

History of The Champs (1958-1960):

References:

<http://www.sealsandcrofts.com/champs.html>

<http://www.rockabillyhall.com/gvjohnny.html>

The Champ's instrumental songs "Train to Nowhere" & "Tequila" were both written by Daniel Flores (aka "Chuck Rio" because he was under another contract with RPM records). "Tequila" was based on a stage vamp the Flores Trio {Dan Flores (sax, keyboards/singer), Gene Alden (Drums), Buddy Bruce (Guitar)} used to play. Cliff Hills was a session bass player on the recording of "Tequila".

"Tequila" was essentially recorded as an afterthought at an instrumental recording session (organized by Dave Burgess) on December 23, 1957 at Goldstar Studios in Hollywood. It was done in three takes. "Tequila" hit number one on the pop charts on March 28, 1958. The Champs received a Grammy award for best instrumental song of 1958 for "Tequila".



Original Champs band members (formed in aftermath of this recording)/

Original Champs band members *touring* lineup (Left to Right) were:

Joe Burnas (Bass), Dave Burgess, aka "Dave Dupree" (soloist/singer/songwriter, rhythm guitar & Challenge Records executive), Gene Alden (Drums), Daniel Flores, aka "Chuck Rio" (Tenor Sax/keyboards/singer) and Dale Norris (lead guitar – {n.b. Buddy Bruce declined to go on tour}).

The Champs tour in the first half of 1958 was a disaster, Burgess & Flores/Rio feuded w/ each other. Flores/Rio (Tenor Sax) and Alden (Drums) quit the band. They were replaced by young Jimmy Seals (Tenor Sax) and Dash Crofts (Drums).

Later that same year, Joe Burnas (Bass) was replaced by Van Norman, who died shortly thereafter in a car crash in November, 1958 - he was immediately replaced by Bob Morris.

Johnny Meeks replaced Dale Norris on lead guitar in 1959. He recorded with them on January 13 and March 14, 1959.



Early 1959 Champs Photo (With Fender Brown-Era Amps), Left to Right:

Dash Crofts (Drums), Bob Morris (Fender Jazz !!! Bass & Fender Prototype Showman-12 Piggyback !!!), Dave Burgess (Fender RW FB Jazzmaster & Fender ?? Amp), Jimmy Seals (Tenor Sax), Johnny Meeks (Fender RW FB Strat & Fender ?? Amp)

This famous photo shows three of the new-fangled brown-era Fender amps (Showman single-12, Fender ?? and Fender ?? amps) - that were not even yet into production (!), Bob Morris playing a Jazz Bass guitar - note the offset body horns and J-Bass' signature thin neck at the headstock (!) - {the J-Bass did not go into production until 1960, prototypes existed in 1959 - see e.g. p 194 of Richard R. Smith's book, "Fender, the Sound Heard 'Round the World"}, Dave Burgess playing a rosewood fretboard Jazzmaster and Johnny Meeks playing a rosewood fretboard Stratocaster. This photo presumably was taken at one of the Champs recording sessions - either on January 13 or March 14, 1959! The later date is perhaps the more probable date, from the point of view of all of the new-fangled Fender gear. But it is still early 1959!

(n.b. Johnny Meeks can be reached via snail-mail:

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Johnny Meeks was drafted six months after joining the Champs - he was replaced by Jerry Cole. Dave Burgess handed over the rhythm guitar work to Glen Campbell about this same time.

The Champs lineup in Late 1959 became:



Clockwise from top left: Bob Morris (Bass), Dash Crofts (Drums), Glen Campbell (Rhythm Guitar), Jerry Cole (Lead Guitar) Jimmy Seals (Tenor Sax).

These Champs band members recorded in July, 1959 and again on August 27, 1959. Thus, the famous Champs photo with the new-fangled Fender gear must predate these dates!.