



## TONE TIPS FROM THE ROAD

## Rewiring Magic

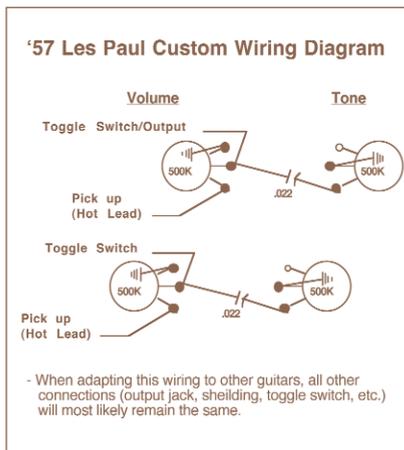
Over the years I've ended up rewiring the electronics of many of my guitars. I thought this might make a good topic to share three of my favorite rewirings. Of course, changing out pick-ups is the biggest way to customize your sound, but there are a few significant tricks you can do with the wiring itself. The additional freedom and creativity you have in shaping your tone makes these mods priceless.

But before you start whacking on your guitar's inards, be sure you're adept with a soldering iron and understand what you're doing. Otherwise, take your guitar to a proper technician tell them what you're looking for. I'm sure I burned up quite a few cap's and pot's in my early days of learning how to solder components.

**1. '50s Gibson wiring** – I noticed that all of my '50s and early '60s Gibsons never lost tone or high-end when I rolled off the volume, especially the P-90 guitars, which actually get a chimy, glassy tone as the volume rolls off. Eventually, I discovered that the wiring was different from later-year Gibsons and most every other guitar. It's down to the relationship of the tone potentiometer ("pot") and capacitor to the volume pot, and which posts the hot leads are connected to. I have included this wiring diagram, and now use it for most every guitar I own, except for my Strats and stock Teles. However, I did use it with incredible results on my mid-'70s Tele Custom (4-knob config with humbucker pickup in the front), which was a complete

tone sucker when you rolled down the volume control.

This is a very common problem that most try to correct by placing a small value (pF) filter capacitor across the volume pot. But that remedy usually screws with the taper of the volume control and adds false amounts of top-end as you drop to lower levels. The '50s Gibson wiring is much more true sounding and useable.



**2. Gibson Firebird VII** – Three pick-up Gibsons always came wired to the 3-position toggle switch: bridge, bridge/middle, neck. On early-model three pickup Les Pauls and SGs, the middle pickup even came wound in reverse phase; in other words, pretty limited tonally for a three pick-up guitar.

I simply converted the tone knob for the front neck pickup to be the volume control for the middle pickup. The neck pickup has its volume control with no tone (I rarely use the tone knob on a front p-up anyway) and the rear has volume and tone. Pretty straightforward, except that you will

most likely need to replace the 3-position toggle switch; the original switch is different in order to accommodate the stock three pickup wiring. But it's worth the trouble and you can easily get the switch from Gibson. With the middle pickup on its own volume, you can get any pickup combination, drastically expanding the tonal range of your three pickup Gibbo.

**3. "The Chromacaster"** – My latest wiring thrill is my Tonequest Strat with the Deaf Eddie's "Chromacaster" switch. This 6-way rotary switch allows for almost every imaginable pickup combination. Not only one or two or three pickups together (parallel), but series and out-of-phase combinations. There's no need to understand the technical aspects; tonally, just think Brian May, whose favorite tones on his homemade guitar included out-of-phase combinations. You drop this switch on your Strat in place of one of the tone controls. The addition of this "Chromacaster" switch created an entirely new guitar out of my Strat. It works in conjunction with the original 5-way switch, so you can always default back to a typical Strat wiring or just find a couple of your fave settings. Check out the website for the "Chromacaster" switch and other switch variations at deaf-eddie.net.

Until next time, happy soldering and RAWK ON! 🎸

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