



*Clapton began his stint with the Yardbirds playing Fenders.*

### **ERIC CLAPTON'S GEAR SET UP**

Clapton began his stint with the Yardbirds playing Fenders, but then switched to Gibsons, which he played during his Bluesbreakers, Cream and Blind Faith days (and he played George Harrison's Les Paul on the Beatle's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps.") Sometime around 1970 he switched to the Fender Stratocaster® and hasn't stopped playing Strats ever since, although he still sometimes plays Gibsons.

#### ***Yardbirds:***

Guitar: Fender Telecaster®  
Amp: Vox AC-30

#### ***Bluesbreakers:***

Guitar: 1959 Gibson Les Paul Standard.  
Amp: 1962 Marshall 2X12 45-watt combo. (output tubes changed to KT66's)

#### ***Cream:***

Guitars: 1959 Les Paul Standard (stolen 1966 or 1967), 1964 Gibson Les Paul SG Standard, Gibson ES-335, Gibson Firebird.  
Amps: Two 100-watt 1959 Marshall heads, two 4x12 cabinets. Settings: volume, treble, bass, and presence all on highest setting; guitar controls turned up all the way. Sometimes he used both stacks (guitar plugged into both with a Y-splitter cable), and sometimes just one. Amps were known to have broken down several times during concerts.

To achieve the Cream "woman tone," Clapton turned the tone all the way down on either the bridge or neck humbucking pickup, turned the volume all the way up, and used heavy strings, with a bass-heavy amp turned all the way up, and the wah-wah pedal at three-quarters back from the forward position.  
Effects: Vox wah-wah pedal, fuzz pedal.

#### ***Blind Faith:***

Guitar: Gibson Firebird  
Amp: Fender Showman

#### ***Derek & the Dominoes:***

Guitar: Fender Stratocaster, maple fretboard  
Amp: Fender Champ (tweed)

#### ***1972-1987:***

Guitar: His trademark Strat, nicknamed "Blackie," was actually a composite guitar which Eric put together himself with loving care, choosing the best components from three Strats he had bought during an American tour in the Delaney & Bonnie/Derek & the Dominoes era.

The Strat used to record "Layla," and which appears on the cover of Layla and Other Assorted Lovesongs, sold at auction for a record \$497,500 in 1999. The sunburst 1956 Strat was nicknamed "Brownie," and was sold with 99 other Clapton guitars to

## FENDER PLAYERS CLUB ERIC CLAPTON



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raise money for his drug rehabilitation center, Crossroads. Another famous Clapton guitar, the psychedelic-painted 1961 Gibson SG/Les Paul used in Cream, is now in the collection of artist/producer Todd Rundgren.

Strings: Light. Ernie Ball Super Slinky: .009, .011, .016, .024, .032, .042. (Also uses Slinky, or .010s.) Normally changed only when one breaks; occasionally three high strings changed.

Slide: Isis medium (thick glass tube, width of neck)

Slide setup: Gibson ES-335, bridge raised. Open G tuning: D, G, D, G, B, D

### ***Clapton's neck setup for his guitars, in his own words (1985):***

"All of them need to be about 1/8" in the action, and I like it to be constant all the way down. I can't stand it if the nut is low, and the action gets higher as you go up the neck. I always take the wang bar off and have five springs, and just tighten the whole thing up. I like frets to be generally somewhere between a Strat and a Les Paul. Les Pauls are too thick, and Fenders are sometimes too thin. The Fender Elite is very nice because it's a blend. The neck on Blackie, the Strat I play all the time, is probably my favorite shape. It's almost triangular on the back -- V-shaped -- with a slightly curved fingerboard, as opposed to the flat one. That, to me, is the best."

### ***Clapton on Fenders and Gibsons (1985):***

"When I get up there onstage, I often go through a great deal of indecision, even while I'm playing. If I've got the black Stratocaster on and I'm in the middle of a blues, I'm kind of going, "Aw, I wish I had the Les Paul." Then again, if I were playing the Les Paul, the sound would be great, but I'd be going, "Man, I wish I had the Stratocaster neck." I'm always caught in the middle of those two guitars. I've always liked the Freddie King/B.B. King rich tone; at the same time, I like the manic Buddy Guy/Otis Rush Strat tone. You can get somewhere in the middle, and that's usually what I end up doing, trying to find a happy medium. But it's bloody anguish."

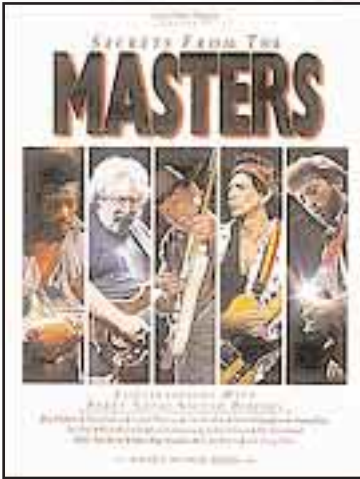
### ***Clapton's Signature Strat:***

In 1988, Eric Clapton became the first artist to have a Fender Signature model. He asked Fender to make him a guitar that had the distinct V-shape neck of his favorite 1930s Martin acoustic guitar, as well as what he described as a "compressed" pickup sound. Various prototypes were built for Clapton by George Blanda at the Custom shop, and the final design eventually went on sale to the public in 1988.

Fender demonstrated to Clapton that Lace Sensor pickups and a midrange-boosting active circuit could deliver the sound he was after, and the production model even offers a blocked-off vintage-style vibrato unit, carefully duplicating that feature of Clapton's favorite Strat (he never used vibrato, but disliked the sound of hardtail non-vibrato Strats). Clapton had retired his faithful old "bitser" Strat, Blackie, in 1987, and started to play his new signature models soon after.

See the Eric Clapton Stratocaster®; at [Fender's website](https://www.fender.com).

## FENDER PLAYERS CLUB ERIC CLAPTON



### *Secrets From the Masters*

Edited by Don Menn©; BackBeat Books

Interviews with 50 of the world's greatest guitarists spanning the past 25 years and collected into one information-packed volume. Based on articles originally published in *Guitar Player*, *Secrets From The Masters* features the most influential guitarists of our time - from legends such as Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins and B.B. King to Joe Satriani, Eddie Van Halen and Eric Clapton, and all genres in-between. This book celebrates the guitarists who have forever altered the way we play and think about the guitar. Within these interviews you will find poetry and prophecy, the outrageous and the sublime, plus rare photos, challenging music, groovy gear, groundbreaking techniques and other glimpses into greatness.

Inventory # HL 699362. **Book \$19.95** (US).



### *50 Years of Fender*

by Tony Bacon

The first Fender guitar hit the scene 50 years ago-and music hasn't been the same since. Featuring 200 color photos, this visual chronicle of the premier guitar maker charts every Fender model from 1950 to 2000, accompanied by a parallel timeline of musical highlights. The book celebrates 50 years of Telecasters, Stratocasters, Precision Bases, and other Fenders played by such artists as Buddy Holly, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, and Kurt Cobain.

Inventory # HL 330592. **Book \$19.95** (US).