

Stageside repairs

Given that the electric guitar needs some setting up, it's worth arriving at a gig at least one hour before showtime. This allows for sound-checks and time for the things that go wrong to be put right. Sound-checks give the PA man a chance to serve your needs better – to understand the likely combinations of instruments and any instrument changes during your set. Sound-checks are also great for fault-finding, and time to find solutions.

1 No sound from your guitar?

Step 1

- Work systematically through the cable chain starting at the guitar, as this is very unlikely to have failed completely.
- Try changing the pickup selector to another pickup. Is the volume control turned up?
- Still no sound? Try replacing the cable between the guitar and the amplifier with a new cable (one you are sure is working).
- The above step bypasses and eliminates any effects chain.
- If you have sound then try reinserting the effects chain. (Still no sound? Go to Step 2.)
- If you have sound then you merely had a faulty cable, the most common cause of onstage sound failure.
- If the sound fails again then it would seem some component of the effects chain is faulty – work through the chain replacing one cable at a time and hopefully isolating the fault.
- If cable replacement doesn't solve the problem try systematically removing one effect at a time from the chain.
- If you find a 'dead' component of the chain try replacing the associated battery or power supply.

Step 2

- Still no sound, even though you are now plugged directly into the amplifier with a 'new' cable?
- The likely scenario is a 'failed' amplifier. Try checking the obvious causes such as:
 - Has the volume been inadvertently turned down to zero?
 - Check the master volume and channel gain.
 - Is the standby switch in the ON position?
 - Does the mains light (if fitted) show 'ON'?
 - Is the amplifier plugged in to the mains? Is the mains switched on? Does the stage have a separate fuse?
 - Are other amplifiers on the same circuit working?
- If yours is the only failed amp look to the fuses. There are likely to be fuses on the amplifier (usually a screw-type fuse cartridge near the mains switch). There may also be fuses in the mains plug. Try a replacement.
- If all of this fails then you must assume the amplifier has a major fault and try a 'work around' – eg sharing an amplifier with the other musicians, etc.
- The crucial thing here is to be systematic – work through the chain logically, eliminating elements of the chain until the fault is isolated.



2 The guitar won't stay in tune?

Strings!

The most likely cause of tuning difficulties on an otherwise well-maintained guitar is poor or worn strings. The bad news is that changing strings one hour before a gig is also a formula for disaster, as the strings really need time to settle. In an emergency try replacing any individual strings that seem particularly troublesome – rusty first, second and third strings will inevitably cause severe tuning problems.



Loose components?

- Have the neck securing screws worked loose (Special 2 only)? A quarter-turn can improve the neck stability.
- Are the machine heads loose?



NB: A machine head that is securely fitted but turns without altering pitch needs replacement. In practice this is unlikely to happen suddenly and should be picked up during routine maintenance.



- If the guitar has a Bigsby fitted is it poorly set up? This is unlikely to respond to a quick fix. See 'The Paul Bigsby vibrato' maintenance, page 42.

In practice any loose component in the string path will cause instability and hence tuning problems – examine the guitar for loose screws and lost or corroded securing springs. If the strings are OK and there are no obvious loose components then perhaps you have changed string gauges without realigning the guitar?

