

Tech 21 Trademark 300

Loud and Proud

By Douglas Baldwin

While most of the amp world has been tripping over their microchips to employ the latest digital modeling technology, Tech 21 has maintained a strong and steady stance with solid-state *analog* circuitry. If the industry-standard Sans-Amp is the brains of Tech 21's operation, then the Trademark 300 is certainly its brawn. With three "trademark" voicings available for each channel and 300 watts to back them up, this is an amp capable of reaching the cheap seats on your next world tour—or at least rattling the beer mugs right off the rack at your local showcase venue.



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SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE

The Trademark 300 head is seductive in its simplicity. Each of its three channels has a three-position voicing switch, dubbed "Tweed" (for a vintage Fender response), "British" (for Marshall's wallop), and "Calif" (for the sizzle and roar of a multi-recto Mesa/Boogie). With three active tone controls for each channel, the resulting range of response is huge. Series and parallel effects loops as well as XLR and tuner direct outputs are pro-plus features that mate nicely with the head's rack-mountable construction.

I set the Trademark 300 and its Celestion-loaded 4x12 cab side by side with a slew of

tube-driven forerunners, and then, using a variety of axes, I did A/B comparisons with an Ernie Ball stereo volume/pan pedal. The

Trademark 300 immediately showed that it *really* wants to be played loud, and that it has a propensity for warm distortion. Predictably, the Tweed channel had the cleanest response, and by subtracting the active tone controls, a full and transparent timbre was established. With the Trademark 300's 4x12 cabinet, I had no trouble pushing this classic tone way past combo amp levels. Upping the Drive as well as the tone controls gave the Trademark 300 the attitudinal snarl of a cloth-covered Fender, but at window-rattling volume.

Both the British and the Calif settings

avored the incendiary tones for which their heritages are famous. Keeping an eye (and ear) on the treble control—earwax-melting sizzle abounds—I could dial in a British setting with the high-mid complexity and hard bottom so complementary to riffs like the one below. The Calif silhouette had Mae West's zaftig bottom, hourglass-thin waist, and lactose-rich top—a sound that fits *nü* metal like a steel corset. The footswitch-activated Boost (up to 9 dB) guaranteed authoritative solo levels. Connoisseurs might note that this head's sound is a shade less warm and deep than the tube-driven originals, but will your audience? I don't think so.

POWER TOOL

If you can bear to keep the Trademark 300's drive and tone controls down, it makes for a brilliant amp for White Stripes-style aggro-pop at stadium volume, whereas headbangers will worship its high-gain settings. No, it's not an exact replacement for a multitude of \$1,000 tube heads and cabinets, but it's a *very* powerful and effective multi-voiced tool for filling bigger rooms.

CONTACT Tech 21, 973-777-6996, tech21nyc.com

HEAR IT ONLINE AT GUITARONEMAG.COM



GEAR BOX **FEATURES** **POWER** 300 watts, solid-state **FRONT PANEL** Three channels, each with three-position Character switch (Tweed/British/Calif); Drive; +/-12 dB active Low, Mid, and High controls; Level control; Master FX2 Mix, Boost, and Master Volume **REAR PANEL** Footswitch jack, XLR out, -10 dB pad, FX2 Send/Return, FX1 Send/Return, tuner output, speaker outputs **CABINET** Closed back, straight or slant front, four 12" Celestion special-design speakers; head and cab also available with custom vintage finish, no extra charge **PRICE** Head: \$995, Cab: \$795