

Will The Real Dean Please Stand Up? Dean Zelinsky Reshapes The Industry Of Electric Guitars.

By Moshpit Media

Dated: Jul 03, 2009

When the correct history of the guitar industry is written, there is no question that Dean Zelinsky remains a force to be reckoned with. An accurate portrayal of the facts leading up to DBZ Guitars.

Dean B. Zelinsky (born February 20, 1957), also known as Dean Z, Dean Barrett Zelinsky or DBZ, is an American Guitar Luthier who founded Dean Guitars in 1976 and later founded DBZ Guitars in 2008 with partners Jeff Diamant and Terry Martin of Diamond Amplification. Dean's guitar designs from the 1970s on continue to dominate rock music more than thirty years later.

Dean's guitar creations have been played by artists such as: Michael Schenker, Kansas, Leslie West, The Cars, Heart, The Doobie Brothers, Jefferson Starship, Dave Mason, Triumph, Iron Maiden, Sammy Hagar, Def Leppard, Nils Lofgren, Larry Crane (John Mellencamp Band), ZZ Top, and the late Dimebag Darrell from Pantera. Many others can be seen playing Dean's guitar designs in photographs, on the Internet, in music videos, and in concerts around the world today. Dean's guitar designs have been featured on the Howard Stern Radio Show, on TV at the Grammys Awards show, in books including a recent book by James Bond novelist Raymond Benson, and in countless magazine articles spanning over 33 years. TV talk show host Mike Huckabee (2008 U.S. presidential candidate), owns and plays a Dean Bass.

Dean Barrett Zelinsky was the second of three boys born to Robert and Sylvia Zelinsky in Chicago, IL. Robert was a successful executive and business owner, whose company designed and manufactured custom fasteners; some of which wound up in early (United States Space Program) rockets. Perhaps with the DNA of his father, and his incessant curiosity, Dean began tinkering with electronics early on in his childhood; and unlike most kids his age he was taking radios apart to see what made them work & reassembling them with ease at age eight. When Dean was 12 years old, his father died in a plane crash while piloting his own twin-engine plane. His widow raised three boys, Dean, Glen and Roger in the wake of this tragedy.

When the Rolling Stones, The Beatles, and Johnny Winter came upon the music scene, Dean's attention quickly turned to Rock & Roll and he became obsessed with finding out what made guitars tick. He began playing electric guitar and learned what he liked and what he did not like. More importantly, while some would have paid anything to get their hands on a vintage Gibson Flying V, Dean not only had one in-hand, but he also sawed it in two, right down the middle to start measuring and setting his sites on making a better instrument. As bands became more avant-garde in the 1970's, it was Dean's opinion that the design of the guitars they were playing was not keeping pace with the times.

While attending high school in Highland Park IL, Dean began offering his services to local music shops and to Chicago area guitar players for repairs, custom paint jobs and soon gained a reputation among local storeowners as someone to turn to for services that went beyond what most of them could offer in-house. It was actually "a first" in the history of his high school that a senior left school for the day to complete their student work program at their own company; a disagreement over receiving credit for this was something that almost drove Dean to leave prior to graduating. However, cooler heads prevailed and he earned his diploma in trail-blazing style.

Having had several years of repairing and re-building guitars under his belt, Dean set out to create a guitar that would sound better and equally important, play better than what he had experienced testing all the brands he could get his hands on in the repair business.

During this time, Dean's best friend (Mathew Lynn) was battling cancer, and although he did not live to

see the success that Dean would soon attain, Mathew was honored posthumously. The sadness of losing his best friend turned into a bittersweet tribute to a young man who fought cancer valiantly. What began as a tribute to his fallen friend was a guitar that in 1977, took off and is still revered today; known as the “ML”, taking its name from Dean’s fallen childhood friend’s initials.

Dean set up his first manufacturing shops in the Chicago area, with all work being closely supervised personally by him on a daily basis. Getting people to notice the new designs was easy, and as his other designs, including the V, Z, and Cadillac started being played by the top touring bands of the day, the reputation of Dean was cemented and quickly grew.

Dean took a cue from another famous Chicagoan, Hugh Hefner of Playboy Magazine fame. While on an airplane once, Dean saw an advertisement in a magazine for a liquor company featuring a beautiful woman standing in water in a provocative pose holding a drink similar to the way Playboy posed models. This led to an idea that forever changed the way guitars were marketed.

Guitar ads for Dean’s company were featuring bikini-clad models wearing guitars, and (tastefully) little else. His early music magazine print ads and trade show marketing used female models from Playboy, and it was this cutting-edge marketing that filled NAMM Show (National Association of Music Merchants) event aisles with merchants seeking to get a better look at the guitars (and models) that were quickly becoming the talk of the industry. When Dean was warned by the trade show officials at one show that he had better tone it down in order to help keep the aisles clear, he knew he was on to something.

Prior to Dean starting Dean Guitars, most guitar manufacturing figures kept a low public profile. With the possible exception of Leo Fender, nobody outside the industry knew their names. Dean broke this mold with his designs and marketing, leading People Magazine to do a feature story on Mr. Zelinsky when he was only 21 years old. Kerry Livgren of the rock band Kansas (Dust in The Wind, Carry on My Wayward Son), proclaimed at one time that Dean was the first guitar maker to achieve Rock Star status.

In 1991 Dean Sold the Dean Guitar Company to take some time off to raise his family with his wife Suzi, a Playboy Playmate.

In 1996, a former Music storeowner acquired the Dean Name that Dean sold the rights to in 1991. While they had the critical mass that had been established in the early days of Dean Guitars, they needed someone to help bring back the magic that had propelled the brand initially, and someone to design new models. Dean was lured back into the music industry, taking on the challenge of helping to re-build the brand he started nearly two decades earlier. What ensued was a successful transformation, based on Dean’s designs and marketing abilities. The Internet was in its early stages back then, but with Dean’s vision, and a new canvas to paint on, he built up the business with his team of Internet professionals and rep network that were eager to work with him again.

In 2004 Dean signed Dimebag Darrell Abbott of Pantera/DamagePlan to an endorsement deal for the company that bares his name. On December 8, 2004 Dime was shot and killed by a crazed fan. Tyler Zelinsky, Dean's son, an upcoming film producer coincidentally had conducted the last video interview with Dimebag just weeks before his untimely demise. It has been featured on the Internet and also excerpts were licensed by VH1 for a special on Rock Wives. The video has also been published in Guitar World Magazine.

After helping with the successful re-build of the brand, adding new designs and implementing marketing that Dean made famous, it was time to seek out partners that he could engage where he could once again have total design control, and maintain quality.

Today, Dean has a new factory (DBZ Guitars), with all the familiar tools used in his first guitar company, working side-by-side with the latest technology available for delivering the precision and quality necessary to support their line of USA and Import Guitars.

The new DBZ guitar company is all about getting back to the basics, and the focus is back on the guitar, where it belongs.

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Category	Guitars, Manufacturing, Music
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