

Title:

How To Make A Cheap Guitar Sound Great

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556

Summary:

Simple modifications to low cost guitars can make them sound just as good as expensive ones.

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Article Body:

Most beginning guitar players start with a rather inexpensive instrument. They usually have a mass production clone of a Fender Stratocaster or a Gibson Les Paul. The most popular clones are made overseas by Gibson and Fender themselves through the Epiphone and Squier lines. These are built to the same specs as the American made models. They are decent instruments in their own right but they can be improved greatly with just a pickup replacement. As long as the neck is straight and the tuning pegs are fairly tight, this is often all you need to upgrade to a pro sound.

Iv'e modified several Mexican made Stratocasters and I'll take you through the process. The first thing you want to decide on is what kind of sound you're looking for. Replacement pickups are available with a lot of variety in sound output. I like to use Seymour Duncan pickups because they have proven to be of high quality and reliability. They also have a good selection and have a CD of sound samples you can listen to. Most dealers have the CD's and you can also listen to the samples online. Choose your replacement pickups and you're ready to upgrade.

You'll need several things for the job. A good stable workbench or table, with plenty of room to lay your tools out, makes things much easier. Here's a list of what you need: 1.screwdriver set, both flat head and philips 2.soldering iron 3.solder 4.new set of strings 5.wire cutters/strippers

The first thing you need to do is remove your guitar strings. I usually leave the low E-string on to keep a little tension on the neck. Next remove the pickguard cover. Make sure you save all the screws in a cup as they are small and get lost easily. After you remove the screws you should be able to lift up

on it and slide it off under the E-string. You should now see your three pickups and the wiring thats attached to them.

The new pickups come with a wiring diagram that is color coded but take a good look at each pickup before you replace it in case something isn't quite right with the color code. It's important that you replace one pickup at a time so as not to mix up the bridge, middle and neck pickups.

Heat up your soldering iron. Remove the first pickup. I usually start with the neck pickup. Cut and strip the wires according to the instructions and solder the wires to the new ones. Repeat the process for the other two. Not too bad, huh?

When you replace the cover/pickguard, be careful not to overtighten the screws or they might get stripped. Now would be a good time to clean the guitar before you put the new strings on.

Replace and tune the strings and plug in. You'll be pleased with the results. I have several of these upgraded strats for the price of one expensive one and more versatilty with different pickup sounds. You can do the same thing with an Epiphone Les Paul to produce a sound that rivals the Gibson for about a third of the price. Now you can spend more money on all the cool effects gadgets. Have fun and keep practicing.

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