**SFGATE E** SECTIONS

# Garcia's guitars fetch record / 'Wolf,' 'Tiger' sold at memorabilia auction for \$1.74 million

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Joel Selvin, Chronicle Staff Writer Published 4:00 am, Thursday, May 9, 2002

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Photo: TINA FINEBERG

#### IMAGE 1 OF 2

Guitar maker Doug Irwin strums "Wolf" an electric guitar he custom made for the late Jerry Garcia, at Studio 54 Tuesday, May 7, 2002 in New York. The guitar is among T& colle bibles fan the Scaleful Agadiands lervi Gagtia the wilhe kurden ed ast Guenes by Weetne beeg May fal 2002 dAnd gudd Inau Fikere Doug

Irwin -- sold for more than \$1.74 million to two anonymous buyers at a New York auction last night.

Tiger -- a guitar Garcia played for 11 years -- went for \$850,000. The other guitar, called Wolf, sold for \$700,000. The buyer's commission pushed the price paid for Tiger to \$957,500 and the price of Wolf to \$789,500.

Garcia, who died in 1995, left both guitars in his will to guitarmaker Doug Irwin, who settled a lawsuit against the Grateful Dead last November and put the instruments up for sale. The Dead had claimed ownership of the instruments.

The Garcia guitars were the first two items up for bid in a large sale of Grateful Dead memorabilia at Manhattan's Studio 54.

The standing-room-only crowd cheered every bid, as Garcia's guitars zoomed past the previous world record figure for a guitar -almost \$450,000 paid at auction in 1999 for the tobacco-burst Fender Stratocaster called "Brownie" that Eric Clapton used to record "Layla." The white Stratocaster Jimi Hendrix played at Woodstock sold for \$325,000 in 1990.

Irwin, nearly destitute and still suffering from a hit-and-run car crash about three years ago, attended the sale and was introduced to the crowd. "I'm glad to see all you rock 'n' rollers," Irwin said. After the sale, he was swamped by autograph seekers.

Prices eclipsed many of the pre-auction estimates. A leather jacket that belonged to the Dead guitarist brought \$23,000. His passport fetched \$10,000. Others did not measure up to projections: A trio of etchings by Garcia, expected to bring between \$15,000 and \$18,000, went for \$10,000. Some items didn't sell at all.

The winning bidder on Tiger, who was seen talking on a cell phone during the auction, refused to identify himself but did say he was acting as agent for another anonymous party.

Garcia bought his first Irwin guitar when he visited the guitarmaker's Sonoma shop in 1972. He ordered Wolf the same day and played the guitar for six years after Irwin delivered the finished instrument to him in May 1973. Garcia paid him \$1,500.

Irwin spent six years building Tiger, which Garcia played for the next 11 years, longer than any other guitar he owned. Ironically, the guitar came out of mothballs to serve as a backup for another guitar he was playing on the band's final tour 1995, the same year he died. Garcia played Tiger during the band's last concert at Soldier Field in Chicago.



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