

Basic Detail Report



Guitar

Date

1937

Primary Maker

Gibson, Inc.

Description

The L-5 guitar was a project spearheaded by Lloyd Loar, the famous Gibson designer who also developed mandolins for the company. In 1922, the L-5 guitar and F-5 mandolin were brought to market; these high-end models incorporated arched tops and f-holes instead of the oval soundholes that Gibson had traditionally used. In 1923, the L-5 and F-5 were joined by the H-5 mandola and K-5 mandocello, which shared its body design with the L-5 guitar. While the L-5 was originally intended to take its place among this similar set of mandolin-family instruments, by the end of the 1920s, the L-5 guitar had begun to achieve popularity independent of the mandolin orchestra. By the early 1930s, Gibson's corporate

competitors, Epiphone, Gretsch, and Harmony had begun to manufacture guitars with f-holes, and individual makers such as John D'Angelico and the Strombergs catered to the needs of professionals who wished to play fine, hand-made archtops. The archtop guitar had reached critical mass as a musical icon of the jazz era; its large volume and punchy attack were perfectly suited to big band music. NMM 10875 was made fifteen years after the introduction of the model, during the golden age of the big band. By this time, the back was carved from maple rather than birch, the hardware had been upgraded to gold-plate from silver, the f-holes were bound, and the lower body width had increased to 17" from 16". The serial number indicates that the instrument was made in 1937, but a date on the label reads 3-7-40. It appears to have been written through the f-hole and is likely the date of purchase or other significant event for an early owner

Stringing: six steel strings
Soundboard: arched, two-piece, quarter-cut spruce: medium grain
Back: two-piece, slab-cut maple with quilted figure and pith flecks
Ribs: two-piece, slab-cut maple with quilted figure and pith flecks
Head: maple with black-lacquered face; white celluloid binding with four-ply (black-white-black-white, the strip closest to binding wider) celluloid purfling trim; abalone flower pot inlay; mother-of-pearl "Gibson" inlay; bell-shaped black celluloid truss rod cover with white border
Neck: two-maple with narrow, irregular curl; integral with head; brown-stained maple inlay strip along center line
Heel cap: white celluloid with white and black celluloid purfling strip trim on inside edge
Binding: white celluloid; trim comprised of five-ply (black-white-black-white-black, the strip closest to binding wider)

celluloid purfling strips on top and back and two-ply (black-white) celluloid purfling strips on back
Fingerboard: ebony bound in ivoroid with four-ply black and white celluloid purfling strips on each side (the strip closest to binding wider); end terminating in a point, with rounded edges on the sides; 20 nickel-silver frets; mother-of-pearl block behind 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 12th, 15th, and 17th frets; single imitation tortoise-shell celluloid side dots behind 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 15th, and 17th frets; double imitation tortoise-shell celluloid side dot behind 12th fret Nut: bone Bridge: two-piece rosewood (compensated) with brass screws for height adjustment Tailpiece: gold-over-nickel-plated brass with geometric outline, geometric, raised nickel-plated device at center, geometric cut-outs, engraved zigzag line decoration, non-hinged lower end with allen wrench tension adjustment, secured to lower rib with three gold-plated steel domed, philips head screws Tuners: six gold-over-nickel-plate worm-gear machine tuners with tulip-shaped heads Endpin: white celluloid Soundholes: f-holes bound in white celluloid Pick guard: translucent dark red-brown imitation-tortoise-shell celluloid bound in white celluloid with four-ply (black-white-black-white, the strip closet to binding wider) celluloid purfling strip trim, mounted on guitar with gold-plated brass bracket and two gold-plated steel screws Lacquer: dark red-brown sunburst Linings: kerfed maple with kerfed mahogany in lower bouts, lapping over maple linings at point of transition Neck block: mahogany End block: mahogany Top bracing: spruce parallel bars between f-holes Grafts: none

Dimensions

Total guitar length: 1061 mm (41-3/4") Back length: 536 mm (21-1/8") Upper bout width: 320 mm (12-19/32") Waist width: 267 mm (10-1/2") Lower bout width: 437 mm (17-3/16") Rib height (including edging) at heel: 82 mm (3-7/32") Rib height, at waist: 81 mm (3-3/16") Rib height, at end block: 84 mm (3-5/16") Head length: 175 mm (6-29/32") Head width, top: 81 mm (3-3/16") Head width, bottom: 74 mm (2-15/16") Neck length (nut to ribs): 355 mm (13-31/32") Neck width, nut: 41 mm (1-5/8") Neck width, heel: 52 mm (2-1/16") Soundhole length: 175 mm (6-29/32") Vibrating string length (nut to bridge edge): high E: 642 mm (25-1/4"); low E: 643 mm (25-5/16")