

treble, bass, middle and volume) are used to dial in the desired amount of dirt from channel two. Finally, the right-hand side of the faceplate boasts a control for the spring reverb, speed and intensity of the tube-driven tremolo, as well as a presence control that governs both channels of the amp.

The feature-packed back panel of the Pro Series, however, is an entirely modern affair. Along with more mundane elements such as power and standby switches, this panel includes a full 1/4-power switch that drops voltage levels in the amp by 50 percent and allows for power tube saturation in smaller, volume-sensitive venues. There are also send and return level controls and input jacks for the effects loop, a preamp out jack that can feed an unbalanced line level signal to a mixing board or external power amp, a power amp in jack that bypasses the pre-amp section for use of the amp as an extension, or “slave,” unit and an input jack for the four-button footswitch, which can be used to change the Pro-Tube’s channel, engage the effects loop and turn the reverb and tremolo on or off.

Last, but certainly not least, the rear panel of all three amplifiers houses a handy “easy maintenance area” that will be appreciated by players and techs alike: an LED glows green when the fuse for the amplifier’s 6L6GC power tubes is intact, and switches to red when it blows, making the often tedious process of troubleshooting a snap. (The Twin Amp sports a pair of LEDs, since the amp utilizes four power tubes instead of two.) Also, there are immediately accessible bias and balance test points and a balance adjustment trim pot that make swapping out power tubes a quick and painless process for even the least technically inclined.

Unlike many past Fender amps designs, which flaunted a dirty channel but produced only a sedate and workmanlike overdrive, the Pro-Tube series amps all deliver thick, harmonically saturated distortion that leaves little to be desired. Setting the gain at three or four will satiate all but the most hardened rocker, while pegging it will have bodies hitting the floor in no time. And thanks, perhaps, to the 13-inch depth of all of the Pro-Tube cabinets, these three combos benefit from an at least partial immunity to the farty, flabby low-end sag that

plagues many combo amps with high-gain circuits. All units also profit from the deep, luscious reverb that is so prized in vintage Fender amps, as well as staggeringly deep tremolo that achieves its Radiohead-ready impact and depth via a design that actually modulates the amplifier’s power section to achieve maximum throb.


As mentioned earlier, although the three amplifiers in the Pro-Tube series feature identical (or nearly identical) circuits and a similar tonality, their different speaker configurations and dimensions result in three amps with very distinct voices and character. The Pro, with its single, 12-inch Jensen, has the sweetest feel of the bunch, and the clean channel, particularly in 1/4-power mode when the power tubes are working a bit, has an elastic, almost springy feel to it that gives an added depth and warmth to slinky Stratocaster licks and the like. Distortion settings on the Pro have a smooth richness that favors legato licks over chunky riffs and will likely thrill some players, while making others feel as if they are taking a sponge bath when the amp is pushed to high volumes.

Thanks to the size and height of its cabinet and a complement of four 10-inch Fender-designed Eminence speakers, the Concert has a much wider, less directional “spread” to its sound than its siblings and features a zingy complexity in the top end as well as thumping lows. Setting this amp on quarter power and pinning this particular unit yields a satisfying classic rock sound that is reminiscent of the tones Joe Walsh coaxed from a

Les Paul and a 4x10 Super Reverb on such James Gang standards as “Funk #49.” The 10-inch speakers also have their own unique way of handling heavy gain settings: open and three dimensional with just a touch of extra growl.

Because it puts out twice the wattage of the Pro and Concert and employs a pair of Fender-designed Eminence speakers that can handle even the most brutal assault without giving an inch, the Twin Amp is *extremely* loud and maintains its composure at sound-pressure levels that could skin a cat at 100 feet. Players who need lots of clean power, or who spend most of their time playing distorted, detuned riffs or engaging in other metallic escapades, will appreciate the head-bangin’ headroom, but others might miss the complexity of tone imparted by the Pro’s vintage-style Jensen or the Concert’s 4x10 speaker configuration.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Elegantly designed, thoroughly toneful and easily serviced, the three amps from the Pro-Tube series should soon be fixtures in the rigs of the rich and famous as well as the dingy clubs where legends are born. Kudos to the Fender crew for staring down its prodigious past and securing its future with a new line of amps that opens a whole new high gain chapter in the company’s history, while preserving the classic array of tones we’ve come to expect. 

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THE FINE PRINT

	PRO-TUBE PRO REVERB	PRO-TUBE CONCERT REVERB	PRO-TUBE TWIN AMP
PRICE	RRP \$3,199 * Australian	RRP \$3,699 * Australian	RRP \$3,499 * Australian
POWER	50 watts RMS	50 watts RMS	100 watts RMS
POWER TUBES	Two 6L6GC	Two 6L6GC	four 6L6GC
SPEAKERS	12-inch Jensen	Four 10-inch Eminence	Two 12-inch Eminence
WEIGHT	75 lbs.	85 lbs.	80 lbs.
DIMENSIONS	17-3/8 x 25-3/8 x 12-27/32	25-3/4 x 25-3/8 x 12-27/32	19-7/8 x 26-3/8 x 12-27/32