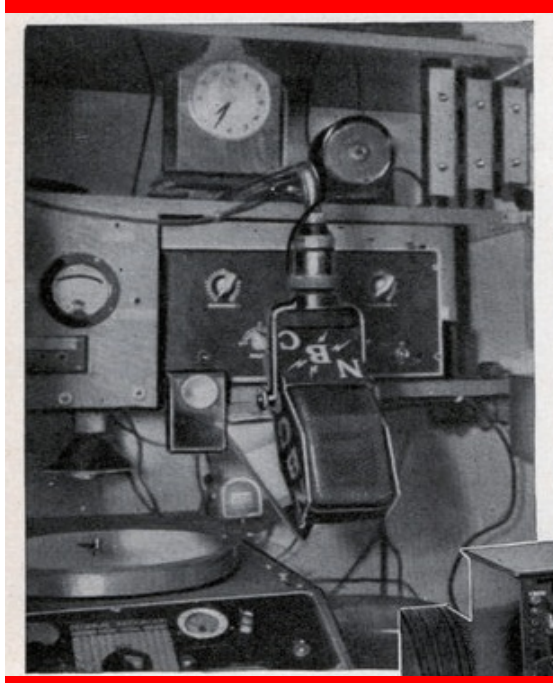


The Wizard of Waukesha, The father of the solid body electric guitar and multitrack recordings. In our subjects early life he began to teach himself not only guitar but electronic engineering . Born in 1915 Lester William Polsfuss but today we know him as **Les Paul**, famed recording artist inventor and entertainer. By the way, Les is still with us!



Les' interest in music began when he was age 8, taking up the harmonica. Paul's only formal training consisted of a few unsuccessful piano lessons as a youngster. At the age of 17 he dropped out of school and played with Rube Tronson's Cowboys and then Wolverton's Band in St. Louis over KMOX Radio.

By 1934 Les was in Chicago with a hillbilly act and making recordings on the Montgomery Ward Label. The year 1937 Les formed a trio and the following year, moved to New York and landed a featured spot with Fred Wearing's Pennsylvanians, which gave Les nationwide exposure through its broadcasts. Shortly after that Les Paul was nearly electrocuted in a studio accident during a jam session in his Queens Jackson Heights residence. His neighbors included Lionel Hampton, Coleman Hawkins and Art Tatum. After Les spent a year in recovery, he was able to resume playing. Then more radio jobs, finally moving to Hollywood in 1943, pre Mary Ford days.

What your author would like to point out is the fact that Les, being an electronic wizard had built a very low power broadcast station in NY - Queens section with pal Earnie Newton in the 40's. Although the stations broadcast radius was small, they still managed to disrupt communications at LaGuardia Airport! The broadcast equipment itself was responsible for Les' near fatal electrical accident. It is rumored many greats of the day previously mentioned plus Benny Goodman, the Dorsey's and Glen Miller were in attendance at those jam sessions broadcast from the Les Paul Pirate Station in Jackson Heights, Queens at all hours. Our above picture from a Modern Mechanix magazine article showing the second floor station control room connected with to the studio at the Les Paul home. Les served in WW2 Armed Forces Radio for the U.S. Army.

Many fabulous things happened in the Les Paul era, hundreds of awards, dozens of gold records, yet the stresses of life include divorce, accidents and rehab, yet in 2006 Les still plays in NYC on a reduced schedule at, you guessed it, age 91. What a guy!



I was amazed to view a PBS documentary about our subjects life July 2007, an hour and a half of this wonderful talent. W8SU 2008