

The the original batch
of forty guitars in



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Explorer's release appeared to be way ahead of its time. Sales of the model were dismal and production was stopped in 1959. Since Gibson usually produced guitars numbering in batches of forty instruments, its fair to say at least one batch of guitars were made in 1958 through 1959. Guitars that weren't shipped sat on racks unfinished until such time that a sale was made. The guitars were then "finished out" meaning that they were assembled to their final fit and finish.

Units finished later were shipped to dealers in the following years of 1960 through 1963 until the model was discontinued officially in 1963. According to the Gibson shipping ledgers, a guitar listed as "Korina Mod. Gtr" had shipped 19 units in 1958 and a further three shipped in 1959 for a total of 22 guitars. At least one Explorer Bass was made in 1958 or 1959 so that leaves seventeen guitars in the original batch. The remaining guitars were shipped out during the years 1960-1963 completing the original batch of forty guitars in the initial production run.

Serial numbers of the original Explorers may be identified by the following: 8 14XX and 8 21XX 8 38XX 8 45XX 9 12XX This does not include at least one verified prototype that was photographed at the 1958 NAMM show. Those models with 8 14XX and 8 21XX serial numbers have six or seven pick guard screws. The prototype appears to have no had any screws on its pick guard and was glued on most likely for display purposes only. Serial numbers in the 8 38XX and up range have eight pick guard screws. Since most Explorers were "made to order", this discrepancy in the number of pick guard screws seems negligible. The number changed back again to seven screws for the remaining Explorers shipped during the sixties. In the Explorer's initial stages

of production, as many as three guitars were made using the split headstock ornamentation as depicted in the patent drawing. Some of the very early models include a control cover for the toggle switch on the back of the body.

Another extremely interesting feature is Explorer serial number 8 2153 and is claimed to be the guitar featured in the April to May issue of the Gibson Gazette. The head stock logo features on an inlayed capital letter “ G” located at the tip of the headstock. The shape of the pick guard at the bridge is also altered and perhaps an attempt to fit the pick guard around the bridge.

The toggle switch and control cavity covers are white instead of the normal brown covers. Stickers that say “ Johnny Watson” have been affixed to the pick guard. Finally, the back of the headstock has a painted “ Stinger”.