AMP DATING TOOLS

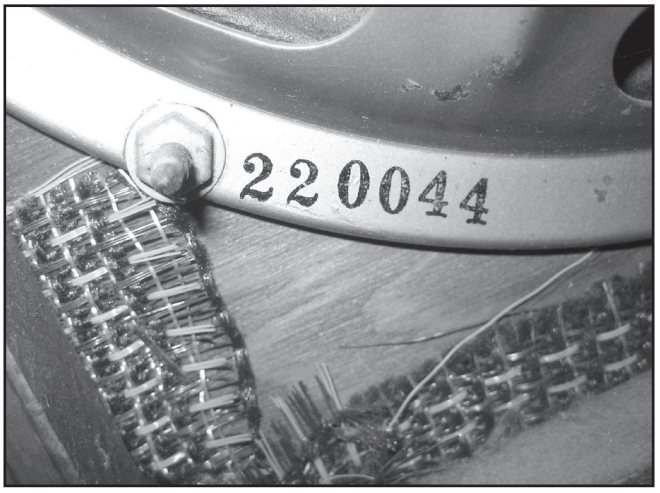
Guitar amplifiers can be dated by several different components including the speakers, potentiometers, transformers, tube charts, and serial numbers. With the exception of Marshall and a period of Ampeg production during the late 1960s, most large companies do not have a record of serialization. In fact, Fender's first kept serial number records start in 1994! More information and charts are appearing on the Internet and in magazines that are mostly compiled by collectors and enthusiasts, but much of it is not from the factory so question credibility on your own. Dating your amp by the major components (if they are original) is the best and/or most reliable way to do so.

One of the first steps to correctly date your amplifier is to figure out the manufacturer and model name or number. The manufacturer name should be present, but the model name/number may not be listed anywhere on the amplifier so you may have to do some research (this happens a lot with House Brand amplifiers such as Supro, Kay, Airline, etc.). There are many vintage catalog websites available (www.vintaxe.com), which is a great way to compare your model to others. All listings in the *Blue Book of Guitar Amplifiers* include the approximate year of production, so once you've identified the make and model name/number, you should be able to narrow it down to a few years.

Most guitar amplifier companies produced amplifiers in series (a group of models with different wattages, speakers, and features that share common cosmetics/coverings). Usually with the large companies, series were introduced and discontinued at the same time. For instance, Fender brown Tolex-covered amplifiers were produced between late 1959 through 1963. Guitar amplifiers are usually valued between the series and not individual years, but this may vary if features were only available for certain years. For instance, Fender silverface amplifiers were produced between 1968 and 1980, but a master volume knob was introduced circa 1976 meaning silverface amps produced between 1968 and 1976 will be valued different than amps produced between 1976 and 1980. In the *Blue Book of Guitar Amplifiers*, features added during production are typically noted and valued accordingly.

SPEAKER DATE CODES

If you would like to try and pinpoint exactly when your amplifier was produced, there are other ways to narrow it down. Refer to individual manufacturer sections within the *Blue Book of Guitar Amplifiers* to see if there is individual serialization or other dating methods (i.e. Fender, Marshall, Ampeg). If major components are original in your amplifier, you can also use those to help date. Speakers are probably the easiest component to locate and find a date code. Remember - if the speaker has been replaced, the date represented on the speaker will not coincide with the date of your amp! Also keep in mind that although the speaker dates 1961 it does not necessarily mean your amp is from 1961. Many large manufacturers purchased components in large quantities and used them as they needed. Speakers could sit on the shelf for months if not years before they were installed. Every American-made speaker should have a date code stamped on it, which is usually located on the edge of the frame. This date code consists of six, seven, or eight digits and will tell you the manufacturer and week and year of production. The first two, three, or occasionally four digits indicate the manufacturer (see chart for information). The next one or two digits indicate the last one or two digits of the year (most speakers built in the 1950s and 1960s have a one-digit year and after 1970 they are usually two digits, but there are variations and exceptions). The last two digits indicate the week of the year. The date code may be split with a hyphen between the manufacturer code and the year/week numbers. Many manufacturers also added other numbers or letters on the speaker to help identify it. The date code was a mandatory number the Electronics Industries Alliance (EIA) made speaker manufacturers apply, but any other date coding was done strictly by the manufacturer.



Examples:

220022: Jensen Speaker built in the 22nd week of 1950 or 1960.
465-831: Oxford Speaker built in the 31st week of 1958 or 1968.
677145: Eminence Speaker built in the 45th week of 1971.

24: Becker
34: Cornell-Dubilier
67: Eminence
101: Admiral
106: Allen-Bradley
117: Credence Speakers
119: Automatic Manufacturing
124: Alpha Wire
125: Bendix
130: Matsushita/Panasonic
132: Talk-A-Phone
134: Mepco/CentraLab/NA Philips
137: CTS
140: Clarostat
145: Cinaudagraph/Consolidated/Illinois Capacitor
150: Crescent
169: Hitachi
185: Motorola
188: General Electric (GE)
213: Dearborn Wire
220: Jensen/Viking
230: Littlefuse
232: Magnavox
235: Mallory/North American Capacitor
240: JW Davis
244: Muter
245: National
251: Ohmite
252: Dukane/Operadio
258: Perm-O-Flex
260: Philco
270: Quam-Nichols
274: RCA
277: Emerson/Radio Speaker
280: Raytheon
285: Rola
286: Ross
296: Solar
300: Speer
304: Stackpole
308: Stromberg-Carlson
312: Sylvania
328: Utah/Oxford
336: Western Electric
343: Zenith
371: Best
374: Cletron
381: Bourns
391: Altec-Lansing
394: Foster Transformer
416: Heath
423: North American Philips/Norelco
433: Cleveland
449: Wilder
465: Oxford/McGregor
466: Delco
532: Ward Leonard
549: Midwest
550: Valco/National/Supro/Airline/Oahu
555: Waldom Electronics
575: Heppner
579: Beldon/Cooper
589: Bogen
649: Electro-Voice
706: Pioneer
719: Carbonneau
722: Milwaukee Resistor
736: Sprague/Allegro MicroSystem
742: Esquire
748: Russell
756: Universal
767: Quincy
787: Sonatone
789: McGregor
794: Harman Kardon
795: Atlas
816: Dale
828: Midland
840: Ampex
847: University
918: Oaktron
932: Atlas
1056: Fisher
1059: Channel
1098: Pyle
1113: Acoustic Fiber Sounde
1149: Curtis Mathes
1191: Micro Magnet
1279: WeberVST

SPECIAL SPEAKER DATE CODES:

JENSEN

Along with the typical date code found on American-made speakers, Jensen used another proprietary code strictly for their speakers. Since Jensen was one of the most popular supplier of speakers in the 1950s and 1960s and they built several different models, this code was useful to identify what kind of speaker it was. Jensen used a letter number combination along with their own numbering system. The first letter indicates the magnet type. The next one or two numbers indicate the speaker size (typically from 6 in. to 18 in.). The last letter indicates the quality of the speaker ranging from J through X. The closer the letter is to J the better quality it is; the closer the letter is to X the lesser quality it is. The remaining letter and numbers are more than likely a Jensen production number, and no information on these numbers is available. Note: Jensen stopped using AlNiCo magnets in the 1960s, but continued use of the P prefix.

Magnet Code Letters

C: Ceramic
EM: Electronic musical
F: Field Coil magnet
P: AlNiCo V

Speaker Quality Letters:

J, K, L: Part of the Professional Series
N, P, Q, R: Part of the Concert Series
S, T, U, V, W, X: Part of the Standard Series, letters V, W, and X are all 8 in. and smaller.

Examples:

C12R: A 12 in. Jensen speaker with a ceramic magnet and is part of the Concert Series.
P10R: A 10 in. Jensen speaker with an AlNiCo magnet and is part of the Concert Series.

CELESTION

Since Celestion is a European company, many European guitar amplifier manufacturers have used their speakers. However, Celestion does not follow the American dating system. Early date codes were stamped on the gasket of the speaker, and on later models the number was stamped onto the frame itself. There are four types of date codes that have been stamped onto the speakers dating back to the 50s. Type 1 ran from 1956-1967, type 2 ran from 1968-1991, type 3 from 1992-2014, and type 4 from 2015-present. For type 1 there are two numbers first followed by two letters. The first two numbers indicate the day of the month the speaker was made (i.e. 1-31 are the numbers). Then the first letter is month and the second letter is the year, which can be found by the corresponding chart. Type 2 date codes are reversed. The letters come first followed by the numbers which are the day of the month again. Type 3 date codes follow the same system as Type 1; they just had to start over with letters as they ran out. The letters are also the same. Type 4 date codes follow the same system as Type 2. In 1962, they discontinued using the letter I because of confusion with the number 1. Examples of this system are 20 CG would be a speaker made March 20, 1962. A date code of FQ 26 would be a speaker made on June 26, 1982.

MONTH 1956-1962

A - January	**D - April**	**G - July**	**J - October**
B - February	**E - May**	**H - August**	**K - November**
C - March	**F - June**	**I - September**	**L - December**

MONTH 1963-CURRENT

A - January	**D - April**	**G - July**	**K - October**
B - February	**E - May**	**H - August**	**L - November**
C - March	**F - June**	**J - September**	**M - December**

YEAR TYPE 1956-1967

A - 1956	**D - 1959**	**G - 1962**	**K - 1965**
B - 1957	**E - 1960**	**H - 1963**	**L - 1966**
C - 1958	**F - 1961**	**J - 1964**	**M - 1967**

***YEAR TYPE** 2 1968-1991*

A - 1968/1991	**G - 1974**	**N - 1980**	**U - 1986**
B - 1969	**H - 1975**	**P - 1981**	**V - 1987**
C - 1970	**J - 1976**	**Q - 1982**	**W - 1988**
D - 1971	**K - 1977**	**R - 1983**	**X - 1989**
E - 1972	**L - 1978**	**S - 1984**	**Y - 1990**
F - 1973	**M - 1979**	**T - 1985**	**Z - 1991**

***YEAR TYPE** 3 1992-2014*

B - 1992	**H - 1998**	**P - 2004**	**V - 2010**
C - 1993	**J - 1999**	**Q - 2005**	**W - 2011**
D - 1994	**K - 2000**	**R - 2006**	**X - 2012**
E - 1995	**L - 2001**	**S - 2007**	**Y - 2013**
F - 1996	**M - 2002**	**T - 2008**	**Z - 2014**
G - 1997	**N - 2003**	**U - 2009**	

***YEAR TYPE** 4 2015-PRESENT*

A - 2015 **B - 2016** **C - 2017**

The date codes after 2005 have not been verified by Celestion and may not be accurate. However, based on their dating code system, the chart provided is based on the continuation of existing numbers.

Examples:

DD19T: A Celestion T1281 Greenback speaker manufactured on April 19, 1971. Image courtesy Douglas Phillips.

HP12: A Celestion T3054 speaker manufactured on August 12, 1981. Image courtesy Gary Borowitz.

OXFORD

Oxford used a date code similar to Jensen, but the letter indicated the power handling of the speaker. The higher the number, the higher peak power the speaker was rated at. Letters range from K to T.

POTENTIOMETER DATE CODES

On every American made potentiometer (pot), there should be a date and manufacturer code similar to speaker codes. This code consists of six or seven digits. The first three indicate the company or manufacturer who made the pot and the last three or four indicate the date it was made. If there are six digits, the fourth digit indicates the last number of the year, and the fifth and sixth digit indicate the week of that year. If there are seven digits, the fourth and fifth indicate the last two digits of the year it was made and the sixth and seventh indicate the week of that year. Usually the numbers were separated by a hyphen after the third digit. When there are possibilities of two different years, refer to the actual amplifier and see what years it was manufactured to narrow it down.

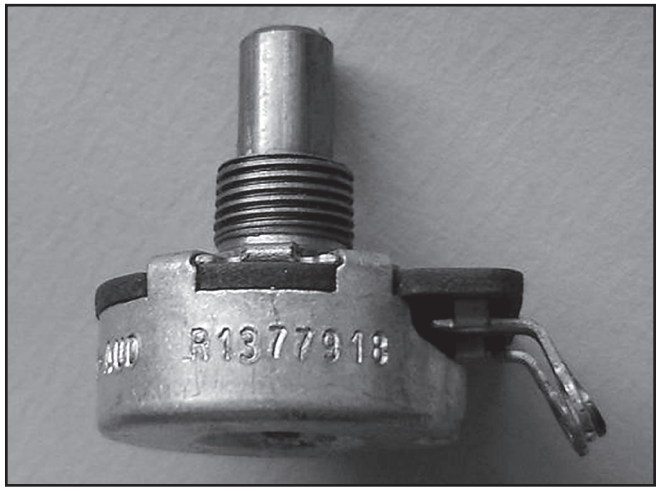
There are several instances to make sure that this system is accurate. The pots must be original. If they have been replaced, they are not going to be an accurate way to determine the date of the amplifier. The pots show that the amp was not made before the date on the pot, but could be made much later than that date. Many large manufacturers purchased components in large quantities and used them as they needed. Pots could sit on the shelf for months if not years before they were installed. If your amp has mainly 1961 pots, it only means it was produced in or after 1961.

Examples:

140-6421: Calrostat pot made in the 21st week of 1964,

137-711= a CTS pot made in the 11th week of 1947 or 1957.

106: Allen-Bradley
134: CentraLab
137: CTS
140: Clarostat
304: Stackpole
381: Bourns Networks
615: IRC



Examples:

1377918: A CTS potentiometer pot built in the 18th week of 1979.

TRANSFORMER/COIL DATE CODES

Many power transformers and coils on amps are still original and can also be used to help date amplifiers because they should also have a date code. The transformer code should be stamped into the actual metal, and will follow the system that potentiometers and speakers use. Remember - if the transformer has been replaced, the date represented on the frame will not coincide with the date of your amp! Also keep in mind that although the transformer dates to 1961 it does not necessarily mean your amp is from 1961. Many large manufacturers purchased components in large quantities and used them as they needed. Transformers could sit on the shelf for months if not years before they were installed. Every American-made transformer should have a date code stamped into the metal casing. This date code consists of six, seven, or eight digits and will tell you the manufacturer and week and year of production. The first three (and occasionally four) digits indicate the manufacturer (see chart for information). The next one or two digits indicate the last one or two digits of the year (most speakers built in the 1950s and 1960s have a one-digit year and after 1970 they are usually two digits, but there are variations and exceptions). The last two digits indicate the week of the year. The date code may be split with a hyphen between the manufacturer code and the year/week numbers. Many manufacturers also added other numbers or letters on the speaker to help identify it. The date code was a mandatory number the Electronics Industries Alliance (EIA) made speaker manufacturers apply, but any other date coding was done strictly by the manufacturer.

Examples:

549-6221: A Midwest Coil & Transformer unit built in the 21st week of 1962.

138: Stancor
141: Coil Engineering
172: Ensign Coil
183: Freed

194: General Radio
218: Jefferson Electric
238: Thordarsen-Meissner
239: Merit Coil & Transformer
305: Standard Coil
352: Essex
366: New York Transformer
391: Altec-Lansing/Peerless
394: Foster Transformer
412: General Transformer
418: United Transformer Corporation
452: Empire Coil
489: Radio-Television Products Corporation
503: Caledonia
524: Triwec Transformer
549: Midwest Coil & Transformer
550: Standard Winding Company
572: F&V Coil Winding
606: Woodward-Schumacher
637: Central Coil
682: Electrical Windings
757: Grand Transformers
773: Forest Electric
776: Ogden Coil & Transformers
830: Triad
831: Better Coil & Transformers
843: Klipsch
878: Acro Products
883: Mohawk
892: American Transformer
897: Tresco
906: Coilcraft
908: Aerocoil
928: Acme Coil & Transformer
933: Magnetic Coil Manufacturing
934: Oaktron
1005: Northlake
1052: Pacific

Several other components such as tubes, transistors, capacitors, and filter caps also utilize date codes similar to speakers, pots, and transformers. However, most of these are replaced over the years due to routine maintenance. If you are positive that these parts are original, you can try dating them. There are separate manufacturer codes for these, but they generally follow the same pattern.

Please remember that all the information included above is intended as a guide only. THERE ARE ALWAYS EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES!!! These charts were put together from a number of sources, including Dave Funk's *Tube Amp Workbook*, and several online websites.