

October 29, 2023

To whom it may concern:

I am Michael Cochran, writer and co-author of Les Paul's autobiography, *Les Paul-In His Own Words*, a massive project that took more than three years to complete. Les was an active hands-on participant every step of the way, through which I became familiar with his history and personal archive of groundbreaking equipment resulting from his many experiments. Through numerous weeklong sessions at his Mahwah, New Jersey home and innumerable lengthy phone conversations, we spent hundreds of hours discussing the significant achievements of his 75-year career as an entertainer, inventor and trailblazing guitarist, and the highs and lows of his extraordinary personal life.

By virtue of my direct personal involvement with Les, I can authenticate and confirm the origin story regarding Les Paul's 50th Anniversary White Custom guitar, a very special gift from Gibson celebrating 50 years of the Les Paul guitar (1952 to 2002). Les had recently received the guitar when we started working on the book, and its impact was still fresh. When he took his prototype for a solid body guitar (the famous Log) to Gibson in 1941, they had dismissed him and his idea as a joke, laughing him out of the room. By giving him the 50th Anniversary White Custom model, Gibson was acknowledging that they had been wrong, that Les had been right all along. It meant a lot to him. This guitar is featured on the front cover (dust jacket) of our book, again in a photo on page 301, resting against the bed he and Mary Ford shared, and also on our book's last page (page 367), where Les is wearing one of his iconic blue mock turtleneck sweaters.

On the day we were to shoot the cover photo for *Les Paul-In His Own Words*, Les came onto the set wearing the blue turtleneck. As photographer Wolf Hoffman was making final adjustments to his lighting array, I asked Les which of his guitars he wanted to hold. "The White Custom," he said without hesitation. To be clear, I am referring to the 50th Anniversary White Custom Les Paul guitar labeled with Les's personal inventory number (G180) and Gibson's Promotional Serial Number 00332400 on the back of the headstock. Wolf took sample shots of Les holding the white guitar wearing the blue turtleneck (page 367 photo). After reviewing the sample photos, I asked Les to put on a tuxedo, thinking a black tux would create a classier look and better show off the guitar. He agreed. The cover photo was taken in the living room of his Mahwah, N.J. home, with the tower of the world's first eight-track tape recorder in the background.

With Les's permission, I personally played this guitar when he first showed it to me and explained why it was so important to him. I handled it again when we were setting up the cover photo shoot, noting the LP inventory number G180. Earlier in the process of creating the book, I had asked Les how many guitars he had in his collection. He laughed and said he didn't know (the number turned out to be more than 600), but when I asked if he could name the guitar that meant the most to him, he answered without missing a beat.

"The 50th Anniversary White Custom," he said. "It's my number one because of what it represents and everything it took for it to exist. We did it! 50 years of my dream come true. This thing changed the world!"

I would like to take this opportunity to verify that our book would not have been possible if not for Les's longtime friend and assistant Tom Doyle vouching for my brother Russ Cochran and I, and urging Les to work with us. I would also like to thank Tom for recognizing the singular importance of the 50th Anniversary White Custom Les Paul guitar, and for celebrating the man whose genius led to its creation. This guitar represents an important milestone in modern musical evolution, as well as Les Paul's far-reaching influence on American culture at large. Working so closely with Les to permanently enter his amazing story into the annals of our collective history was one of the greatest honors of my life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Cochran". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Cochran
Writer/co-author
Les Paul-In His Own Words