

SOUNDCHECK

Testing 1...2...3... THE GEAR IN REVIEW.

Triple Threat

Fender Pro-Tube series Pro Reverb, Concert Reverb and Twin amps.

by Tom Beaujour

It's hard to imagine, but it took less than 20 years—from 1948 to 1960—for Fender founding father and namesake Leo Fender to create the Stratocaster, Telecaster, Precision Bass, Jazz Bass, Jazzmaster and an array of ball-blasting tweed and blackface amplifiers that would virtually define the sound of rock and roll. While Leo was incredibly generous toward musicians with his ingenuity, he was being terribly inconsiderate to the people who would one day follow in his footsteps. What, one wonders, could a modern-day Fender worker possibly do to live up to that dizzying legacy of innovation? Well, he or she could avoid the issue entirely, rest on the company's well-earned laurels and knock off early every day to work on a nice, solid drinking habit. If cut from more ambitious cloth, however, said employee might realize that while Fender's classic amps and guitars deserve every ounce of the reverence they command, these

grand pieces of equipment can still be expanded upon and improved.

The new Pro-Tube series of combo amps attempts to do just that by combining a blackface-inspired clean channel—a feat that we'd expect Fender to be able to pull off at this point—with a supercharged, high-gain channel that can satisfy even the most ravenous and discerning crunch junky. The series consists of the 50-watt 1x12 Pro Reverb and 4x10 Concert Reverb and the 100-watt 2x12 Twin Amp, and while all three models share virtually identical control panels and circuitry (the Twin Amp boasts an extra duet of 6L6 power tubes), their differing speaker configurations yield a wide variety of flavors that you'll want to investigate fully before settling on a particular model.

Bear in mind that Fender had to cram a vast amount of tubes, caps, circuit boards, resistors, etc., into these three amplifiers in order to maintain an all-tube design and pro-

vide a wide range of features. As a result, the Pro, Concert and Twin Amp have weights and girths that might frighten away the weak of spine and small of trunk. All three amps are nearly 13 inches deep (a 1965 Fender Twin, by comparison, measures in at only 10.5 inches), and even the 1x12 Pro tips the scales at a hefty 75 pounds. The Twin-Amp and Concert, meanwhile, both exceed the 80-pound mark. Remember to lift with the knees, not the back, and you'll probably survive.

Vintage enthusiasts will no doubt be pleased by the classy, blackface-style vibe of the Pro-Tube series control layout; from across a smoky club, you'd be hard-pressed to identify any of these amplifiers as the newfangled channel-switching beasts that they are. The left side of the front panel houses the amplifier's single input jack as well as the controls (volume, bright switch, treble, bass and middle) for the clean channel, while the five knobs in the center, and

(from left) Twin Amp, Concert Reverb and Pro Reverb amplifiers

