

GEAR SETUP

Buddy Holly was one of the first rock & roll guitarists to use a Fender Stratocaster®, a guitar which had been introduced in 1954 and up until Holly had been used mostly by blues, R&B and country & western guitarists. His use of the still-newfangled instrument on his TV appearances greatly popularized it and caused many of the next generation of rock & rollers to rush out and buy it.

His brother Larry bought him his first Strat®, but it was later stolen; Holly owned three or four of them during his career. The one he played at his last show, which was later returned to his parents, is now on display at the Buddy Holly Center in Lubbock, Texas. The guitar was recently conserved by John Page of the Fender Custom Shop, and a white pick (a Gibson medium) was found wedged under the bottom of the pick guard, as can often be seen in photographs.

The tremolo plate was found to have five springs, making it lie flat instead of floating. Page believed that the guitar was set this way at the factory; Holly rarely used the tremolo arm, and setting it to lie flat would have given it better tone.

The Strat, serial #028228, is a '58 three-tone sunburst with an alder body and "slim C" profile neck. The neck measures .840" at the first fret, .992" at the 12th fret, and has a slightly larger-than-standard 1.665" nut. The peghead thickness is .570". In July 1958, Manny's in New York City shipped the Strat to him while he was on the road. This instrument replaced a Strat stolen from the group's station wagon while the band stopped for lunch in East St. Louis, Missouri.

According to Tommy Allsup, who played guitar for Holly, Fender shipped two free Stratocasters and two Twins (Fender Twin-Amp) to the band just before the July 1958 tour (one pair for Holly and one for Allsup), and it was Holly's "free" Strat that was stolen and replaced by Manny's. Another Strat (most likely his original '55 model) had been stolen on one of Alan Freed's rock & roll package tours.

Photos of the final tour show that virtually all the guitarists and bassists played Fender instruments: Waylon Jennings has a Precision Bass®; Ritchie Valens, Dion, and Tommy Allsup are all shown with Fender Stratocasters®.

Photographs show that Buddy Holly used the middle-treble pickup selector setting, but it's known that he switched settings for rhythm and lead sections of songs.

CAPO: Holly was frequently photographed in concert using a capo on the fifth fret, and also sometimes on the first fret.

AMPLIFIERS: A 1957 concert shot shows Holly using a small Ampeg amp. Photos from the final Winter Dance Party tour show two tweed Fender amps onstage, most likely the Fender Twin-Amps referred to by Allsup. The 1958 Twin-Amp was a large, narrow cabinet with two Jensen 12-inch speakers, and four power tubes which gave it considerably more power (80 to 100 watts) than the earlier 50-watt models; it also added a new "middle" tone control to the bass, treble, normal volume, bright volume, and presence controls.

RECORDING TECHNIQUES

Besides popularizing the Strat®, Buddy Holly also pioneered overdubbing techniques in the recording studio.

Holly double-tracked vocal and guitar parts on "Words of Love" by a process of trial and error because it was a technique that was not done at that time. On "Peggy Sue," he had the drums removed from the studio and run through an echo device; then he manually raised and lowered the volume in time with the music for an unusual effect. Norman Petty recalled that while Holly was running down "Everyday" for the band, "Jerry started to join in, improvising by slapping his

FENDER PLAYERS CLUB BUDDY HOLLY

knees, and the sound appealed to Holly. So the only drumming on the record is Jerry Allison slapping his knees." To show how primitive recording conditions were in those days, Crickets rhythm guitarist Niki Sullivan recalls recording "Peggy Sue:" "Buddy couldn't switch from rhythm to lead fast enough without breaking rhythm. He couldn't get his hand to the switch fast enough and it showed up on tape. So we stopped and redid it with me pushing the switch on Buddy's guitar."