

# SERIALIZATION

## ADAMAS

For Adamas serialization, please see the Ovation serialization.

## AMERICAN ARCHTOP

According to luthier Dale Unger, the digits after the dash in the serial number are the year the guitar was completed.

## ALVAREZ YAIRI

Alvarez Yairi guitars can be dated by the number stamped onto the back of the heel. The number is based on the Emperor of Japan at the time the guitar was built. The first two numbers represent the number of years the Emperor of Japan has been in term. The next two numbers indicate the number of the month. The following chart shows what number indicates what year.

NUMBER	YEAR
45	1970
46	1971
47	1972
48	1973
49	1974
50	1975
51	1976
52	1977
53	1978
54	1979
55	1980
56	1981
57	1982
58	1983
59	1984
60	1985
61	1986
62	1987
63	1988
1	1989
2	1990
3	1991
4	1992
5	1993
6	1994
7	1995
8	1996
9	1997
10	1998
11	1999
12	2000

Alvarez Yairi stopped using the emperor code in 2000 (2000 was the last year with #12). New serialization is a two-digit number code that matches the year. 01=2001, 02=2002, etc.

NUMBER	YEAR
01	2001
02	2002
03	2003
04	2004

NUMBER	YEAR
05	2005
06	2006
07	2007
08	2008

## ARIA/ARIA PRO II

Aria started using serial numbers in the mid-1970s, and models before this have no serial number. Several different schemes have been used for serialization. Guitars built between 1979 and 1987 may use either one of these formats: YNNNNN or YYNNNNN. The first one or two digits indicate the year. A 79XXXXX would be a 1979 and a 2XXXXXX would be a 1982. Some models built in Korea may use a year and week code for the first four digits.

Serial numbers after 1987 are unknown at this point. Keep in mind that several variations have been used and anything is quite possible.

*Source: Michael Wright, Aria*

## BENEDETTO

To date, Robert Benedetto has completed over 750 musical instruments. 466 are archtop guitars, with the remainder being comprised of 51 violins, five violas, one classical guitar, two mandolins, eleven semi-hollow electrics, 209 electric solidbody electric guitars and basses, and one cello. The eleven semi-hollow electrics include six unique, carved top, semi-hollow electrics made between 1982 and 1986. The other five include three prototypes for, and two finished examples of, his new "benny" semi-hollow electric line introduced in 1998. The 209 electric solid bodies include 157 electric guitars and 52 electric basses. Benedetto began making them in 1986 with John Buscarino. He stopped making them in the Spring of 1987. The eleven semi-hollow electrics and the one classical guitar are included in the archtop guitar serial numbering system. The two mandolins have no serial numbers. The violins, violas, and cello have their own serial number system (starting with #101) as do the electric solid body guitars and basses (starting with #1001).

Serial Numbers:

All Benedetto archtop guitars (except his first two) are numbered in one series, and electric solidbodies and basses each have their own separate series, as do the violins, violas and cello. Archtop guitars have a four- or five- digit serial number with configuration ##(#)YY. Two (or three) digits ##(#) indicate ranking, beginning with #1 in 1968.

The last two digits (YY) indicate the year.

Example: 43599 was made in 1999 and is the 435th archtop made since 1968.

Note: year listed on the right indicates date shipped, not made:

NUMBER	YEAR
0168 (#1)*	1968
0270 (#2)*	1970
0372	1972
0473	1973
0575-0676	1976
0777-1177	1977
1277-2778	1978
2879-4279	1979
4380-5580	1980
5681-7381	1981
7482-9582	1982
9682-10983	1983
11084-11984	1984

NUMBER	YEAR
12085-12885	1985
12986-13586	1986
13686-13987-A	1987
14087-16488	1988
16588-19189	1989
19289-22490-A	1990
22591-25091	1991
25192-28092	1992
28193-30293	1993
30393-32994	1994
33095-36595	1995
36696-39496	1996
39597-40697	1997
40798-4349	1998
43599-45199	1999
45200-46200	2000
46301-46601	2001

Note: Benedetto models made at the Guild Custom Shop in Nashville have a separate serial number system beginning with the letter N.

\*Actual number in log: Benedetto did not adopt his current serial number system until his third guitar, serial #0372.

Seven guitar serial numbers are followed by the letter "A". Example: archtop guitar #23891 and #23891-A are two separate instruments even though both are numbered the "238th."

**From Robert Benedetto's Archtop Guitar Serial Number Log-book. Further information and a full serial number list can be found in Robert Benedetto's book, Making an Archtop Guitar (Center-stream Publishing/Hal Leonard, 1994).**

## BREEDLOVE

Breedlove Custom Shop serial numbers can be found on the guitar's label inside the guitar (look through the soundhole). Serial numbers on the Atlas series do not follow this system. Through 1999, a five digit serialization system was used where the first two digits indicate the last two numbers of the year, and the following three digits are sequential numbering. Example: Serial number 96-040 was the 40th guitar built in 1996. In 1999, Breedlove switched to a completely sequential numbering serialization system. The system started at 2000, and remember that the serial number is assigned at the beginning of construction and not the end.

NUMBER	YEAR
2000-2630	1999
2631-3217	2000
3218-4070	2001
4071-5160	2002
5161-6444	2003
6445-7499	2004
7500-8490	2005
8491-9736	2006
9737-	2007

## BUSCARINO

Luthier John Buscarino had the privilege of apprenticing with not one but two Master Builders, Augustino LoPrinzi and Robert Benedetto. Buscarino formed his first company, Nova U.S.A. in 1981; he changed the company to **Buscarino Guitars** in 1990.

The last two digits of the Buscarino serial number are the year the guitar was completed.

## CARVIN

Originally founded by Lowell C. Kiesel as the pickup-building L. C. Kiesel Company, Carvin has expanded through the years into a full line mail order company that offers guitars, basses, amplifiers, P.A. gear, and replacement parts. The company initially offered kit-built guitars, and, by 1964, completed models.

The 2,000 to 4,000 instruments built between 1964 and 1970 did not have serial numbers. The first serial number issued in 1970 was number 5000, and numbers since then have been sequential. Serial numbers up until the late 1990s were stamped on the jackplate. On models with rounded edges and no jackplates, the serial number was stamped into the end of the fingerboard unless it was maple. In that case, the number may be stamped inside the control cavity cover plate.

Carvin's serialization is sequential, but there appears to be no logical order in the way they are assigned. A TL60 built in 2002 has a serial number of 63663 while a Bolt built in 2000 has a serial number of 82398, and an LB70 bass built in 1998 has a serial number of 63094. The following chart of serial numbers contains several overlaps in numbers. The numbers recorded represent the lowest and highest numbers found for each year. More possibilities exist. Carvin suggests dating your guitar by certain features rather than the serial number. Refer to the Carvin Museum website for more information: [www.carvinmuseum.com](http://www.carvinmuseum.com).

NUMBER	YEAR
1970-1979	5000-10019
1980-1983	10768-15919
1984-1987	13666-25332
1988-1990	22731-25683
1991-1994	25359-42547
1995-1999	45879-81427
2000-Present	56162-

Source: Carvin Museum.

## CHRIS LARKIN CUSTOM GUITARS

Since 1982, a simple six-digit system has been used. The first two digits indicate the year, the next two the month, and the final two the sequence in that month. For example, 970103 was the third instrument in January 1997. Before 1982, the numbers are a bit chaotic! Chris Larkin has full documentation for almost every instrument that he has ever built, so he can supply a history from the serial number in most cases.

## COLLINGS

Collings guitar serial numbers are expressed as the date, which is written on the label on the inside of the guitar. However, here is a more expanded view on Collings serialization:

Flattop Serialization

1975-1987: Guitars do not possess a serial number. Most are marked with a handwritten date on the underside of the top. Some guitars from 1987 may have a serial number.

1988 to date: Guitars began a consecutive numbering series that began with number 175. The serial number is stamped on the neck block.

Archtop Serialization

Before 1991: Archtops before 1991 had their own separate serialization.

1991 to date: Archtops are now numbered with a two part serial number. The first number indicates the archtop as part of the general company serialization; and the second number indicates the ranking in the archtop series list.

(Serialization information courtesy Collings Guitars, Inc.)

## D'ANGELICO

Master luthier John D'Angelico (1905-1964) opened his own shop at age 27, and every guitar was hand built - many to the specifications or nuances of the customer commissioning the instrument. In the course of his brief lifetime, he created 1,164 numbered guitars, as well as unnumbered mandolins, novelty instruments, and the necks for the plywood semi-hollowbody electrics. The objective of this list is to help identify the production of numbered guitars.

D'Angelico kept a pair of ledger books and some loose sheets of paper as a log of the guitars created, models, date of completion (or possibly the date of shipment), the person or business to whom the guitar was sold, and the date. The following list is a rough approximation of the ledgers and records.

### First Loose Sheets

NUMBER	YEAR
1002-1073	1932-1934

### Ledger Book One

1169-1456	1936-1939
1457-1831	1940-1949
1832-1849	1950

### Ledger Book Two

1850-2098	1950-1959
2099-2122	1960
2123	1961

### Second Loose Sheets

2124-2164	Dates not recorded
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Again, it must be stressed that the above system is a guide only. In 1991, author Paul William Schmidt published a book entitled *Acquired of the Angels: The Lives and Works of Master Guitar Makers John D'Angelico and James L. D'Aquisto* (The Scarecrow Press, Inc.; Metuchen, N.J. & London). In Appendix 1 the entire ledger information is reprinted save information on persons or businesses to whom the guitar was sold. This book is recommended to anyone seeking information on luthiers John D'Angelico and James L. D'Aquisto.

## D'AQUISTO

Master luthier James L. D'Aquisto (1935-1995) met John D'Angelico around 1953. At the early age of 17, D'Aquisto became D'Angelico's apprentice, and by 1959 was handling the decorative procedures and other lutherie jobs.

D'Aquisto, like his mentor before him, kept ledger books as a log of the guitars created, models, date of completion (or possibly the date of shipment), the person or business to whom the guitar was sold, and the date. The following list is a rough approximation of the ledger. As the original pages contain some idiosyncrasies, the following list will by nature be inaccurate as well, and should only be used as a guide for dating individual instruments. The objective of this list is to help identify the production of numbered guitars.

### The D'Aquisto Ledger

NUMBER	YEAR
1001-1035	1965-1969
1036-1084	1970-1974
1085-1133	1975-1979
1134-1175	1980-1984
1176-1228	1985-1990

Beginning in 1988, serialization started with 1230. 1257 was D'Aquisto's last serial number on non-futuristic models.

Other guitars that D'Aquisto built had their own serial numbers. For example, solid body and semi-hollow body guitars from 1976 to 1987 had an *E* before the three-digit number. D'Aquisto also built some classical models, some flat-top acoustics, and some hollowbody electric models (hollowbody guitars run from #1 to #30, 1976 to 1980; and

#101 to #118, 1982 to 1988).

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## DOBRO

The convoluted history of the Dopyera brothers (Dobro, National Dobro, Valco, Original Music Instrument Company) has been discussed in a number of wonderful guitar texts. Serialization of Dobro instruments is far less tangled, but there are different forms of the numbers to contend with. Dobro serial numbers should always be used in conjunction with other identifying features for dating purposes.

Dobro was founded in Los Angeles in 1929, and production continued until the outbreak of World War II in 1942 (resonator guitar production ends). The numbers listed by year are the serialization ranges, not production amounts.

NUMBER	YEAR
900-2999	1928-1930
3000-3999	1930-1931

Between 1931 and 1932, the *cyclops* models carried a serial number code of B XXX.

5000-5599	1932-1933
5700-7699	1934-1936
8000-9999	1937-1942

In the mid-1950s, Rudy and Ed Dopyera return to building wood-bodied Dobros from pre-war parts under the trademark of **DB Original**. The serialization of these models is still unknown.

In 1961, Louis Dopyera of Valco transferred the **Dobro** trademark to Rudy and Ed. These models are distinguished by a serialization code of D plus three digits.

After Semie Moseley gained the rights to the Dobro trademark, the Original Music Instrument Company was founded in 1967 by Ed, Rudy, and Gabriela Lazar. OMI regained the Dobro name in 1970, and instituted a new coding on the instruments. The code had a prefix of **D** (Wood body) or **B** (Metal body), followed by three or four digits (production ranking) and a single digit to indicate the year, thus:

D XXXX Y                      OMI Dobro coding 1970-1979

The code reversed itself in 1980. The single digit prefix indicated the year/decade, then three or four digits (production ranking), another single digit to indicate the year, then the body material designation (D or B), like:

8 XXXX YD                      OMI Dobro coding 1980-1987

In 1988, the code became a little more specialized, and shared more information. The prefix consisted of a letter and number that indicated the model style, three or four digits for production ranking, another letter for neck style, two digits for year of production, and the body material designation (D or B):

AX XXXX NYD                      OMI Dobro coding 1988 - 1992

In 1993, Gibson bought OMI/Dobro. Production was maintained at the California location from 1993 to 1996, and the serialization stayed similar to the 1988 - 1992 style coding. In 1997, Gibson moved Dobro to Nashville.

## EPIPHONE

**1920S-1950:** Acoustic guitars were first produced in 1930, and were built in New York City, New York through 1953. However, some various models were built in the late 1920s. Electric models were introduced in 1935. Company manufacturing was moved to Philadelphia

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due to union harrassment in New York, and Epiphone continued on through 1957. Serial numbers on original Epiphones can be found on a label inside of the guitar.

NUMBER	YEAR
1-999	LATE 1920S
1000S	1931
5000S	1932
6000S	1933
7200S	1934
8000S-9000S	1935
10000S	1936
11000S	1937
12000S	1938
13000S-14400S	1939
145000S	1940
16000S-17400S	1941
17500S-18100S	1942
18200S-18900S	1943
19000S-20000S	1944
50000S-52000S	1944
52000S-54000S	1945
54000S-55000S	1946
56000S	1947
57000S	1948
58000S	1949

1950-1957: In 1951, electric instruments were brought under the same numbering system as acoustics, and serial numbers were relocated to a paper label in the instrument's interior. Some transitional instruments bear both impressed numbers and a paper label with differing numbers. The latter are more accurate for use in dating.

NUMBER	YEAR
59000S	1950
60000S-63000S	1951
64000S	1952
64000S-66000S	1953
67000S	1954
68000S	1955
69000S	1957

1958-1961: In May of 1957, Epiphone was purchased by CMI and became a division of Gibson. Gibson-built Epiphone guitars in Kalamazoo from 1958 to 1970. Hollow body guitars had the serial number on the inside label, and were prefixed with "A-", plus four digits for the first three years (note: this is different than the similar Gibson serialization).

NUMBER	YEAR
A 1000S	1959
A 2000S	1959-1960
A 3000S-A4312	1960-EARLY 1961

1961-1970: In 1961, the numbering scheme changed as all models had the serial number pressed into the back on the headstock. There were numerous examples of duplication of serial numbers, so when dating a Epiphone from this time period, consideration of parts, configuration and other details is equally important.

NUMBER	YEAR
100-42440	1961
42441-61180	1962
61450-64222	1963
64240-71040	1964
71041-96600	1962, 1963, 1964

NUMBER	YEAR
96601-99999	1963
000001-099999	1967
100000-106099	1963, 1967
106100-108999	1963
109000-109999	1963, 1967
110000-111549	1963
111550-115799	1963, 1967
115800-118299	1963
118300-120999	1963, 1967
121000-139999	1963
140000-140100	1963, 1967
140101-144304	1963
144305-144380	1963, 1964
144381-149864	1963
149865-149891	1964
149892-152989	1963
152990-174222	1964
174223-176643	1964, 1965
176644-250335	1964
250336-305983	1965
306000-310999	1965, 1967
311000-320149	1965
320150-320699	1967
320700-329179	1965
329180-330199	1965, 1967
330200-332240	1965, 1967, 1968
332241-348092	1965
348093-349100	1966
349121-368638	1965
368640-369890	1966
370000-370999	1967
380000-385309	1966
390000-390998	1967
400001-406666	1966
406667-409670	1966, 1967, 1968
409671-410900	1966
410901-419999	No Entries
420000-429193	1966
500000-500999	1965, 1966, 1968, 1969
501009-501600	1965
501601-501702	1968
501703-502706	1965, 1968
503010-503109	1968
503405-520955	1965, 1968
520956-530056	1968
530061-530850	1966, 1968, 1969
530851-530993	1968, 1969
530994-539999	1969
540000-540795	1966, 1969
540796-545009	1969
555000-556909	1966
558012-567400	1969
570087-570643	1966
570645-570755	1966, 1967
570857-570964	1966

NUMBER	YEAR
580000-580080	1969
580086-580999	1966, 1967, 1969
600000-600998	1966, 1967, 1968 (LOW END)
600000-606090	1969 (HIGH END)
700000-700799	1966, 1967
750000-750999	1968, 1969
800000-800999	1966, 1967, 1968, 1969
801000-812838	1966, 1969
812900-819999	1969
820000-820087	1966, 1969
820088-823830	1966*
824000-824999	1969
828002-847488	1966, 1969
847499-858999	1966, 1969
859001-895038	1967
895039-896999	1968
897000-898999	1967, 1969
899000-899999	1968
900000-901999	1970
910000-999999	1968

**1970-PRESENT (FOREIGN):** In 1970, production of Epiphone instruments moved to Japan. Japanese Epiphones were manufactured between 1970 and 1983. According to author/researcher Walter Carter, the serial numbers on these are unreliable as a usable tool for dating models. Comparison to catalogs is one of the few means available for dating these instruments. Earlier Kalamazoo labels were generally orange with black printing and said "Made in Kalamazoo", while the Japanese instruments featured blue labels which read "Epiphone of Kalamazoo, Michigan" (note that it doesn't say "Made in Kalamazoo", nor does it say "Made in Japan"). Research of the model should be more thorough than just glancing at the label. Serial numbers from Japanese-made models are still unknown.

During the early 1980s, the Japanese production costs became pricey due to the changing ratio of the dollar to the yen. Production then moved to Korea where a different serialization system was used.

NUMBER	YEAR	TYPE
1000	1985	SOLIDBODIES
400000S	1985	HOLLOWBODIES
410000S	1985	HOLLOWBODIES
506000S	1985	SOLIDBODIES
508000S	1985	SOLIDBODIES
509000S	1985	HOLLOWBODIES
510000S	1985	SOLIDBODIES

Current Epiphones manufactured overseas typically utilize a seven- or eight-digit serial number, the first digit being the last one or two numbers of the year of manufacture, and the third and fourth digits being the week of manufacture. Many of these instruments have an alphabetical character designating the manufacturing facility:

#### China

BW	Unknown
DW	DaeWon
EA	Qing Dao
EE	Qing Dao
MC	Muse
SJ	Sae Jung
Z	Zaozhuang Saehan

#### Czech

B	Bohemia Musico-Delicia
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#### Indonesia

SI	Samick
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#### Japan

F	FujiGen
J/T	Terada

#### Korea

I	Saein
P/R	Peerless
S	Samick
U	Unsung

Examples: S3061789 refers to an instrument mfg. June, 1993 by Samick, R5068265 indicates an instrument mfg. during 1995 by Aria. S02104385 indicates a Samick model produced in October, 2002. Models produced in the late 1990s and early 2000s are more likely to have the eight-digit system.

Elite/Elitist Models:

Epiphone Elitist models utilize a different serialization system that consists of one letter and five digits (FYNNNN). F indicates the factory code, which will be either a T or an F as all Elitist models are built in Japan, the Y indicates the last number of the year, and the remaining four digits are sequential numbering. Example: T30765 is a 2003 Elitist built in the Terada factory and was the 765th instrument that year.

**1977-PRESENT (U.S.):** Some top-of-the-line Epiphones were produced in the U.S. at Gibson's Kalamazoo, Nashville, or Montana facility since the mid 70s. Like Gibson numbers, there are eight digits in the complete number, and follows the code of YDDDDYNNN. The YY (first and fifth) indicate the year built. DDD indicates the day of the year (so DDD can't be above 365), and the NNN indicates the instrument's production ranking for that day (NNN = 021 = 21st guitar built). The Nashville facility begins each day at number 501, and the Montana workshop begins at number 001 (as did Kalamazoo). However, in 1994, the Nashville-produced Epiphones were configured as YNNNNNNN: YY = 94 (the year) and NNNNNNN is the ranking for the entire year. Example: 82303025 was built on the 230th day of 1983 and was the 25th instrument built at Kalamazoo that day.

**Source:** *Walter Carter, Epiphone The Complete History, Walter Carter and George Gruhn, Gruhn's Guide to Vintage Guitars.*

## FENDER

Fender acoustics do not correspond to their electric counterparts in serialization. The records are not complete enough to create a rough approximation. However, on Fender's website, they have created a listing of all of their acoustic guitars along with their production years and features. This should help date a guitar within a few years. Visit [www.fender.com](http://www.fender.com) for more information.

## FRAMUS

Framus serial numbers were generally placed on the back of the peghead or on a label inside the body. The main body of the serial number is followed by an additional pair of digits and a letter. This additional pair of numbers indicate the production year.

For example:

51334 63L =	1963
65939 70L =	1970

*Serial number information courtesy Tony Bacon and Barry Moorehouse, The Bass Book, GPI Books, 1995*

## GIBSON

Identifying Gibson instruments by serial number is tricky at best, and downright impossible in some cases. The best method of identifying them is to use a combination of the serial number, the factory order number and any features that are particular to a specific time (i.e. logo design change, headstock volutes, etc).

In addition to the above serial number information, Gibson also used Factory Order Numbers (FON) to track batches of instruments being

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produced at the time. In the earlier years at Gibson, guitars were normally built in batches of forty instruments. Gibson's Factory Order Numbers were an internal coding that followed the group of instruments through the factory. Thus, the older Gibson guitars may have a serial number and a FON. The FON may indicate the year, batch number, and the ranking (order of production within the batch of forty).

This system is useful in helping to date and authenticate instruments. There are three separate groupings of numbers that have been identified and which are used for their accuracy. The numbers are usually stamped or written on the instrument's back and seen through the lower f-hole or round soundhole, or maybe impressed on the back of the headstock.

Code Letter FONs were discontinued after 1941, and any instruments made during or right after World War II do not bear an FON codes. In 1949, a four-digit FON was used, but not in conjunction with any code letter indicating the year.

From 1952-1961, the FON scheme followed the pattern of a letter, the batch number, and an instrument ranking number (when the guitar was built in the run of forty). The FON is the only identification number on Gibson's lower grade models (like the ES-125, ES-140, J-160E, etc.) which do not feature a paper label. Higher grade models (such as the Super 400, L-5, J-200, etc.) feature both a serial number and a FON. When both numbers are present on a higher grade model, remember that the FON was assigned at the beginning of the production run, while the serial number was recorded later (before shipping). The serial number would properly indicate the actual date of the guitar.

**1902-1947:** The first serialization system was started in 1902. The serial numbers started with number 100 for acoustics, around 90000 for electrics and run up to 99999. All numbers are approximates. In most cases, only the upper end instruments were assigned identification numbers. Serial numbers appear ink-stamped on a white paper label.

FONs were first used in 1935. Other FONs may appear that aren't listed here that were produced during WWII. From 1935 to 1937, the letter appeared between the batch and instrument numbers (i.e. 722 A 23, 465 D 58, 863 E 02). The number is ink-stamped inside the guitar on the back. In 1938, the FON was changed to a two- or three-letter prefix before the batch and instrument numbers. The first letter indicates the year, the second indicates the brand (i.e. G for Gibson, K for Kalamazoo), and the third (if applicable) for electric. The FON is either ink-stamped on the label or on the back of the headstock.

Nick Lucas models produced between 1928 and 1933, will all have serial numbers from 1928 or 1929.

### SERIAL NUMBERS

APPROX. LAST #	YEAR
1500	1903
2500	1904
3500	1905
5500	1906
8300	1907
9700	1908
10100	1909
10600	1910
10850	1911
13350	1912
16100	1913
20150	1914
25150	1915
32000	1916

### SERIAL NUMBERS

APPROX. LAST #	YEAR
39500	1917
47900	1918
53800	1919
63650	1920
69300	1921
71400	1922
74900	1923
81200	1924
82700	1925
83600	1926
85400	1927
87300	1928
89750	1929
90200	1930
90450	1931
90700	1932
91400	1933
92300	1934
92800	1935
94100	1936
95200	1937
95750	1938
96050	1939
96600	1940
97400	1941
97700	1942
97850	1943
98250	1944
98650	1945
99300	1946
99999	1947

### FACTORY ORDER NUMBERS (FON)

BATCH NUMBERS	YEAR
259	1908
309	1909
545, 927	1910
1260, 1295	1911
1408, 1593	1912
1811, 1902	1913
1936, 2152	1914
2209, 3207	1915
2667, 3508	1916
3246, 11010	1917
9839, 11159	1918
11146, 11212	1919
11329, 11367	1920
11375, 11527	1921
11565, 11729	1922
11973	1923
LETTER	YEAR
A	1935
B	1936
C	1937
D	1938

LETTER	YEAR
DA	1938
E(X, OR OTHER LETTERS)	1939
E	1941
F	1940
FA	1940
G	1941
H	1942

1947-1961: Gibson changed their serialization system once they reached 99999 and decided they did not want to go to a six-digit system. Instead, they added an A prefix followed by a three-, four-, or five-digit number. The new system started on April 28, 1947 with number A 100. The last number was used on February 21, 1961. From 1947 to early 1955, white oval labels were used. In early 1955, the label was changed to an orange oval. Serial numbers are on the label and FONs are ink-stamped on the inside back of the guitar. FONs consisted of a letter, four-digit batch number, and count number (i.e. Y 2230 21, V 4867 8, R 6785 15). FONs were discontinued after Gibson changed to the new serialization system in 1961.

**SERIAL NUMBERS**

APPROX. LAST #	YEAR
A 1304	1947
A 2665	1948
A 4413	1949
A 6597	1950
A 9419	1951
A 12462	1952
A 16101	1953
A 18667	1954
A 21909	1955
A 24755	1956
A 26819	1957
A 28880	1958
A 32284	1959
A 35645	1960
A 36147	1961
700-1000S	1947
1100-3700S	1948
3700-4500S	EARLY 1949
2000S	LATE 1949
3000-5000S	1950
6000-9000S	1951

**FACTORY ORDER NUMBERS (FON)**

LETTER	YEAR
Z	1952
Y	1953
X	1954
W	1955
V	1956
U	1957
T	1958
S	1959
R	1960
Q	1961

1961-1970: In 1961, Gibson started a new serial number system that covered all instrument lines. It consisted of numbers that were impressed into the wood. This is generally considered to be the most

confusing out of all Gibson's serial number systems used between the years 1961 and 1970. There are several instances where batches of numbers are switched in order and duplicated, not just once, but up to four times, and seem to be randomly assigned throughout the decade.

**Note:** If "MADE IN USA" is stamped in the back of the headstock near the serial number, the guitar is not from the 1960s, but the 1970s. In this case, please refer to the next section on serialization for 1970-1975 guitars.

NUMBER	YEAR
100-42440	1961
42441-61180	1962
61450-64222	1963
64240-71040	1964
71041-96600	1962, 1963, 1964
96601-99999	1963
000001-099999	1967
100000-106099	1963, 1967
106100-108999	1963
109000-109999	1963, 1967
110000-111549	1963
111550-115799	1963, 1967
115800-118299	1963
118300-120999	1963, 1967
121000-139999	1963
140000-140100	1963, 1967
140101-144304	1963
144305-144380	1963, 1964
144381-149864	1963
149865-149891	1964
149892-152989	1963
152990-174222	1964
174223-176643	1964, 1965
176644-250335	1964
250336-305983	1965
306000-310999	1965, 1967
311000-320149	1965
320150-320699	1967
320700-329179	1965
329180-330199	1965, 1967
330200-332240	1965, 1967, 1968
332241-348092	1965
348093-349100	1966
349121-368638	1965
368640-369890	1966
370000-370999	1967
380000-385309	1966
390000-390998	1967
400001-406666	1966
406667-409670	1966, 1967, 1968
409671-410900	1966
410901-419999	No Entries
420000-429193	1966
500000-500999	1965, 1966, 1968, 1969
501009-501600	1965
501601-501702	1968
501703-502706	1965, 1968

NUMBER	YEAR
503010-503109	1968
503405-520955	1965, 1968
520956-530056	1968
530061-530850	1966, 1968, 1969
530851-530993	1968, 1969
530994-539999	1969
540000-540795	1966, 1969
540796-545009	1969
555000-556909	1966
558012-567400	1969
570087-570643	1966
570645-570755	1966, 1967
570857-570964	1966
580000-580080	1969
580086-580999	1966, 1967, 1969
600000-600998	1966, 1967, 1968 (LOW END)
600000-606090	1969 (HIGH END)
700000-700799	1966, 1967
750000-750999	1968, 1969
800000-800999	1966, 1967, 1968, 1969
801000-812838	1966, 1969
812900-819999	1969
820000-820087	1966, 1969
820088-823830	1966*
824000-824999	1969
828002-847488	1966, 1969
847499-858999	1966, 1969
859001-895038	1967
895039-896999	1968
897000-898999	1967, 1969
899000-899999	1968
900000-901999	1970
910000-999999	1968

1970-1975: From 1970 to 1975 the method of serializing instruments at Gibson became even more random. All numbers were impressed into the wood and a six-digit number was assigned, though no particular order was given and some instruments had a letter prefix. The orange labels inside hollow bodied instruments were discontinued in 1970 and were replaced by white and orange rectangular labels on the acoustics, and small black, purple, and white rectangular labels were placed on electric models.

In 1970, the words **MADE IN USA** were impressed into the back of instrument headstocks (though a few instruments from the 1950s also had this). The difference between a 1960s and a 1970s Gibson model is the "MADE IN USA" stamp on the back of the headstock.

NUMBER	YEAR
000000S	1973
100000S	1970-1975
200000S	1973-1975
300000S	1974-1975
400000S	1974-1975
500000S	1974-1975
600000S	1970, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975
700000S	1970, 1971, 1972
800000S	1973, 1974, 1975
900000S	1970, 1971, 1972
6 DIGITS + A	1970

NUMBER	YEAR
A + 6 DIGITS	1973, 1974, 1975
B + 6 DIGITS	1974, 1975
C + 6 DIGITS	1974, 1975
D + 6 DIGITS	1974, 1975
E + 6 DIGITS	1974, 1975
F + 6 DIGITS	1974, 1975

When the Nashville Gibson plant was opened in 1974, it was decided that the bulk of the production of products would be run in the South; the Kalamazoo plant would produce the higher end (fancier) models in the North. Of course, many of the older guitar builders and craftsmen were still in Kalamazoo, and if they weren't ready to change how they built guitars, then they may not have been ready to change how they numbered them! Certain guitar models built in the late 1970s can be used to demonstrate the old-style, six-digit serial numbers. It is estimated that Gibson's Kalamazoo plant continued to use the six-digit serial numbers through 1978 and 1979. So double check the serial numbers on those 1970s L-5s, Super 400s, and Super 5 BJBs!

1975-1977: During the period from 1975 to 1977, Gibson used a transfer that had eight-digit numbers. The first two indicate the year (99=1975, 00=1976 and 06=1977), and the following six digits are in the 100000 to 200000 range. *MADE IN USA* was also included on the transfer and some models had *LIMITED EDITION* also applied. A few bolt-on neck instruments had a date ink stamped on the heel area.

NUMBER	YEAR
99XXXXXX	1975
00XXXXXX	1976
06XXXXXX	1977

1977-PRESENT: In 1977, Gibson first introduced the serialization method that is in practice today. This updated system utilizes an impressed, eight-digit numbering scheme that covers both serializing and dating functions. The Custom/Historic/Art divisions do not use this system. Certain models in the Standard series do not follow this, either. Please refer to the end of the section for exceptions. The pattern is as follows:

#### YDDDYPPP

**YY** is the production year

**DDD** is the day of the year

**PPP** is the plant designation and/or instrument rank.

In 1994, for Gibson's Centennial, they used a special serialization. Every serial number started with 94 followed by six digits, which were the production dates and number (YYNNNNNN).

The three PPP numbers 001-499 indicate Kalamazoo production from 1977 to 1984. The Kalamazoo numbers were discontinued in 1984 when the factory closed. The three PPP numbers 500-999 indicate Nashville production from 1977 to 1989.

All currently manufactured Gibsons (non-custom shop) are stamped with a hand arbor, and start at 300 or 500, and continue until production is finished that day. This hand stamp used to be reset daily at #300 or #500 for all the LP style headstocks. The other shapes (Flying V, T-Bird, Explorer, etc.) were started at 700.

When acoustic production began at the plant in Bozeman, Montana (in 1989), the series' numbers were reorganized. Bozeman instruments began using 001-299 designations and, in 1990, Nashville instruments began using 300-999 designations. It should also be noted that the Nashville plant has not reached the 900s since 1977, so these numbers have been reserved for prototypes. Examples:

70108276 means the instrument was produced on Jan. 10, 1978, in Kalamazoo and was the 276th instrument stamped that day.

82765501 means the instrument was produced on Oct. 3, 1985, in



Nashville and was the 1st instrument stamped that day.

03202652 means the instrument was produced in Bozeman on November 16, 2002 and was the 152nd instrument stamped that day (assuming they started at 500).

There are a few exceptions to this system.

**Centennial Year/Models:** 1994 is the most notable exception, with the first two numbers representing the year, so all models start with 94 and are followed by six digits. The Centennial models produced for the 1994 model year have an inked-on serial number that is six digits long. The serial number appears as YYYYMM. The first four represent the number produced. They all started on 1894, which represents instrument #1, and 1994 would be instrument #101. The last two digits indicate the month of the guitar released. A new model was released each month with a total of fourteen different models that includes two prototypes. The last two numbers will range from one to fourteen.

**Special Runs/Limited Editions:** Certain special editions in the 1970s and 1980s may feature serial numbers with six digits in the configuration of YY NNNN. The YY indicates the year and the NNNN is the instrument ranking.

**CUSTOM SHOP:** Most custom shop models use the configuration of Y9NNN or Y9NNNN (if the production run is higher than 1000 units in a year). The Y indicates the last digit of the year the guitar was built. 9 is assigned to every custom shop guitar, and the last three or four digits are production numbers.

Historic ES models use a slightly different system than the Custom Shop. The configuration consists of a letter prefix + MYNNN. The letter, which is usually an A or B, indicates that it is part of the Historic Collection, the M indicates the last year of reissue model, the Y indicates the last number of the year the guitar was built, and the final NNN digits are production numbers.

Custom Shop Signature Models use a serialization system with the artist's initials and the instrument production number.

Other models such as the Gibson Les Paul Classic may use serialization that was used on the models during that time period. These would be six-digit serial numbers.

**Source: A.R. Duchossoir, Gibson Electrics, The Classic Years and Walter Carter and George Gruhn, Gruhn's Guide to Vintage Guitars.**

## GRETSCH

Before World War II, serial and model number replaced the penciled numbers inside the instruments. By 1949, small labels bearing "Fred Gretsch Mfg. Co.," were used. This label was replaced by a different style label, an orange and grey one, sometime in 1957. A few variations of this scheme occurred throughout the company's history, the most common being the use of impressed numbers in the headstock of instruments, beginning about 1949. Serial numbers were also stamped into the headstock nameplate of a few models. The numbers remain consecutive throughout, and the following chart gives approximations of the years they occurred.

**1940-1949:** Serial numbers were penciled onto labels on the inside backs of Gretsch's higher-end instruments. The number can usually be viewed from the bass side f-hole. Numbers were assigned consecutively, but little is known about year-to-year specifics.

APPROX. NUMBERS	YEARS
001 - 1000	1939-1945
1001 - 2000	1946-1949

**1949-1965:** The label changed to read: The "Fred Gretsch Mfg. Co." with the company's address in New York. There are two spots where the model is printed and serial number is written in. The serial number should be in red and the model number written in blue or black. The label could be viewed from the f-hole on hollowbody models. On solidbody models, the number was placed inside the electronic compartment either on the wood or on the control plate. Some models

produced in the 1960s may have the number impressed into the back of the headstock.

APPROX. NUMBERS	YEAR
2000 - 3000S	1950
3000 - 5000S	1951
5000 - 6000S	1952
6000 - 8000S	1953
8000 - 12000S	1954
12000 - 16000S	1955
16000 - 21000S	1956
21000 - 26000S	1957
26000 - 30000S	1958
30000 - 34000S	1959
34000 - 39000S	1960
39000 - 45000S	1961
45000 - 52000S	1962
52000 - 63000S	1963
63000 - 77000S	1964
77000 - 85000S	1965

**1965-1972:** In the latter part of 1965, Gretsch decided to begin using a date coded system of serialization. It consisted of the first digit (sometimes two) which identified the month; the second or third identifying the year, and the remaining digit (or digits) represented the number of the instruments in production for that month. Some examples of this system would be:

997            September, 1969 (7th instrument produced)  
11255        November, 1972 (55th instrument produced)  
70250        July, 1968 (250th instrument produced)

On solid body instruments, impressed headstock numbers were used. In 1967, *Made in USA* was added. Hollow body instruments still made use of a label placed on the inside back of the instrument.

**1973-1981:** In 1973, the label style changed once again, becoming a black and white rectangle with *Gretsch Guitars* and the date coded serialization on it. A hyphen was also added between the month and the year to help avoid confusion.

Serialization Examples:

12-4387      December, 1974 (387th Instrument Produced)  
3-745        March, 1977 (45th Instrument Produced)  
10-056      October, 1980 (56th Instrument Produced)

**1989-2002:** Gretsch serialization beginning in 1989 utilized a nine digit format (YYMMmmm(m)xxx). YY indicates the last two digits of the year (i.e., 97 = 1997). M or MM indicates the month of the year (1-12). mmm(m) references the model number with either three or four digits (i.e., a 6136 reads 136). x(xx) refers to a one-to- three-digit production count. Examples: A currently manufactured Country Club Model (Model No. 6196) with ser. no. 01319652 indicates it was built in March of 2001, the last three numbers of the model number are next - 196. 52 indicates the production count. A Model No. 6121 Roundup with a ser. no. of 999121447 indicates it was built in Sept. of 1999, 121 represents the last three digits of the model number, and 447 is the production count.

**2003-PRESENT:** When Fender bought Gretsch in 2003, they also implemented a new serialization system. This new format follows a two letter and eight digit serialization system (JTYMMNNNN). The first two letters should be JT indicating the Japan Terada factory, the first two numbers indicate the last two digits of the year (03 indicates 2003), the third and fourth digits indicate the month (08 indicates August), and the final four digits are a general numerical sequence that has no specific model numbering.

## GUILD

Guild Serialization went through three distinct phases, and can be both a helpful guide as well as a confusing one when trying to deter-

## 682 SERIALIZATION, cont.

mine the manufacturing date of a guitar. The primary fact to keep in mind is that most Guild models use a **separate serial numbering system for each guitar model** - there is no "overall system" to plug a number into! While serial numbers are sometimes a helpful tool, other dating devices like potentiometer codes or dating by hardware may be more exact.

**1952-1965:** Between the inception of the Guild company in 1952 and 1965, the serialization was sequential for all models.

### APPROXIMATE

LAST NUMBER	YEAR
350	1952
840	1953
1526	1954
2468	1955
3830	1956
5712	1957
8348	1958
12035	1959
14713	1960
18419	1961
22722	1962
28943	1963
38636	1964
46606	1965

**1966-1969:** While some models retained the serialization from the original series, many models were designated with a two-letter prefix and an independent numbering series for each individual model between 1966 and 1969.

### Continued Original Serialization Series

#### APPROXIMATE

LAST NUMBER	YEAR
46608	1966
46637	1967
46656	1968
46695	1969

The models that were numbered with the new two-letter prefix started each separate serial number series with 101.

**1970-1979:** The following chart details the serial numbers as produced through the 1970s. There are no corresponding model names or numbers for this time period.

#### APPROXIMATE

LAST NUMBER	YEAR
50978	1970
61463	1971
75602	1972
95496	1973
112803	1974
130304	1975
149625	1976
169867	1977
190567	1978
211877	1979

**1979-1989:** In 1979, Guild returned to the separate prefix/serial number system. Serial numbers after the two-letter prefix in each separate system began with 100001 (thus, you would need a serialization table for each model/by year to date by serialization alone). In 1987, a third system was devised. In some cases, the **Model Designation** became the *prefix* for the serial number. For example:

D300041 D-30, #0041 (41st D-30 instrument produced)

With acoustic models, you can cross-reference the model name to the serial number to judge the rest of the serialization; the resulting serial number must still be checked in the serialization table.

**1990-2004:** Between 1990 and 2004, Guild continued with the separate prefix/serialization system. In 1994, only the model prefix and last serial numbers for each model were recorded; better records continued in 1995.

**Guild Custom Shop:** The three Guild Custom Shop models (**45th Anniversary, Deco, and Finesse**) all use a completely different serial numbering system. Each instrument has a serial number on the back of the headstock that indicates which number it is out of the complete series. Inside the guitar there is a seven-digit code: The first three numbers (starting with 500) indicate the production sequence, while the last four digits indicate the date of production (the fourth and seventh digit in reverse indicate the year, the fifth and sixth digits are the month).

Guild has a series of charts available on their website ([www.guildguitars.com](http://www.guildguitars.com)) to help date a Guild model during its different manufacturing periods. It is recommended that you refer to this information, as there are many charts needed for the individual model serialization. Through the years (and different owners of the company), some of the historical documentation has been lost or destroyed. However, these tables are some of the most comprehensive available to the public. They are up to date through December 1997.

**2005-PRESENT:** In 2005, Fender bought the Tacoma company and moved all Guild acoustic production to their facility in Washington. They also implemented a new serialization system that follows Tacoma's system. This serialization system follows a two letter and six digit format (TYDDNNN). The first letter is usually T, which indicates the guitar was built in the Tacoma factory. The second letter indicates the year and this is based on Tacoma's system that was started in 1998.

LETTER	YEAR
I	2005
J	2006
K	2007
L	2008

The first three digits indicate the day of the year based on the Julian calendar, and the final three digits are the production number on that day. Example: TJ 289 015 indicates a guitar built at the Tacoma factory on the 289th day (October 16th) in 2006 and was the 15th guitar produced that day.

**Serialization reference source: Hans Moust, The Guild Guitar Book; and Jay Pilzer, Guild Authority; additional company information courtesy Bill Acton, Guild Guitars**

## IBANEZ

Ibanez offers a wide selection of models with a corresponding wide range of features. This means there are a lot of models and, of course, a lot of different model numbers to try and keep track of. Ibanez serial numbers never indicated the model number, and still don't. Most solid body Ibanez guitars and basses didn't feature model numbers until recently, and even then, only on Korean-made instruments. On some semi-hollow models, some model numbers will appear on the label visible through the f-hole.

Here's how the Ibanez model numbers work (of course, there are always exceptions - but for the Ibanez models commonly encountered, this system applies pretty consistently).

**SERIES:** the first in the model number designate the series: RG550BK, RG Series; SR800BK is a Soundgear, etc. Also, in the Artstar lines, AS indicates (A)rtstar (S)emihollow, AF indicates (A)rtstar (F)ull hollow.

**FINISH:** the last two letters designate the finish: RG550BK, Black finish; RX240CA, Candy Apple. **Exceptions:** finishes such as Amber Pearl and Stained Oil Finish use three letters: AMP, SOL, etc. (having offered so many finishes, Ibanez is running out of traditional two let-

**MARTIN**

ter combinations!)

The numbers following the Series letters indicate two items:

1. Point of Manufacture

On solid body guitars and basses, the numbers 500 and above indicate Japanese manufacture: RG550BK, SR800BK, BL850VB, the numbers 400 and below indicate Korean manufacture: SR400BK, RX240MG, etc.

This system doesn't apply to hollow bodies, and many signature guitars. J of White Zombie's signature model, the IJ100WZ is made in Japan, as is the JPM100.

2. Pickup Configuration

On solid body guitars only, the last two numbers indicate pickup configuration:

20 = two humbucking pickups with or w/o pickguard (ex: TC420MD)

30 = three single coils with or w/o pickguard (no current models)

40 = sin/sin/hum with a pickguard (ex: TC740MN)

50 = hum/sin/hum with a pickguard (ex: RG550BK)

60 = sin/sin/hum with no pickguard (no current models)

70 = hum/sin/hum with no pickguard (ex: RG570FBL)

**Exceptions:** Of course! For example, TC825 (which has two humbuckers and a pickguard) and BL1025 (hum/sin/hum with a pickguard), etc.

Author/researcher Michael Wright successfully discussed the Ibanez/Hoshino history in his book, *Guitar Stories Volume One* (Vintage Guitar Books, 1995). Early serial numbers and foreign-built potentiometer codes on Japanese guitars aren't much help in the way of clues, but Ibanez did institute a meaningful numbering system as part of their warranty program in 1975.

**1975-1987:** In general, Ibanez serial numbers between 1975 and 1987 had seven digits, arranged **XYZZZZZ**. The letter prefix "X" stands for the month (January = A, February = B, etc. on to L); the next following two digits (YY) are the year. The last four digits indicate the number of instruments built per month through a particular production date.

An outside source indicated that the month/letter code prefix was discontinued in 1988, and the previous dating code was discontinued in 1990. However, in 1987 the **XYZZZZZ** still appeared the same, but the new listing shifted to **XYZZZZZ**.

**1987-1997:** The opening alphabetical prefix "X" now indicates production **location** instead of month: F (Fuji, Japan), or C (Cort, Korea). The first digit "Y" indicates the year: As in 198Y and 199Y. Bright-eyed serialization students will have already noticed that while the year is obtainable, the decade isn't! Because of this, it is good to have a working knowledge of which models were available in approximately which time periods. All following numbers again are the production ranking code (**ZZZZZ**).

**1997-PRESENT:** In mid-1997, Ibanez changed the format, and the second two digits after the alphabetical prefix indicate the last two digits of the actual year of production (i.e. F0003680 indicates a guitar built in Fuji during 2000).

**CE Designation:** In late 1996, in addition to the serial number on the back of the headstock, Ibanez electric guitars and basses added the "CE" designation. This indicated that the product met the electronic standards of the European Common Market, similar to our UL approval.

For more information on individual Ibanez guitar models, refer to *Ibanez - The Untold Story*, by Paul Specht, Michael Wright, Jim Donahue, and Pat Lefferts. This book features all of the history about Ibanez and features individual model listings. It may be easier to date the guitar from the production time that it was produced.

**Source:** Michael Wright, *Guitar Stories, Volume One, Jim Donahue, Ibanez Guitars*.

YEAR	LAST NUMBER
1898	8348
1899	8716
1900	9128
1901	9310
1902	9528
1903	9810
1904	9988
1905	10120
1906	10329
1907	10727
1908	10883
1909	11018
1910	11203
1911	11413
1912	11565
1913	11821
1914	12047
1915	12209
1916	12390
1917	12988
1918	13450
1919	14512
1920	15848
1921	16758
1922	17839
1923	19891
1924	22008
1925	24116
1926	28689
1927	34435
1928	37568
1929	40843
1930	45317
1931	49589
1932	52590
1933	55084
1934	58679
1935	61947
1936	65176
1937	68865
1938	71866
1939	74061
1940	76734
1941	80013
1942	83107
1943	86724
1944	90149
1945	93623
1946	98158
1947	103468
1948	108269
1949	112961
1950	117961
1951	122799

YEAR	LAST NUMBER
1952	128436
1953	134501
1954	141345
1955	147328
1956	152775
1957	159061
1958	165576
1959	171047
1960	175689
1961	181297
1962	187384
1963	193327
1964	199626
1965	207030
1966	217215
1967	230095
1968	241925
1969	256003
1970	271633
1971	294270
1972	313302
1973	333873
1974	353387
1975	371828
1976	388800
1977	399625
1978	407800
1979	419900
1980	430300
1981	436474
1982	439627
1983	446101
1984	453300
1985	460575
1986	468175
1987	476216
1988	483952
1989	493279
1990	503309
1991	512487
1992	522655
1993	535223
1994	551696
1995	570434
1996	592930
1997	624799
1998	668796
1999	724077
2000	780500
2001	845644
2002	916759
2003	978706
2004	1042558
2005	1115862
2006	1197799

Source: Lon Werner, *The Martin Guitar Company*.

## MOONSTONE

The most important factor in determining the year of manufacture for Moonstone instruments is that each model had its own set of serial numbers. There is no grouping of models by year of manufacture.

D-81 EAGLE	
L001-L004	1981
L005-L011	1982
4809-4816	1981
4017-4031	1981
4032-4052	1982
4053-4064	1983

MOONDOLINS	
T001-T002	1981
T003-T006	1983
T007	1984

## OVATION

Three-digit numbers (no letter prefix):

NUMBER	YEAR
006-319	1966
320-999	1967 (February - November)

Four-digit numbers (no letter prefix):

1000-	1967 (November) to 1968 (July)
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Five-digit numbers (no letter prefix):

10000-	1970 (February) to 1972 (May)
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Six-digit numbers (1971 to present, except Adamas models):

NUMBER	YEAR
000001-007000	1972 (May - December)
007001-020000	1973
020001-039000	1974
039001-067000	1975
067001-086000	1976
086001-103000	1977 (January - September)
103001-126000	1977 (September) to 1978 (April)
126001-157000	1978 (April - December)
157001-203000	1979
211011-214933	1980
214934-263633	1981
263634-291456	1982
291457-302669	1983
302670-303319	1984 [Elite models only]
315001-331879	1984 (May - December) [Balladeer models only]
303320-356000	1985 to 1986
357000-367999	1987
368000-382106	1988
382107-392900	1989
403760-420400	1990
421000-430680	1991
402700-406000	1992
446001-457810	1992
457811-470769	1993
470770-484400	1994
484401-501470	1995

NUMBER	YEAR
501471-518689	1996
518690-528368	1997
528369-536826	1998
536827-545890	1999
545891-555979	2000
555980-564478	2001
564479-571883	2002
571884-579654	2003
579655-	2004

Adamas Models Serialization:

Serialization for the Adamas models begins with number 0077 on September, 1977.

NUMBER	YEAR
0077-0099	1977
0100-0608	1978
0609-1058	1979
1059-1670	1980
1671-2668	1981
2669-3242	1982
3243-3859	1983
NUMBER	YEAR
3860-4109	1984
4110-4251	1985
4252-4283	1986
4284-4427	1987
4428-4696	1988
4697-4974	1989
4975-5541	1990
5542-6278	1991
6279-7088	1992
7089-8159	1993
8160-9778	1994
9779-11213	1995
11214-12448	1996
12449-13020	1997
13021-14623	1998
14624-16136	1999
16137-17393	2000
17394-18961	2001
18962-20040	2002
20041-20802	2003
20803-	2004

Letter Prefix plus digits:

A + 3 digits	1968 (July - November)
B + 3 digits	1968 (November) to 1969 (February)
B + 5 digits	1974 to 1979 [Magnum solid body basses]
C + 3 digits	1969 (February - September)
D + 3 digits	1969 (September) to 1970 (February)
E + 4 digits	1973 (January) to 1975 (February) [solid bodies]
E + 5 digits	1975 (February) to 1980 [solid bodies]
E + 6 digits	1980 (late) to 1981 [UK II guitars]
F Prefix	1968 (July) to 1970 (February)
G Prefix	1968 (July) to 1970 (February)

H Prefix	1970 to 1973 [Electric Storm series]
I Prefix	1970 to 1973 [Electric Storm series]
J Prefix	1970 to 1973 [Electric Storm series]
L Prefix	1970 to 1973 [Electric Storm series]

**Source:** *Walter Carter, The History of the Ovation Guitar. Information collected in Mr. Carter's Ovation Appendices was researched and compiled by Paul Bechtoldt.*

## PEAVEY

While more musicians may be aware of Peavey through the numerous high quality amplifiers and P.A. systems they build, the company has been producing solidbody guitars and basses since 1978. Peavey serial numbers exist more for the company's warranty program than an actual dating system. According to researcher Michael Wright, the earliest serial numbers had six digits; by 1978, the company switched to eight digits. Peavey can supply the shipping date (which is within a few weeks of actual production) for the more inquisitive.

Replacement manuals are generally available for Peavey products. For further information, contact Peavey Electronics through the Trade-mark Index located in the back of this book.

**Information courtesy Michael Wright, Guitar Stories, Volume One.**

## RICKENBACKER

Rickenbacker offered a number of guitar models as well as lap steels prior to World War II, such as the **Ken Roberts Spanish** electric f-hole flattop (mid-1930s to 1940) and the 559 model archtop in the early 1940s. The company put production on hold during the war; in 1946, they began producing an **Electric Spanish** archtop. Serialization on early Rickenbacker models from 1931 to 1953 is unreliable, but models may be dated by patent information. This method should be used in conjunction with comparisons of parts, and design changes.

In 1953, Rickenbacker/Electro was purchased by Francis C. Hall. The **Combo 600** and **Combo 800** models debuted in 1954. From 1954 on, the serial number appears on the bridge or jackplate of the instrument. The Rickenbacker serial numbers during the 1950s have four to seven digits. The letter within the code indicates the type of instrument (Combo/guitar, bass, mandolin, etc), and the number after the letter indicates the year of production:

Example: X(X)B7XX (A bass from 1957)

**1961 to 1986:** In 1961, the serialization scheme changes. The new code has two-letter prefixes, followed by digits. The first letter prefix indicates the year; the second letter indicates the month of production.

PREFIX	YEAR
A	1961
B	1962
C	1963
D	1964
E	1965
F	1966
G	1967
H	1968
I	1969
J	1970
K	1971
L	1972
M	1973
N	1974
O	1975
P	1976

PREFIX	YEAR
Q	1977
R	1978
S	1979
T	1980
U	1981
V	1982
W	1983
X	1984
Y	1985
Z	1986
A	January
B	February
C	March
D	April
E	May
F	June
G	July
H	August
I	September
J	October
K	November
L	December

**1987-1998:** In 1987, the serialization was revised, again. The updated serial number code has letter prefix (A to L) that still indicates month; the following digit that indicates the year. It is unknown what was used for 1997 and 1998.

DIGIT	YEAR
0	1987
1	1988
2	1989
3	1990
4	1991
5	1992
6	1993
7	1994
8	1995
9	1996

The following digits after the month/year digits are production (for example, *L2XXXX* would be an instrument built in December, 1989).

**1999-2006:** The numbering/lettering system was replaced by two digits that indicate the last two numbers of the year (99=1999, 02=2002). Rickenbacker has a serial number decoder on their website, and readers are encouraged to use this for more specific identification.

## STROMBERG

This Boston-based instrument shop was founded by Charles Stromberg, a Swedish immigrant, in 1906. Stromberg generally concentrated on banjo and drum building, leaving the guitar lutherie to his son Elmer. Elmer joined the family business in 1910, and began building guitars in the late 1920s.

Total production of guitars reached about 640. The labels on the guitars were business cards, so the instruments can be dated (roughly) by the telephone number on the cards.

In the late 1930s, the Blue shipping labels inside the guitar body were either typed or handwritten

LABEL	YEAR
Bowdoin 1228R-1728-M	1920-1927
Bowdoin 1242 W	1927-1929

LABEL	YEAR
Bowdoin 1878 R	1929-1932
CA 3174	1932-1945
CA 7-3174	1949-1955

*Source: Jim Speros, Stromberg research.*

## TACOMA

Tacoma first built guitars in 1996 and the serialization system for that year only was a four digit number. By 1997, the four digit system was phased out and a new six-digit system was introduced the followed the format of 97XXXXX. 97 indicates 1997 and the last four digits are production numbering. In 1998, Tacoma introduced the serialization system that is still in use today that follows the format of Y DDD NNN N. The first letter corresponds to the year the guitar was built. The first three digits indicate the day of the year based on the Julian calendar. The fourth digit will be either a 0 indicating a traditional soundhole or a 5 indicating a wing soundhole. The fifth and sixth digits are the production number of the guitar on that day. The seventh and final digit indicates if the guitar was a factory second. Almost all guitars will have a 0, which means the guitar was of regular production, first quality. If the guitar was returned to the factory for neck replacement or some other fix, this digit will be a 5. Examples: B 290 011 0 indicates a guitar built on the 290th day (October 17th) in 1998, that it has a traditional soundhole, was the 11th guitar built on that day, and was a regular production instrument. G 213 506 5 indicates a guitar built on the 213th day (June 1st) in 2003, that it has a wing soundhole, was the 6th guitar built on that day, and was a returned to the factory for repair. This chart shows the letter to year correspondence.

LETTER	YEAR
B	1998
C	1999
D	2000
E	2001
F	2002
G	2003
H	2004
I	2005
J	2006
K	2007
L	2008

## TAKAMINE

The eight digit serial number on Takamine instruments can be deciphered by breaking down the number into four groups of two digits, thus:

$$YYMMDDXX = (YY)(MM)(DD)(XX)$$

The first two digits (YY) indicate the year; the next two digits (MM) indicate the month; the third group of digits (DD) indicates the day of production; and the remaining two digits indicates the ranking in the number of instruments produced that day. If a nine-digit serial number is encountered, assume that the last three digits indicate the production ranking.

Example: 91060979 indicates an instrument manufactured June 9th of 1991, and was the 79th instruments manufactured that day.

## TAYLOR

**1974-1992:** Taylor did not introduce serialization until 1975 and used the first two numbers as the year (10 was 1975, 20 was 1976, and 30 was 1977) and the next three numbers were production numbers. In 1977 they started with a new system that was strictly numeric and ran until 1992.

NUMBER	YEAR
10109-10146	1975
20147-20315	1976

NUMBER	YEAR
30316 & UP, 001-450	1977
451-900	1978
901-1300	1979
1301-1400	1980
1401-1670	1981
1671-1951	1982
1952-2445	1983
2446-3206	1984
3207-3888	1985
3889-4778	1986
4779-5981	1987
5982-7831	1988
7832-10070	1989
10071-12497	1990
12498-15249	1991
15250-17947	1992

**1993-PRESENT:** In 1993, they started a serialization system that can pinpoint when the guitar was made down to the day and month. Between 1993 and 1999 they used a nine-digit number system. The first two digits indicate the year. The next two are the month. The third two indicate the exact day production was started on the guitar, the seventh digit is either a 1 or 0 and 300 and 400 series instruments get the 0 and 500 or higher receive the 1 designation. The final two digits indicate the production number that day. In 2000, they expanded to an 11-digit system where the only difference is there is now a four-digit year to accommodate to Y2K worries. For example: serial number 980626109 indicates a 500 series or higher guitar built (started) on June 26, 1998 and was the ninth instrument of the day. Another example of the 11-digit system would be 20010402012, indicating a 300 or 400 series built on April 2, 2001 and was the 12th instrument produced that day.

**Source:** [www.taylorguitars.com](http://www.taylorguitars.com).

## THREET GUITARS

The serial number on Threet acoustic guitars consists of a letter followed by three (sometimes four) numbers. The letter indicates the model:

- A Parlor-size (similar to a traditional Model O)
- B A "large person's" parlor-size (similar to a Model OO)
- C Larger, balanced sound parlor-size (similar to a Model OOO)
- D Cross between a Model C and a dreadnaught

The first two numbers indicate the year the guitar was started (and, hopefully, completed). The third (and occasionally fourth) number indicate the guitar's "rank" in that year's production. For example:

**C 964 = Model C built in 1996 4th Guitar Produced**

Keep in mind, Threet guitars are offered in both *Standard* and *Deluxe* versions. Review the appointments to determine the level of construction, and watch for *Custom* level inlays as well.

**Source:** *Judy Threet, Threet Guitars.*

## WASHBURN

The Washburn trademark was introduced by the Lyon & Healy company of Chicago, Illinois in 1864. While this trademark has changed hands a number of times, the historical records have not! Washburn suffered a fire in the 1920s that destroyed all records and paperwork that was on file; in the 1950s, another fire destroyed the accumulated files yet again.

When the trademark was revived yet again in 1964, the first production of Washburn acoustic guitars was in Japan. Washburn electric guitars debuted in 1979, and featured U.S. designs and Japanese pro-

duction.

Production of Washburn guitars changed to Korea in the mid- to late 1980s; a number of U.S.-produced **Chicago Series** models were introduced in the late 1980s as well. Serial numbers from 1988 on use the first two digits of the instrument's serial number to indicate the year the instrument was produced (1988 = 88XXX). This process works for most, but not all, of the instruments since then.

**Washburn Limited Editions** feature the year in the model name. For example, **D-95 LTD** is a Limited Edition introduced in 1995. No corresponding serialization information is available at this time.

**Washburn information courtesy Dr. Duck's AxWax.**

## YAMAHA

Yamaha instruments were originally produced in Japan; production switched to Taiwan in the early 1980s. Instruments are currently produced in the U.S., Taiwan, and Indonesia. It is important to recognize that Yamaha uses two different serialization systems.

Yamaha electric guitars and basses have a letter/number (two letters followed by five numbers) code that indicates production date. The first two letters of the serial number indicate the year and month of production (the first letter indicates the year, the second letter indicates the month). Yamaha's coding system substitutes a letter for a number indicating year and month, thus:

CODE LETTER	MONTH or YEAR NUMBER
H	1
I	2
J	3
K	4
L	5
M	6
N	7
O	8
P	9
X	10
Y	11
Z	12

For example, an "H" in the first of two letters would be a "1," indicating the last digit of the year (1981 or 1991). An "H" in the second of two letters would also be a "1," indicating the first month (January). Like Hamer, the digits will cycle around every ten years.

After the two-letter prefixes, five digits follow. The first two digits represent the day of the month, and the three digits indicate the production ranking for that day. For example:

**NZ19218**                      **December 19, 1987**  
(or 1997); #218.

The example's code should be properly broken down as N - Z - 27 - 19 - 218. The "N" in the first of the two letters would be a "7," indicating the last digit of the year (1987 or 1997). The "Z" in the second of the two letters would be a "12," indicating the twelfth month (December). The two-digit pair after the letters is the day of the month, the 19th. The final three digits indicate production ranking, therefore this imaginary guitar is the 218th instrument built that day.

Yamaha Acoustics and Acoustic Electrics contain eight-digit serial numbers. In this coding scheme, the first digit represents the last digit of the year (for example, 1987 = 7); the second and third numbers indicate the month (numbers 01 through 12); the fourth and fifth numbers will indicate the day of the month, and the final three digits will indicate the production ranking of the instrument.

This system works for most (but not all) Yamaha products. If a serial number doesn't fit the coding system, Yamaha offers internal research via their website ([www.yamahaguitars.com](http://www.yamahaguitars.com)) - just email them your request.