

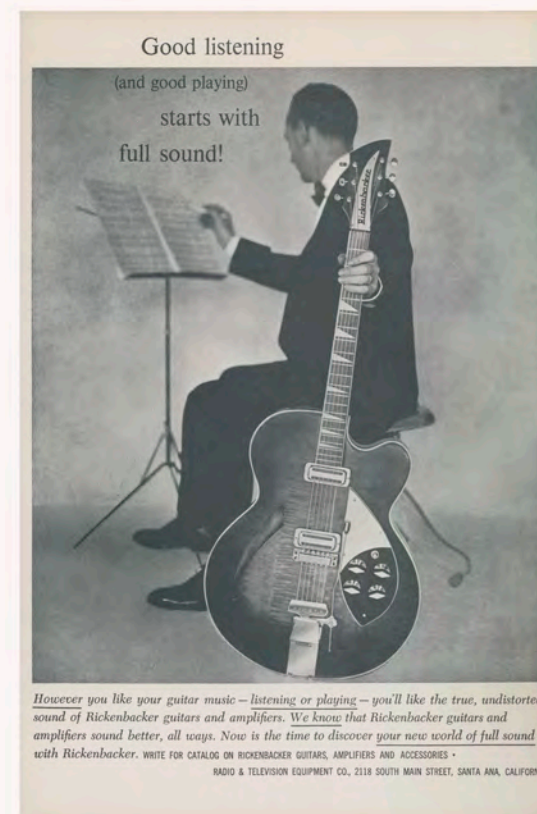


F Body Guitars

330F, 335F, 340F, 345F, 360F
365F, 370F, 375F

Roger Rossmeisl was clearly at a creative peak during 1958 and the F series, or Full Body Capris launched that summer, were yet another outstanding design by the German born luthier. Aimed at jazz guitarists, Rickenbacker's F series stood apart from other models in the Capri range. A large body, single cutaway, semi-acoustic design that was 16 3/4 inches at its widest point and 2 1/4 inches deep could easily have been compared to Gibson or Gretsch instruments that preceded it - but Rossmeisl created something subtly unique and completely original.

Two prototypes delivered in June 1958 were completed just in time for summer trade shows: a standard 330F with an unbound body finished in a shaded brown sunburst and a deluxe 365F in Autumn-glo with checkerboard body binding and triangular full-width fretboard markers. Both instruments featured two toaster pickups. The 330 incorporated a single layer gold lucite guard with volume and tone controls plus two switches while the 360 featured a unique split layer pickguard with a gold top section and a black bottom layer with two volume and two tone controls and a pickup selector. Both prototypes featured long, exaggerated soundholes



330F

Amplifiers 1946-1953

The Big Bands of the 1940s Swing era lifted morale during World War Two. Groups had swelled in size since the 1930s and often included up to twenty musicians with five trumpets, four trombones, five saxophones plus the rhythm section. Once again guitarists found themselves being drowned out by other musicians but Rickenbacker rose to the challenge with a new line of amplifiers launched in 1946. The M-12 priced at \$115 sat at the top of the new range delivering 15 watts of power via a special heavy duty 12" speaker while the \$95 M-11 offered 12 watts via a standard 12" unit. The new professional models featured the word RICK cut into their speaker baffles in sharp edged art deco letters whilst the pre-war 8-watt M-10 received a more subtle redesign to its four-cutout speaker baffle. Heavy transformers, valves and control sections sat in the bottom of cabinets as they had in pre-war designs but these were soon repositioned at the top to give guitarists easy access to instrument inputs, volume and tone controls. Sharp edged RICK cut outs were rounded off to a softer design by 1947 whilst coverings changed from a light linen to a striped tweed and finally a brown fabricoid leatherette by 1948.

Mid to late '40s M-8 student amplifiers were essentially identical to the metal cased Model 59 units supplied with pre-war sets. Sold individually for \$44.50, an extra \$5 afforded the Super 8 with two input sockets. Usually finished in colors to match the student instrument with which they partnered, those sold with Ace lap steels often featured the word ACE stenciled in large letters over speaker grilles.

In 1949 the entire range received another makeover as coverings were changed to a smart new two-tone scheme with brown fronts and light tan sides covered in Dupont fabricoid. The professional M-11 and M-12 models received redesigned die-cut speaker baffles featuring a stylised letter 'R' and brass name plates positioned in the top left corner that finally spelled Rickenbacker with a 'K'. Wattage ratings were also lifted by 2 or 3 watts to keep pace with rapidly changing musical trends. Even the M-8 student amplifier, now renamed the M-88, received a wooden case with two-tone covering but its grille cloth was stenciled with a scene depicting a lone surfer on a palm tree lined beach.

Rickenbacker's late '40s line up of instruments and amplifiers was impressive to say the least. The company had all bases covered for guitarists and, although sales remained healthy, Adolph Rickenbacker's interest was beginning to wane. Having turned 60 during 1947, Adolph claimed he was starting to feel his age and by the early 1950s was looking for a potential buyer for the company he'd been running for over twenty years. In summation of his and Beauchamp's achievements in the electric guitar field, he would later state: "I feel proud of George and myself that we did not let the guitar players down and I don't know of any other thing that has ever happened to put so many boys back to work."



1946-1948 Amplifiers - tweed or brown covering

M-8: 4 watts; 1 x 8" speaker
 M-10: 8 watts; 1 x 10" speaker
 M-11: 12 watts; 1 x 12" speaker - with RICK cutout
 M-12: 15 watts; 1 x 12" speaker - with RICK cutout

1949-1953 Amplifiers - two tone brown covering

M-88: 4 watts; 1 x 8" speaker
 M-10: 10 watts; 1 x 10" speaker
 M-11: 15 watts; 1 x 12" speaker - with R cutout
 M-12: 18 watts; 1 x 12" speaker - with R cutout

(facing page, left to right)
 B16A Supersonic, B14A, B9A
 (this page, above)
 George Harrison at the Plaza Hotel,
 New York, 8th February 1964
 (this page, right)
 B15AD Supersonic dual cabinet

RICKENBACHER ELECTRO HAWAIIAN GUITARS
Give You More for Your Money

M-11 AMPLIFIER (ABOVE) — 12 watt output, 2 inputs, 5 tube circuit with power equivalent of 6 tubes, 12" speaker \$95.00 List
 ECONOMY STYLE CASE \$7.50 List
 KERATOL COVERED CASE, fully lined \$27.00 List

M-12 AMPLIFIER (ABOVE) — 15 watt output, 3 inputs, 5 tube circuit equivalent of 7 tubes, 12" speaker \$115.00 List
 KERATOL COVERED CASE, fully lined, for 6 or 7 string guitar \$27.00 List

MODEL "NS" GUITAR (ABOVE) — All metal one piece seamless body, in satin-grey finish. Has Rickenbacker Electro Pick-Up with adjustable magnet. Also volume and tone controls, raised frets, white position dots, detachable connecting cord. 6 string model \$47.50 List

MODEL "B-6" GUITAR — Black bakelite body with contrasting white metal top plates. Has Rickenbacker Electro Pick-Up with adjustable magnet. Also tone and volume controls, white position dots, raised frets, individual pegs, detachable connecting cord. 6 string model \$75.00 List

MODEL "B-7" GUITAR — Same, with 7 strings \$86.00 List

MODEL "B-8" GUITAR — Same, with 8 strings \$96.00 List

MODEL "B-14" GUITAR (ABOVE) — Double Neck Model with 16 strings, permitting customary Hawaiian tuning on one neck, A76 Hawaiian tuning on the other. Two piece all metal bronze-gold body, brown bakelite necks. Has tone and volume controls, Rickenbacker Electro Pick-Up with adjustable magnet. An ornate guitar in every detail. Used with M-12 Amplifier shown below \$175.00 List
 KERATOL COVERED CASE, fully lined, similar to Model "B-6" case shown below but for double neck guitar \$40.00 List

M-10 AMPLIFIER (ABOVE) — 8 watt output, 2 inputs, 3 tube circuit equivalent of 4 tubes. Tone and volume control. 10" speaker . . . \$59.50 List

RICKENBACHER ELECTRO
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Buegeleisen & Jacobson, Inc.
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Jerry Byrd and Pedal Steels

CW, JB and 777-790 Pedal Steels

Though past their peak of popularity, steel guitars remained an important part of Rickenbacker's business during the mid to late '50s. A new professional model named the CW was introduced during 1957 that featured a modern, beautifully sculptured body designed by Roger RossmeisI constructed from either walnut or flamed maple. The new steel oozed quality with only the best woods selected and hand polished to highest standard. The CW was available in six, seven, eight or ten string options each featuring a single horseshoe pickup with separate volume, bass and treble controls mounted onto a chrome panel on the instrument's front edge. All CW models were equipped with three adjustable legs and finished with a strip of black or wheat colored amplifier grille cloth running along the instrument's leading edge. Introduced as a short scale twenty-two-and-one-half inch instrument, four full scale twenty-five inch models - the CW-61, CW-71, CW-81 and CW-101 - were added to the range during 1958.

Nashville steel guitar legend Jerry Byrd took to the new design and soon preferred a seven string CW-7 over his trusted pre-war Bakelite B-7. Byrd often demonstrated the instrument at trade shows and appeared in advertising material that claimed: 'His deft hands make beautiful music with Rickenbacker's newest matched steel guitar set.' By 1959, price lists even described the CW range as 'the Jerry Byrd Series' and in 1961 the short scale instruments in the range became Jerry Byrd models JB-6, JB-7, JB-8 and JB-10 badged with 'Rickenbacker Jerry Byrd Model' name plates. Production manager Dick Burke would later explain: "Having his name on there definitely helped us sell a few of those, but suddenly the steel just wasn't there for us and we were making less and less."

The pedal steel pointed the way forward for steel guitarists during the late '50s, as these were fast becoming a key ingredient for country music. Gibson introduced the first steel guitar with pedals for changing string pitch, the Electraharp, in 1941, but its pedals were designed for tuning adjustments between songs rather than during play. Paul Bigsby, a hugely influential guitar maker and inventor from Downey California, was the first to design a steel with pedals specifically for altering pitch during play. His first was custom built for Speedy West in early 1948 and caused a sensation when it was heard on radio broadcasts with Spade Cooley's Western Swing Orchestra. But the real breakthrough came when Bud Issacs featured a Bigsby pedal steel on Webb Pierce's hit 'Slowly' which topped the country charts for seventeen consecutive weeks during 1954. Suddenly the pedal steel became the in-demand sound for country music as manufacturers raced to bring their own model to market. The instrument's complex internal mechanism wasn't something that was easy to produce and even Gibson, who had a head start in the field, didn't release their Multiharp pedal steel until 1956.

Although Rickenbacker offered an option to custom fit pedals to their pre-existing console steels during 1957, these were designed for tuning changes rather than in-play note bending. The company's first purpose-built pedal steel guitars were introduced in the summer of 1959 and included: the 775, a

short scale twenty-two-and-one-half inch 6-string with just two pedals, plus two twenty-five-inch scale instruments - the 780 8-string with six pedals and the 785 10-string with six pedals. Each featured the trusted horseshoe pickup which was still highly regarded by steel guitarists. Like the CW, bodies were constructed from choice walnut or flamed maple and the build quality was outstanding. Even so, the short scale two pedal 775 proved unpopular and was dropped after just a year.

During the summer of 1962 Rickenbacker introduced its final steel guitar, a flagship pedal steel to sit at the top of the line, and a fitting swan song for the instrument upon which the brand had built its reputation. The model 790 was the most expensive instrument the company had ever produced and boasted two 8-string necks with six pedals and retailed at a staggering \$1529.50, the equivalent of the price of four semi acoustic 330 electric guitars at the time. Though rarely produced, and it's doubtful that any were manufactured after the 1960s, the 780, 785 and 790 remained on price sheets until 1975 when the company finally dropped steel guitars altogether. Rickenbacker had introduced the world to the sound of the electric steel guitar in 1932 and produced some of the finest instruments ever made. But changing music styles and a shift towards electric Spanish playing meant the company had already switched its primary focus by the time its pedal steel guitars were even introduced. Music had changed and Rickenbacker was changing with it.



(facing page) a walnut 790 pedal steel in the Radio Tel show room at 2118 South Main Street, Santa Ana
(below) Jerry Byrd demonstrates a CW-7 steel at the 1959 NAMM show in New York





Light Show Guitars

331, 331/12, 4005LS

The Rickenbacker Light Show Guitar is without question one of the most bizarre and off-the-wall instruments ever manufactured - a guitar with inbuilt lights that flash in time with the notes and chords played. Popular music had come a long way since the birth of rock'n'roll and the electric guitar more than any other instrument was at the epicenter of changing styles and fashions. Like Rickenbacker's 6/12 converters and Slant Fret guitars, the Light Show was introduced as a brave new concept, something that had never been seen before and an all-out showstopper.

Another third party design, the light show concept was brought to F.C. Hall's attention in 1969 by Stephen Woodman and Marshall Arm. The original idea was for light show cabinets that would form part of a band's backline alongside amplifiers, but after some discussion the idea of incorporating colored bulbs inside a guitar was hatched. A prototype described by factory records as the 'Xmas Tree Special' was worked up and the first production instruments were completed by June 1970. Designated Model 331, the Light Show was based on a 330 six string but featured two large translucent panels screwed to the top of an extra deep 2" body required for the additional electronics. High gain pickups and new style 24 fret necks with specially bound, dot inlaid fingerboards were fitted as standard and an additional 6th control knob positioned near the tailpiece controlled the sensitivity of the lights from 'off' to 'bright.' Light Show guitars also required an outboard mains power transformer to bring them to life, but as Rickenbacker advertising material explained: "The Model 331 combines a fine musical instrument with the thrill of a light show."

Colored bulbs inside the guitar's body were triggered by the sonic frequencies of notes played. Treble notes lit red bulbs, middle frequencies activated yellow or green bulbs while bass notes lit up blue. Early examples featured hand wired circuits with lights positioned in straight lines under the pickguards, but within a few months a more elaborate printed circuit board designed by Tony Blokdyk with bulbs scattered randomly under the translucent panels gave a greatly improved effect. Light Show guitars were produced in Maple-glo, Jet-glo, Burgundy-glo and Azure-glo finishes and Rickenbacker even produced rare 331/12LS twelve string Light Show guitars and perhaps four or five 4005LS Light Show basses.

As a promotional stunt, F.C. Hall kitted out an all-female Las Vegas show band called The Kimberly Diamonds with a matching set of Burgundy-glo Light Show guitars - two 331LSs and a 4005LS bass. Country legend Buck Owens played his 331LS with the studio lights down on his 'Hee Haw' TV show. Roger McGuinn raised the bar during early '70s Byrds shows by closing the band's set with a psychedelic rendition of 'Eight Miles High' using his unique Burgundy-glo Slant Fret Light Show 341/12. John Entwistle of the Who used a Light Show bass in the 70's whilst Geddy Lee of Rush has been a more recent adopter of this impossibly rare model. Aerosmith's Joe Perry and Edwyn Collins are also fans of the 331LS six string. Priced at \$599.00 upon release, the 331 Light Show was \$140 dearer than its regular 330 counterpart. Built between

