Joined at the 18th Fret
- 17" Wide Body w/Open "F" Holes
- Adjusto-Matic™ Bridge

### G6122-12 CHET ATKINS COUNTRY GENTLEMAN 12-STRING

241-1130-892

- "High-Sensitive" Filter'Tron™ Pickups
- Grover® Rotomatic™ Machine Heads
- Adjusto-Matic™ Bridge
- 2" Deep "Electrotone" Body w/Simulated F-Holes





# 6122

## COUNTRY GENTLEMAN<sup>®</sup>

### G6122-1962 CHET ATKINS COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

240-1135-892

**Also Available:  
Left-Handed Model**

240-1125-892

- "High-Sensitive" Filter-Tron™ Pickups
- "Rocking" Bar Bridge
- Grover® Imperial™ Machine Heads
- Dual Flip-Up Muffler System

### G6122-1958 CHET ATKINS COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

240-1131-892

- "High-Sensitive" Filter-Tron™ Pickups
- 2.75" Deep "Electrotone" Body w/Simulated F-Holes
- "Rocking" Bar Bridge
- Grover® Imperial™ Machine Heads



### G6122-1959 CHET ATKINS COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

240-1134-892

**Also Available:  
Left-Handed Model**

240-1124-892

- Custom Handmade Pickups by TV Jones®, Plus HT (Bridge), Super-Tron™ Classic (Neck)
- Bigsby® Vibrato Tailpiece w/Fixed Wire Arm
- "Rocking" Bar Bridge
- Grover® Imperial™ Machine Heads







VLT ← KODAK

→ 26A