

# Les Paul

## Musician, Inventor, Entertainer

*You may know that he designed the Gibson Les Paul solid body electric guitar or that he invented the 8-track tape recorder. Maybe you know that his recording techniques made today's music possible. Maybe you know he is in both the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the National Inventors Hall of Fame. But, Les Paul wasn't always famous and he wasn't always lucky.*



He was raised by a single mom who struggled to cover expenses. That was when people rarely got divorced. He was not at the top of his class.

At age 26, he lost all feeling in his hands when he was nearly electrocuted. Just when his career was starting to take off, he was in a car accident that put him in the hospital for a year with a broken back, ribs, nose and a shattered right elbow. Of the accident, Les said, "I was the luckiest guy in the world (to have been in that

accident.)" What!

Despite the pain and nearly dying, Les said that in the hospital he took time to think about what he wanted to do. He never would have done that by choice.

When he thought he might lose his right arm, he started to design a synthesizer he could play with one hand.

When Les got out of the hospital, he was determined to play his guitar. Since he couldn't hold the guitar, he designed a way to bend his guitar stand to hold the guitar so he could play.

As he got older, Les Paul lost the use of his fingers one at a time. Les' reaction: "And now the guy who could play so fast, who played all the licks that have been copied for generations, can't bend his fingers. But it's okay because I've compensated by learning the value of a single note."



## Words from Les

**Talents** – “We’re all gifted in some way. I have always, my whole life, been very active. It’s that drive and curiosity which has helped me get the most out of whatever gifts I



was born with. It’s the difference between just thinking and actually doing that has set me apart more than anything else.”

**Tough Breaks** -- “Some things are going to fall your way when you thought they wouldn’t, and sometimes you’re going to step on a rake and get a rotten deal when you thought you had it made.

It’s challenges that make you better and prove beneficial to you.”

**Goals** – “Set your sights on where you want to go in your life, make up your mind you’re going to do it no matter what, and start digging. More often than not, you’ll get there. Whether it works out or not, it may lead to something wonderful you would’ve otherwise missed. Have a sense of humor. Be willing to improvise and something will work out.”

**Mistakes** – “You’re going to take a wrong turn and get lost, you’re going to discover somebody lied to you or have to live with the fact that you lied to somebody else. And you’re not going to be alone because it’s the same for everybody. “



**“The best thing you can do for yourself** and for the world is very simple. Try to be a good person and have a good time doing it. Forgive if you want to be forgiven. Stick with that, and you can’t go wrong.”

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\* Les Paul’s quotes are from the book, *Les Paul In His Own Words*

Mar 2019