

Inventor, Gold Record Performer, Songwriter, multiple Halls of Fame inductee

1915

Lester Polsfuss is born June 9 in Waukesha, Wisconsin. *(Lester's mother changed the spelling of their last name, but Lester never legally changed his name.)*



1923-31 (8 – 16 years old)

- Punches holes in player piano roll and creates multi-track effect.
- Receives first harmonica from a ditch digger.
- Receives first guitar.
- Invents flip-able harmonica holder.
- Electrifies his guitar so more people can hear it.
- Fills hollow body guitar with Plaster of Paris to create solid body.
- Stretches guitar string over a section of train rail, adds telephone microphone as pickup and amplifies it by connecting it to a radio.
- Builds first recording machine with Cadillac flywheel, dental belt and a nail.



Rail

1932-34 (17-19 years old) *Great Depression leaves many without jobs.*

- Plays hillbilly music with Sunny Joe Wolverton on St. Louis and Springfield, MO radio stations.
- Starts to play electric guitar.
- Performs with Sunny Joe on Chicago radio and at World's Fair.
- Plays hillbilly music on daytime radio as Rhubarb Red. Plays jazz at night as Les Paul.

1935-40 (20-25 years old)

- Converts Bell & Howell movie speaker into guitar amplifier.
- Makes first professional recordings.
- Records first sound on sound because no one was around to jam.
- Moves to New York and joins Fred Waring on NBC radio.
- Performs in White House concert for President Franklin D. Roosevelt.



The Log

1941-45 (26-30 years old)

- Builds the "Log".
- Gibson executives laugh at Les' suggestion to build a solid-body electric guitar.
- Extreme electric shock severely burns his hands.
- Moves back to Chicago. Becomes music director for WIND and WJJD radio.
- Builds headless guitar from sheet of aluminum.
- Moves to Los Angeles.
- Drafted into Armed Forces Radio Service, where he learns about recording.
- Converts his Hollywood garage into a recording studio.

1946-49 (31-34 years old)

- Spends two years inventing new recording techniques.
- Makes first sound-on-sound commercial recordings using disks.
- Les Paul and Mary Ford are in horrific car accident during winter storm.
- Doctors recommend amputating Les' badly damaged right arm.
- Persuades doctors to set arm so he can continue to play.
- Capitol releases "Lover" and "Brazil", first of Les' "New Sound".
- Invents Sound-on-Sound tape machine.
- Hosts radio show, *Les Paul at Home* for 23 weeks.



1950-1 (35-36 years old)

- After almost 10 years of Les trying to convince Gibson, the company begins to design a solid-body electric guitar with input from Les.
- Sells six million records.
- Voted number one guitarist in country by *Down Beat* magazine.



1952-53 (37-38 years old)

- Gibson introduces Les Paul solid-body electric guitar.
- Release of Les and Mary's biggest hit, "Vaya Con Dios".
- *Les Paul and Mary Ford At Home*, series of 5-minute television shows (170 episodes) recorded in their Mahwah, NJ home.

1955-64 (40-51 years old)

- Proposes use of light for recording sound at Audio Engineering convention.
- Introduces his Les Paulverizer, a remote control attached to his guitar.
- Uses Les Paulverizer during White House concert for President Eisenhower.
- Designs Capitol Records' echo chambers and recording studios.
- From 1947 to 1957 sells over 10 million records.
- Inducted as honorary member of Audio Engineering Society.
- Receives Hollywood Walk of Fame star with Mary Ford.
- Retires from performing, but continues to experiment with electronics.



1977-88 (62-73 years old)

- Receives Grammy for Best Country Instrumental for *Chester and Lester*.
- Receives Grammy for "How High the Moon".
- Inducted into Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
- Begins weekly shows in New York City. Performs until two months before he dies.

2001-2009 (86-94 years old)

- Receives awards including: Technical Grammy, Emmy Lifetime Achievement in Engineering, two Grammy awards and the National Medal of Arts.
- Celebrates 90th birthday with tribute concert at Carnegie Hall.
- Inducted into National Inventors Hall of Fame. Named Inventor of the Year by *EQ Magazine*.
- Named One of the Ten Best Electric Guitar Players of all Time by *Time Magazine*.
- Dies in White Plains, NY on August 12.