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ANKLE BITER

The Mesa Boogie California Tweed 6V6 2:20 1x10 Combo

Classic Fender tweed amps are known for fat, warm clean tones, but even more for their raunch when cranked. Mesa Boogie's California Tweed amps are firmly rooted in those '50s circuits, and the 6V6 2:20 1x10 Combo is a take on those classic designs with modern features in a compact package.

With its cream tolex, wheat grillecloth, and chickenhead knobs, the California Tweed is attractive. Our 20-watt tester came with a pair of 6V6s and a 10" Jensen Alnico Blackbird speaker. The front panel has controls for Gain, Treble, Mid, Bass, Presence, and Master Volume. Multi-Watt power scaling provides three levels – 20, 10 or 1 watt selected with a rotary knob. On the back panel are an effects loop and knob for tube-driven spring reverb, which is also footswitchable.

Dialing in clean tones with a Telecaster and a Les Paul was a breeze. At the 20-watt

setting with Gain at 9 o'clock, Master at 2 o'clock, and EQ controls around noon, rich, harmonic, chimy tones with depth and presence oozed from the Blackbird. A touch of the spring reverb added even

more depth and space. Thick, warm tones all the way to percussive and crunchy can be dialed in with the ultra-responsive EQ. Sweeping the Gain

and Master clockwise took it from edge-of-breakup to Neal Young-style destruction, but never out of control. Lead lines sing with a pronounced vocal sound and just the right amount of chewiness and sustain to make it fun to play. Switching to lower power settings brought volume down but kept tones fuzzy and compressed, with a progressively looser feel.

The California Tweed's tones drip with vintage authenticity while bringing modern features that don't get in the way. It's the real deal. – *Charlie Wilkins*

Price: \$1,999
www.mesaboogie.com



Price: \$339
www.aclamguitars.com

CREAMY TRIBUTE

Aclam Guitar's The Woman Tone Overdrive

On November 26, 1968, Cream performed its last show, at Royal Albert Hall, and Eric Clapton left the band as a bonafide guitar god. Barcelona-based Aclam Guitar's The Woman Tone is a tribute to the sounds Clapton wielded during that era, and the theme is deepened with artwork designed by artist Marijke Koger, who painted Clapton's famed "The Fool" SG (VG, December '11, also viewable at VintageGuitar.com).

The Woman Tone is a two-sided overdrive pedal; the right side approximates Clapton's 100-watt Marshall, while the left engages Clapton's technique of rolling back the guitar's Tone control while keeping the Volume knob on 10. Think Cream's "I Feel Free" or "Sunshine of Your Love."

Fine-tuned FET transistors replicate Clapton's Plexi, but the money tones are controlled by engaging the Woman Tone side. As a result, warm, soaring vocal qualities emerge without using your hands. Volume and Gain knobs control the Plexi side, while the Woman Tone knob performs like a guitar's Tone control. With the Woman Tone side engaged, you get dark, beefy sounds with increased gain.

A humbucker simulator is also activated, making any guitar sound like Cream-era Clapton. Internal DIP switches can be adjusted for darker or brighter sounds. It's a sweet but slightly woolly Marshall-esque overdrive by itself, and with the Woman Tone engaged it becomes an artsy Cream machine with beaucoup harmonic overtones with addictive power and sustain. – *Oscar Jordan*