



## Gibson ES-150, 1938

### Date

1938

### Primary Maker

Gibson Brands, Inc.

### Medium

mother of pearl

### Description

Although not the first electric guitar produced, the Gibson “Electric-Spanish” ES-150 was the first commercially successful electric guitar. While this particular ES-150 was manufactured in 1938, the model itself was first brought to market in 1936 and continued in production until 1957. It is almost identical in construction to the Gibson L50 arch-top acoustic guitar, except that it was fitted with a bar pickup and a reinforced top for support. The guitar, accompanying amplifier, and cables were sold as a bundle for \$150 (equivalent to about \$2,800 today), hence the model name. Gibson experimented with electric guitars in the 1920s, but Gibson manager Guy Hart did not focus the company on these efforts until competitor Ro-Pat-In, later called the Electro String Instrument Corporation, introduced the Rickenbacher Electro Hawaiian and Spanish models in 1932. Gibson designer Walter Fuller was then assigned the task of developing an electric guitar pickup. Although Gibson's first electric guitar using the Fuller pickup was an electric lap steel Hawaiian guitar, the Spanish style ES-150 followed shortly thereafter. The artist most associated with the ES-150 is Jazz player Charlie Christian (1916 – 1942), who played with Benny Goodman's quintet. Christian was one of the first players to establish the electric guitar as a lead instrument with soloing capabilities. Although not formally endorsed by the company, he became a significant marketing asset for Gibson—he was so associated with their early electric guitars that the pickups on both the ES-150 and the ES-250 are commonly referred to as “Charlie Christian” pickups.

### Dimensions

Overall (HWD) (body): 9 × 51 5/16 in. (22.86 × 130.302 cm) overall1 (body overall): 51 5/16 in. (130.302 cm) overall2 (neck): 43 3/8 in. (110.236 cm) overall3 (overall): 104 5/16 × 74 × 40 5/16 × 12 13/16 in. (264.923 × 187.96 × 102.362 × 32.512 cm)