

# Basic Detail Report

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## Guitar

### Date

1939

### Primary Maker

Gibson, Inc.

### Description

The Recording King brand was applied to the stencil-line guitars made by several American manufacturers to be sold by Montgomery Ward. In their 1939 catalog, Wards promoted these instruments by appealing to thrifty customers looking for quality at a cut rate: "Same quality sold by music stores . . . at Wards you save \$2 to \$66. Here's the reason why: three of the best known makers of fretted instruments in the country made the models on these pages. They're made of the same costly materials as those guitars which bear the makers' own names. When you buy them by the mail at Wards, you pay no costly selling expenses or salesmen's commissions. You buy direct! Remember, these are Brand New Instruments—not to be confused with reconditioned or studio-used models frequently sold at these low prices." The Recording King Jumbo guitars, endorsed by Ray Whitley and available with rosewood or mahogany backs, represented an extraordinary value for a high-quality

Gibson. The rosewood model shared the proportions and batwing-style bridge of Gibson's own J-55, and sold for a mere \$29.95 (with "usually \$80" noted nearby in the catalog) compared to the \$55 Gibson-brand Jumbo, which had a lower-grade mahogany back. The mahogany-backed Recording King cost even less—only \$19.95 ("usually \$37.50," according to Wards catalog, the price of Gibson's J-35). To clinch this phenomenal deal, Wards' final selling point boasted that "Recording King Jumbo Guitars have the full endorsement of Ray Whitley, Hollywood screen guitarist. Each has a flat top and back with a wider, deeper body, which means deep tones; just right for accompaniments. The following points are found on both Jumbos: celluloid bound rosewood finger board with inlaid pearl markers; rosewood bridge; vertical type peghead; hooks on end of body for cord." Stringing: six steel strings Soundboard: two-piece spruce: narrow grain broadening toward the flanks Back: two-piece rosewood; no back stripe Ribs: two-piece rosewood; no end graft Head: dark-brown lacquered maple veneered with black lacquered maple; "Recording King" stenciled in black paint on rectangular mother-of-pearl inlay; mother-of-pearl crown with black-painted

details above "Recording King" signature; no truss rod cover Neck: dark-brown lacquered maple; integral with head; rosewood-maple-rosewood stripe on back of neck, the center strip wider Heel cap: none; neck heel recessed from back Binding: white celluloid; two-ply white and black celluloid strip trim on top; no additional trim Fingerboard: rosewood bound in white celluloid; 19 nickel-silver frets; 5 mother-of-pearl diamonds behind 3rd fret, 4 mother-of-pearl diamonds behind 5th fret, 3 mother-of-pearl diamonds behind 7th, 9th, 12th, and 15th frets; single imitation tortoise-shell celluloid side dots behind 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 12th, and 15th frets Nut: bone; later Bridge: rosewood with festooned lower edge, known as "batwing"; three mother-of-pearl dots inlaid below bridge pins; angled bone saddle; white plastic bridge pins Tuners: six chrome-plated steel Grover worm-gear machine tuners with decoratively cut plate outlines with pressed groove border; chrome-plated steel heads Endpin: white plastic; extends through nickel-plated steel strap holder secured to rib with three nickel-plated steel Philips head screws; corresponding nickel-plated steel strap loop secured to back of head with two nickel-plated steel Philips head screws Rosette: sound hole bound in white celluloid with two-ply (black-white) celluloid purfling strips Pick guard: imitation tortoise-shell celluloid; engraved border and decorative engraved abstract foliate design; edges tapered outside border; overlaps soundhole trim and binding Lacquer: dark red-brown sunburst with fine craquelure on top; clear on back and ribs; dark brown on neck and head Linings: kerfed maple

### **Dimensions**

Total guitar length: 1039 mm (40-29/32") Back length: 516 mm (20-5/16") Upper bout width: 292 mm (11-1/2") Waist width: 267 mm (10-1/2") Lower bout width: 408 mm (16-1/16") Rib height (including edging) at heel: 98 mm (3-27/32") Rib height, at waist: 106 mm (4-5/32") Rib height, at end block: 123 mm (4-27/32") Head length: 173 mm (6-13/32") Head width, top: 88 mm (3-7/16") Head width, bottom: 79 mm (3-3/32") Neck length (nut to ribs): 351 mm (13-13/16") Neck width, nut: 44 mm (1-3/4") Neck width, heel: 57 mm (2-1/4") Soundhole diameter: 103 mm (4-1/16") Vibrating string length (nut to bridge edge): high E: 631 mm (24-7/8"); low E: 635 mm (25")