

# THEN *and* NOW!

## Like a Rolling Stone:

### Iconic Drum and Guitar Maker Celebrates 125 Years

(NAPSA)—Anyone with an interest in music greats may want to note the mostly harmonious history of one of the world's finest instrument makers.

**Then:** When 23-year-old German immigrant Friedrich Gretsch opened his Brooklyn, N.Y. music shop in 1883 making banjos, tambourines and accordions, he had no way of knowing that 125 years later, his name would be synonymous with one of the most revered drum and guitar makers in the world.

The long road to success wasn't easy. In 1895, just 12 years after opening his shop, Friedrich Gretsch passed away suddenly, leaving the company to his wife Rosa and 15-year-old son Fred. The enterprising teenager and his mother steadily built the business on a reputation for precision and quality.

As rock 'n' roll exploded in the 1950s and 1960s, so did the Gretsch brand. Artists such as Chet Atkins and Bo Diddley sparked love affairs with Gretsch guitars, and George Harrison ignited "Gretsch mania" by playing a Gretsch guitar on the Beatles' watershed Ed Sullivan appearance in 1964. The next year, the Rolling Stones toured the U.S. with the company's drums.

In 1967, Fred Gretsch, Jr. retired and sold the business to Baldwin Piano Company. Without the family commitment that had driven the brand for so long, product quality suffered and sales plummeted.

Fred's nephew, Fred W. Gretsch, vowed to buy back his family's business and rebuild its reputa-



Photo credit: Chet Falzerano

**"For as long as I can remember, Gretsch drums have always epitomized class," said longtime Gretsch endorser Phil Collins.**

tion. Almost 18 years later, he bought the company back and began producing new, vintage-styled guitars and classic drums.

**Now:** Today, the company's instruments are played by many of the world's top studio musicians and recording artists, including Bono, Neil Young, The White Stripes, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Phil Collins and Charlie Watts. They can be seen on stages around the world—even at the Superbowl, most recently with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers' Steve Ferrone on Gretsch drums.

In its fourth generation of family ownership, the company is celebrating its 125th anniversary with new lines of limited-edition drums and guitars, conducting an online search for the world's best unsigned bands, and hosting a concert event in New York City with a full lineup of "Gretsch Greats."