

TECH 21 "TRADEMARK 30" GUITAR AMP

Review By **Dave Celentano**

STREET PRICE **\$329**



The glory days of spandex, bandanas, and big hair may be a thing of the past, but the music of that era still beats in many hearts. In fact, a lot of the guitar tones developed during that time are still relevant. Tech 21, a New Jersey-based amp manufacturer and creator of the very popular SansAmp, keeps the torch burning and delivers big with Trademark 30 – a small, lightweight combo amp that captures the best of those classic sounds. I was already impressed with Tech 21's SansAmp (used for most of the electric guitars on my Wicked Music Box cd), but upon discovering that a modified version of the SansAmp GT2 pedal was the heart of the amp, I couldn't wait to fire it up.

FEATURES

Trademark 30 puts you in the architectural driver's seat with the easy-to-use control panel. Tone is designed by selecting combinations of nine Character attributes between Amp types, Mod (gain stages), and Speaker types. Then you fine tune with the drive and three-band active EQ. Just spin a few knobs and flick a switch or two. You'll have killer tones in seconds. For instance, pair a Strat with the Tweed Amp, Hi Gain Mod, and U.S.

Speaker and you'll sound like Stevie Ray Vaughan. You've got a wicked Metallica tone if you select the Calif Amp, Hot Mod, U.S. Speaker, and ditch the mids.

Here's encouraging news for technology challenged guitarists: there's no wasting time with memory banks or scrolling through menus and presets. The seven sample settings in the owner's manual absolutely nail the characteristics of each amp and will have you sounding like the pros in minutes. Amp and artist tones stylized after Marshall, Fender, Mesa/Boogie, AC/DC, Van Halen, SRV, and Metallica are guaranteed to inspire any blues, rock, and metal guitarist. Sweet!

Trademark 30 emulates tube amps remarkably well using all-analog circuitry, which results in great tones at any volume. Plus, distortion tones are fatter, warmer, and more sensitive to picking dynamics. Are you digging it yet? 30 watts of power through a custom 10" speaker is loud enough for practice and monitoring; but what I appreciated about the unit was the XLR direct out. By providing a direct link to a mixer or PA, you can get the big studio, club, or concert environments without wasting time trying to find the right spot



for the mic. The ¼" headphone jack doubles as a direct out, which is cool since XLR might not always be available. You say it's too small to have in your back-line? No problem. The Trademark 30 has a 4-OHM speaker output that is capable of powering an external 2x12 or 4x12 cabinet while simultaneously defeating the internal speaker.

The amp has an effects loop and Accutronics spring reverb. But aside from that the focus is on clean, overdriven, and distorted amp tones, which sound remarkably authentic and will fool most sworn tube users. It comes with a one-year limited warranty for the original purchaser and a plastic slipover dust cover for when not in use (which might not be that often!).

VERDICT

Trademark 30 is everything I expected from Tech 21 and more. In addition to being a great amp for jam sessions, guitar lessons, and a multi-functional tone generator in the studio, its charming appeal with burlap-style grill cloth, rooster head knobs, and clean appearance will look snazzy in the office or domestic setting. Trademark 30 is for those that want a versatile and uncomplicated amp that produces great tones fast, so you can get to the most important thing: playing guitar!

