Stringed Things

Tele control plate switch

I have a Telecaster-style guitar. It has a Douglas body and a Guitarfetish neck. The pickups are both from Guitarfetish. The bridge is a Wilkinson with brass saddles. Tuners are Wilkinson E-Z lock.

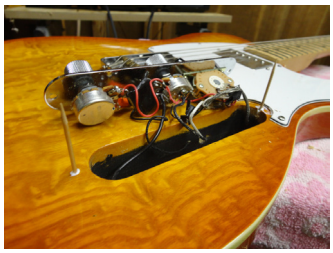
So, as you can tell, this guitar has been modded a LOT! Still, I had one other modification that I needed to make. I wanted to do some volume swells on a particular song that I was recording. However, in the stock configuration, the volume knob on the Tele is almost too far away to easily do volume swells. I know that didn't stop Roy Buchanan, but I'm not Roy Buchanan.

So, I decided to re-arrange the controls so that the volume knob would be at the front of the control plate, or closer to the picking hand. I first saw this modification on the Telecaster of Terry Kath, founding guitarist of Chicago. Many others also have done it.

So, here's what the control plate looked like before I dug into it:

You may notice that the screw at the end of the plate is missing. I'll fix that, too.

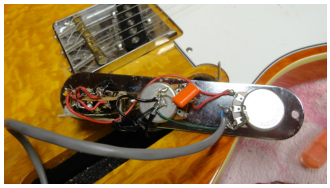
Here's the control plate removed from the cavity. The wiring looks messy. Maybe I can fix that, too. Notice the toothpicks glued into each screw hole. That should help with the screw problem.



The pots have been removed.

I discovered that the wire from the input jack would not be long enough to reach the re-located volume pot. So, I had to replace that wire. An electric screwdriver made quick work of removing the screws of the backplate.

Here's what the control plate looked like after I finished the wiring. It's much neater than it was. The big gray wire is the new input jack wire. I probably made it too long, but it will work.



I used a wiring diagram that I got from the RioGrande pickups web site. Their wiring diagrams are very clear and easy to follow. Go to their web site and click on the support tab. That should show you the link to the wiring diagrams.

I had to replace several wires because of them not being long enough. I also re-checked some connections. I did have a treble-bypass circuit added to the volume knob, but I decided to leave it out. It cluttered up the control compartment and I'm not sure it did much good anyway. The purpose of the circuit is to prevent your signal from losing high frequencies when you turn down the volume knob. I usually play with the volume knob full up, so I didn't use that feature much.

The switch should be reversed so you can choose the pickups in the same order as before.

Here's a shot of my messy work area while the work was in progress. If you do this project, be sure to be better about protecting the guitar than I was. I should've put some kind of protective paper or something on the guitar. In this picture, I've even put a tool on the finish – a definite no-no, but I got away with it.

I'm using a razor blade to cut off one of the toothpicks that filled up the screw hole. If you use a razor blade, be careful!

I put everything back together and plugged it in. It worked! The first time! That's not always the case with my mod jobs.

If you are fairly new to guitar electronics and want to do this project, remember to take your time. I find that a multi-meter with an audible continuity check helps a lot. In this project, it helped me discover that a stray wire was causing the input wire to send its signal to ground. That would've caused there to be no output.

With a multi-meter set to continuity check, you can put the probes at two points of a connection to see if the signal is going from one place to the other. You also can check to see if the ground connections are where they should be – and shouldn't be.

When all was said and done, I was able to play those volume swells much easier. Oh, I'm glad I know how to solder!