



Fave Pickups, Pt. 2

Since there wasn't enough space to cover them all in the last issue, I'll continue with some of the favorite pickups I'm using these days or have liked over the years. The first handful are listed by the guitar they're currently living in.

Fender Classic '50s Telecaster (Bare Knuckles)

If you're looking for a vintage feel that's affordable, this Tele is one of the best deals going. In fact you may never bother placing that order for a Relic. But there's room to improve on the pickups (what do you expect for a guitar with a street price under \$700?). For this one, I've loaded in a set of Bare Knuckles. My pal Kenny Rardin at Solidbody Guitar turned me onto these. Kenny *knows* tone and constantly was going on about Bare Knuckles' Tele style pickups. He sent me a "Country Boy" set and they are absolute beauties. Plenty of chime, clarity and spank. Inspired by the early '50s Tele pickups using the Alnico III magnets.

Gibson Les Paul Standard (Voodoo Humbuckers)

Given to me by a friend years ago, the Voodoo Pickups (made by Peter Florance) ended up in my old workhorse Les Paul Standard that I had bought brand new back in 1989. This guitar has had countless humbuckers installed over the years – a guitar where I know its sound very well so I can get a good feel for the pickup's character. I threw in these Voodoos, and once again they haven't left. They are my partner, Dan Boul's (from 65 Amps) new fave, and he bought a set for himself. Lots of beef and

power based on a PAF design. Other fave pickups in my personal stash collected over the years...

Seymour Duncan STL-1 Vintage '54 Lead Tele Pickup

Great spank and tone for an off-the shelf pick-up. Lived in my '76 Tele Custom for ages.

Seymour Duncan Antiquity Tele Lead

This one is now back in my '76 Tele Custom, another workhorse guitar I've used since the early '90s.

Seymour Duncan Antiquity Texas Hot & Twangbanger Strat combo

These pickups ended up in a late '70s exotic wood Schecter Strat loaned to me by a close friend. I've since given the guitar back and left the pick-ups in. I loved the sound of these Antiquity Texas Hot Strat pickups and the addition of the Twang Banger, a Strat-style with a copper plate like a Tele pickup, was a killer "best of both worlds" combo. I definitely need to get another set.

Harmonic Design Z-90

Ooohh, the sound of original P-90s is hard to reproduce. Or at least I've had trouble finding any that really nail the sound of a '50s LP Jr. P-90 that sounds like it's about to explode. P-90s are not a high-output pickup, but they have a dynamic range so broad that vintage amps sound like they're about to blow apart from the seams when you crank 'em. Years back, my pal David Wilson of *The Tonequest Report* brought

a guitar by the house with this Harmonic Design Z-90 installed, a humbucker size P-90. We were blasting through a bunch of Marshalls (our main intention of getting together that day) and after a while, I marveled over the sound of the pickup. We ended up pulling out my old Juniors and Specials to compare to vintage P-90s. They didn't really emulate the vintage sound, but rather had an inspiring tone of their own. Very broad with tons of clarity, and well worth checking out.

DiMarzio "PAF" humbuckers from the '70s

I've had this set floating in and out of guitars since the '70s, back when replacement brand pick-ups were first starting to surface. After hearing these for so long, I don't really consider them a true PAF tone, but man, they are rock screamers – very powerful sounding with a nice bite. I'm not sure how they compare to new issue DiMarzio PAF styles, and I'd imagine there is a collectibility to early DiMarzio's. I had the DiMarzio Super Distortion Humbuckers when they first came out in '76 or so when I was in high school and threw them in a Les Paul. Would love to still have that set.

Until next time ... rawk on! 

Peter Stroud

is co-founder of 65amps

www.sherylcrow.com

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