



# "Fillmore Set" Pickups

## Duane Allman Tone, but more!

This month's product review of the "Fillmore Set" pickup set is a testimonial in the search for tone, and a reminder that no matter how much some things change, the more they stay the same. Isn't it interesting to note that "Tone" seems to be a cyclical quest! The players change, the gear seems to change, but at the end of the night when the Les Paul screams, it's that big, fat, creamy, warm, singing, luscious, harmonic tone that never changes. Or the quest to discover how to get it. Quest No More! Because I believe it is here in the "Fillmore Set". In extensive testing, here is my opinion of the "Fillmore Set".

### Up And Runnin':

Just so happens that I had happened to have a '74 Les Paul Black Beauty Custom in dire need of a fret job that inspired my choice of guitars in which to install the "Fillmore Set". I was thinking of experimenting with a different pickup set and since the guitar was having a fret job done anyway...well, you get the drift. So my buddy Greg from the Guitar E.R. and our monthly "Guitar Shop" column was the man for the job. By the way Greg, excellent fret job. Needless to say, we installed the Fillmore Set into the Black Beauty. These pickups are an easy retrofit to darn near any humbucker equipped guitar. The Fillmore Set comes with foil shielded pigtailed with two conductor plugs plus grounds and all connections are clearly marked along with a user friendly wiring diagram. The only adjustment we made was to remove the nickel pickup covers so that the Black Beauty's gold covers could be used. The "Fillmore Set" comes standard with nickel covers. Install was complete in about an hour and all in all was no big deal. We are now wired for sound so let's plug in...

### The Tone:

Duane Allman obviously was very influential in the voicing of the "Fillmore Set". And who can't appreciate a tone like Duane Allman had? With that being said the first amplifier I plug into is my Marshall JCM 800, 50w, dual channel half stack. Straight up! The tone of these pickups immediately slaps you up the side of the head and you will find yourself saying, "This is what I've been looking for!" Well balanced, tight low end, sharp but yet warm highs and a throaty midrange that is guaranteed to find its way thru the mix. But I can not stress enough how warm these pickups sound. This tone reflects vintage

Allman Brothers but yet offers more meat than I would of ever expected out of a so called Vintage Voiced pickups! Wide open, these pickups deliver the goods. Full bodied rasp with absolutely mind blowing harmonics. As you attenuate the volume pot however, the

Fillmore Set cleans up unlike any pickup I think I have heard.

This would be a great benefit for those of you using vintage British type single channel amps. The Fillmore Set pickup in the neck position is absolutely joyous! Clean, bluesy but not over the top. These pickups retain individual note clarity at all volumes and chords ring with distinct note separation.



### Amp #2:

Utilizing a Mesa Boogie Dual Rectifier to primarily get the juice on clean settings. The Fillmore Set is surprisingly clean, for a humbucking pickup. Again, even in the clean mode, these pickups respond remarkably to small attenuation moves. You can increase or decrease output attenuation without sacrificing tone. So many lesser grade pickups will lose high frequencies as you turn the volume pot down. The Fillmore Set pickups provide consistent tone voicings regardless of where your output is set.

These pickups are not what I consider "high" output pickups as compared to today's standards. However, they almost sound like they are high output because of how well balanced the tone is and how clearly defined notes are. In other words, the Fillmore Set has just enough of the sweet stuff. Not too much, but not too little.

### The Secret:

Without giving up the "ancient Chinese secret" of how the Fillmore Set pickups are designed, I would be happy to elude to the recipe from what I know, but please understand that I will be killed if I divulge too much. With that being said the Fillmore Set and recreating the Duane Allman tone is all about the art of "hand wound" pickups. Each individual pickup is literally wound by hand, no automation used in

the process at all. The actual process is a very skillful procedure which requires a fine eye for detail. The trade marked Fillmore Set uses Alnico magnets that are custom buffered and 43 gauge wire, but the real secret is in the tension that is used to wind the pickups, the

speed and pattern that they are wound at, the special potting that is utilized and the covering used on the wire itself. This enables more copper to be placed closer to the magnetic core of the pickup. The size and placement of Alnico magnets is also crucial, to create the perfect amount of string pull, not too much and not too little. This is just a snippet of how the overall

tone is achieved. The potting allows the pickup to breathe and yet is a great suppressor for unwanted feedback and squealing. These pickups are amazingly quiet, even in high gain settings.

### The Final Mojo:

The Fillmore Set, to put it mildly, simply Kick Ass! Yes, they do sound like Duane Allman's tone if you want them to. Duane's Darkburst Les Paul were not stock pickups, they were wound differently and there is definitely a secret to it. These pickups for all the true vintage purists are not too hot! Hell, let your amp or a stomp box do that. These pickups provide a fantastic range of tones both clean and dirty. The overtones will make your mamma cry, and the harmonics jump out like a skunk at a picnic. Fat, warm, singing, luscious, retro tone is as good as sex! (Well, almost.) Needless to say, I love these pickups and will be staying in my '74 Les Paul Custom for the remainder of its life. When you consider that vintage PAF's especially pre-Darkburst can bring \$750-\$1500, the "Fillmore Set" sells for \$240 per set. These pickups are a small investment that yields significant tone return. You will fall in love all over again with your guitar.

### Information:

Wagner's Custom Rewind  
20586 Willow Springs Dr.  
Soulsbyville, CA 95372  
209-588-0621  
www.crcoils.com  
jim@crcoils.com