

# Great

## Reviews



## Three Little Piggy(backs)

“Lunchbox” Amps from Mesa, Egnater, Ibanez

**T**he last couple years has seen a surge in the number of guitar amps offered in the “lunchbox” segment. Extremely portable and offering output levels low enough to keep the volume cops at bay, beyond their practicality, most of these amps are just plain cool.

We recently gathered a trio of new amps from an array of manufacturers

— one an industry innovator, one an industry legend, and one more associated with guitars and pedals. All three have a unique vibe and each is available with a similarly compact 1x12 cabinet designed to match the head.

The Mesa Boogie Transatlantic TA-15 is the most expensive of the bunch. Housed in an all-metal cabinet with a cool art-deco vibe, retractable handle, and an LED internal/backlight that casts a blue hue when the amp is powered up, it distinguishes itself from

the other heads by way of two discrete footswitchable channels and up to 25 watts of output from a pair of EL84s. Controls include Volume, Bass, Treble, and Master Volume, a Cut, and a slew of voicing and power switches for each channel. There are also multiple output settings for each channel — class A single-ended/5 watts, class A 15 watts, or Mesa’s 25-watt Dyna-watt setting.

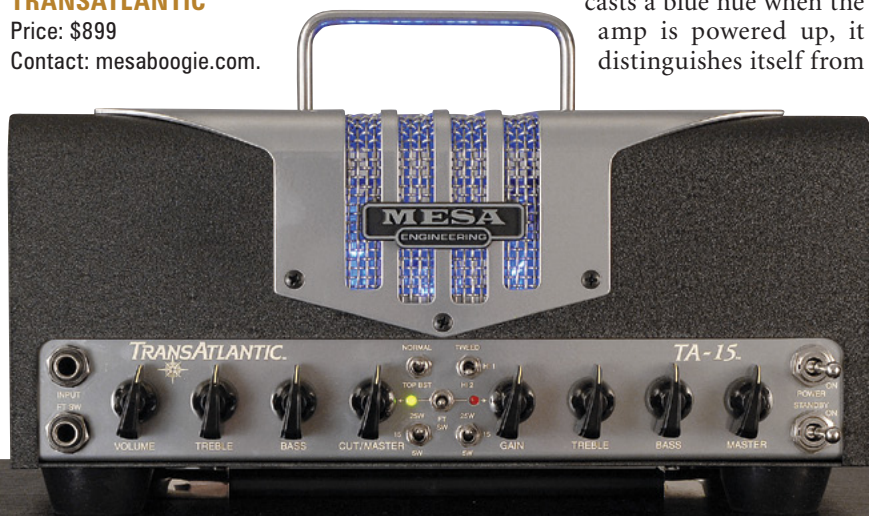
Channel One is all Vox — loaded with midrange overtones and crisp top-end that rings clearly with chords or single notes, it offers respectable overdrive with the Volume dimed. In conjunction with the Cut switch, the Tone control works well to compensate when going from a Strat to a Les Paul by taming highs and filling out the low-end. The output switch lets you dial in the amount of power-tube drive by limiting the amp’s headroom; the 25-watt setting works great for cleaner tones, while 15-watt setting works well for overdrive and the 5-watt setting is ideal for low-volume/practice situations.

Channel Two offers more-aggressive gain and a setting called “Tweed.” Whether it’s British or classic high-gain,

### MESA BOOGIE TRANSATLANTIC

Price: \$899

Contact: mesaboogie.com.



### GIBSON DON FELDER EDS-1275

The Gibson Don Felder “Hotel California” SG Double Neck guitar is based on the EDS-1275, with a one-piece mahogany body and two necks carved from three pieces of maple each. Both bodies use Burstbucker pickups, with the chrome covers removed on the six-string. A second output enables the 12-string neck to be routed independently to a Leslie rotating speaker cabinet to produce Felder’s trademark tone. See more at [gibson.com](http://gibson.com).



### AMPTWEAKER TIGHTBOOST

The Amptweaker TightBoost is a clean-boost pedal with a Pre/Post switch, LED illumination of the controls, and battery on/off switch. Read about it at [amptweaker.com](http://amptweaker.com).

### LAVA CABLE MINI COIL

The Lava Mini Coil cable is an oxygen-free low-strand-count copper conductor that uses right-angle G&H Show Saver Plugs and a proprietary outer jacket. It can stretch from 1" to 12". See it at [lavacable.com](http://lavacable.com).



### IGS T-SHIRTS

Invisible Guitar Strap (IGS) t-shirts use a grip coating placed where an acoustic or light electric guitar would rest against a player’s body. Check them out at [igstshirts.com](http://igstshirts.com).



### MANSON JOHN PAUL JONES E-BASS

The Manson John Paul Jones E-Bass has maple through-neck construction, figured maple top, Cherry Sunburst lacquer finish, ebony fingerboard, EMG active pickups, a Hipshot D-Tuner, Schaller machine heads, and a Badass bridge. Visit [mansons.co.uk](http://mansons.co.uk).



## EGNATER TWEAKER

Price: \$399.99

Contact: [egnater.com](http://egnater.com)

the HI1 and HI2 settings offer smooth, articulate overdrive, each with a slightly different flavor.

The Egnater Tweaker has two 6V6 power tubes producing 15 watts and a pair of 12AX7 preamp tubes, all in a small (14" x 8" x 7.5"), lightweight amp head with black Tolex, cane grillcloth, and gold piping. Controls on the front panel include a Master Volume with a Vintage/Modern voicing switch, three-band tone (Treble, Middle, Bass) with its own voicing switch (USA/AC/Brit) a Gain control with a Hot or Clean settings, and switches for Bright/Normal and Tight/Deep. The rear panel has an effects loop and a pair of speaker-output jacks with impedance selector.

The many voicing switches on the Tweaker allow for plenty of control over variables as one moves from one style of guitar to another, and their changes are subtle, but very useful, whether you're looking to add midrange overtones for a British/Vox sound, scoop the mids a bit for classic California tone, or tighten the low-end for a chunky, high-gain sound. Though the Tweaker doesn't offer footswitchable channel changing or a boost circuit, its Master volume control is very transparent and unless you're going from sparkling clean to screaming overdrive, you can clean up the front end of the amp easily with the guitar's Volume control.

The Ibanez TSA Tube Screamer has a well-executed cream Tolex cover with white piping, black grillecloth, and a dark-green chassis. A 15-watt amp, it uses a pair of 6V6s and has a



## IBANEZ TSA TUBE SCREAMER

Price: \$399.99

Contact: [ibanez.com](http://ibanez.com)

built-in Ibanez Tube Screamer circuit. Along with the typical Tube Screamer controls—Drive, Tone, and Level—the amp also has Bass, Treble, and Volume controls as well as a 6-db Boost switch. The back panel has a Pentode (5-watt output)/Triode (15-watt) power switch and jacks to accommodate a stereo footswitch and an effects loop.

Ibanez designed the amp so signal first runs through the Tube Screamer circuit, then through the boost circuit, followed by the effects loop and finally

into the front of the amp, so effects such as reverb and delay are post-overdrive. It also allows the Tube Screamer to be used as a straight overdrive or as a boost to drive the front end of the amp. Both the Tube Screamer and the Boost are footswitchable, essentially giving this single-channel amp the ability to have a clean sound, overdrive sound, and a solo boost (clean or dirty).

All three of these little amps offer great tones and solid build quality. Each one has its own set of cool, player-friendly features. And though they may be small in physical stature, they loom large in terms of performance and vibe. — *Phil Feser*

## GEARIN' UP



## TAKE A STAND GUITAR STANDS

Take a Stand guitar stands are made with hardwoods and wood trim accents, machined metal, and leather. Contact points are surgical rubber covered with leather, and supports are secured to the neck of the stand using internal stainless-steel pins. Two models accommodate guitars including unique shaped guitars like Gibson Flying Vs and Explorers. For more, go to [takeastandinc.com](http://takeastandinc.com).



## SHEPTONE P90H

Sheptone's P90H pickup uses rough-cast, degaussed Alnico V magnets and scatter-wound #42 plain-enamel wire. They are available with black covers, black/gold/nickel/chrome open-faced covers, and gold or nickel poles. To learn more, go to [sheptone.com](http://sheptone.com).



## SNARK TUNER

The Snark tuner has a full-color LCD readout that rotates 360 degrees, so the tuner can be clamped to the front or back of an instrument's headstock. Its features include a tap-tempo metronome, pitch calibration, and ability to transpose. It is available in guitar/bass and all-instrument/chromatic models. Learn more at [snarktuners.com](http://snarktuners.com).



## VOX AGA150/ICE 9 OVERDRIVE

The Vox AGA150 is a 150-watt/two-channel amp with a 12AU7 preamp tube. Each channel is equipped with a standard guitar input, as well as a microphone input with selectable phantom power. Its controls include Bass, Middle and Treble, while a Color knob allows the overall tone to be shifted during performance. A full complement of effects is available on each channel. It has built-in Chorus and Reverb, and Anti-Feedback control.

The Vox Ice 9 Overdrive has two overdrive modes, tone-shaping, and a "More" switch. Learn more at [voxamps.com](http://voxamps.com).

# Like an Old Pair of Jeans

## The Gizmoaudio Sawmill Distortion/Overdrive

Many of today's quests to build a better distortion/overdrive pedal inadvertently end up with more of the same ol' same ol'—a tired reproduction of a classic or a sly representation of something cool. The challenge lies in making a pedal that stands out, and a company called Gizmoaudio has done it.

Company founder Charlie Luke is a lifelong musician and Georgia Institute of Technology grad whose quest wasn't centered on a distorted sound, but the *clean* tone a pedal created. Focusing on the clarity of notes, he wanted a box that would let him play chords that didn't sound muddy. The circuit he developed evolved to become the Sawmill.

## GIZMOAUDIO SAWMILL

Price \$ 220

Contact: [gizmoaudio.com](http://gizmoaudio.com)



Looking like a vintage box, the Sawmill is actually MOSFET with new ideas. The cream-finished enclosure has controls for