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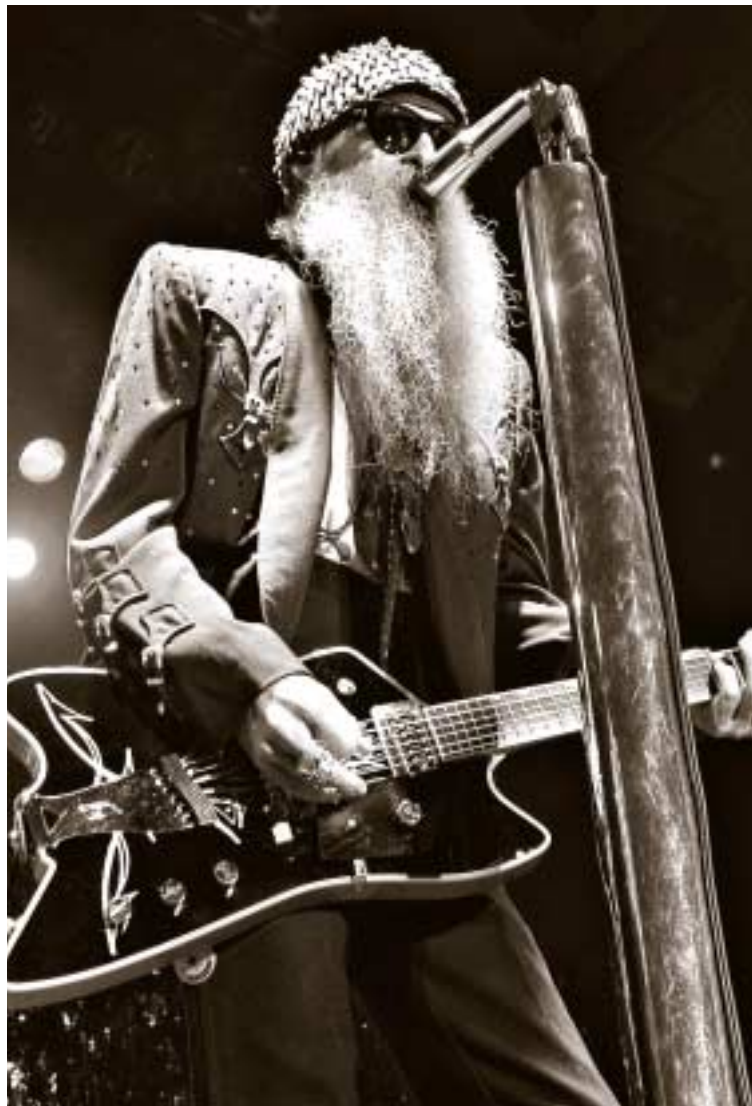
*The Player's Guide to Ultimate Tone*

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## 18 Watts of Whoop Ass

*"Somebody once said we never know what is enough  
until we know what's more than enough."*

*—Billie Holiday*



After five years, we still receive more calls and e-mails about how to tame a +30 watt amp for home and club use without compromising tone, further reinforcing the notion that we may not always need as much volume as we think... This issue celebrates the resurrection of the mighty 18 watt amplifiers built by Jim Marshall that are now inspiring innovative designers to build their own unique variations on these rare and timeless classics. So just what is it about the 18 watt amps that makes them the dog's bollocks?

If your signature sound requires a seamless blend of overdriven and

clean tones at modest volume, nailing inspiring tone night to night in unfamiliar venues can be an exercise in compromise. Big amps may require an attenuator at higher volume settings, an over-

drive pedal at lower volumes (pedal tone!), and often too much work to make it all work. 'Plug and play' is good.

The tradeoff, of course, is a lower threshold for clean headroom at levels that can cut through the band, and if clean, clear, robust tone is your sound, there can be few compromises. We recommend "Destiny Road" by the Peter Green Splinter Group for an exceptional example of luscious humbucking tone with headroom. This record captures big guitar tones that will take root in your head, spawning fantasies of a Les Paul coupled with a blonde Showman, Twin Reverb, or perhaps the infamous "Freddie King festival rig" – a Gibson 355 and Fender Quad Reverb with four JBL D-120's.

But for most of us, a mere 18 watts can indeed deliver the goods when combined with a 2x12, 4x10 or 4x12 cabinet. Because such larger cabinet configurations were rarely offered with low-powered American production amps (remember the Silvertone 'Twin'?) we often incorrectly associate low-wattage with Weenie Tone. British-style 18 watt amps with larger cabinets are an entirely different story...

Now, by all means hold on to your vintage 100W Plexi, the Hiwatt and the Super... fondle them... ogle them... coddle them... Hell, create a temple devoted to them in yer music room (we know you do this) but it's time you discovered the magic of 18 watts in an amp you can actually play, playah...

Who better to kick off our celebration of the lusty 18W vibe than The Reverend Billy F Gibbons... Our favorite King Daddy of Grease & Grind is back in the woodshed after a couple of years of steady rocking on tour with that little old band from Texas, and one thing's for sure... They still Nationwide and over the globe, as we all know...

We were privileged to attend two ZZ Top extravaganzas in the past year, including the recent appearance at our very own Chastain Park in Atlanta – a truly magical outdoor amphitheater where folks bring their coolers and break out candles,



crystal (glasses), and throw down an authentically Southern, shabby-shiek-wang-dang-doodle... Trust us?

ZZ never sounded better...!!! All good things improve with time, the band and crew have all the tones nailed, and the energy is intense, mystifying, and...!?!?!?

Mr. Beard (the beardless one in the band) was locked tight, phat and steady as usual... Dusty remains wide-glide, completely on the money, and The Rev continues exploring and drafting the Mighty Big Tone as only he can. Seriously, people, these shows remain the events enjoyed for all time... We are blessed to have that Texas Rock and Blues outfit in our presence and in fine, fine, superfine form. Now let's get down to bidness...

**TQR:** Greetings, Amigo!

Si Senor...!!!

**TQR:** Cudos on the tours...!

! Gracias ! ...

**TQR:** The success of the ZZ release of "MESCALERO" is just generally living large, man. Now... can you tell us about the your upcoming Fender/Gretsch "BillyBo" guitar you perform with...? ... pickups, hardware... How is it wired up?

Yeah, man! As you may know, Fender/Gretsch is offering some fine playing instruments with their new production. This proposed "BillyBo" is a faithful recreation of the original design first seen in 1959. The unusual shape features two Filtertron hum-canceling pickups, a 4-knob arrangement in the traditional Gretsch fashion wired for two volumes, a tone, and a master volume control standard, one toggle pickup selector, the early Spacebar bridge, and the G tailpiece. The first issue will show off the original Red with Black back and sides with nickel hardware, as on the example from our collection.



Mr. Mike Lewis, production head, is overseeing attention toward every detail, including the lightweight, chambered body, thumbnail position markers – even the original style open-back machine heads.

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And, of course, the famous Gretsch inlay on the headstock. A sure-fire bonus for all Gretsch freaks.

**TQR:** What plans can we await in building the "BillyBo" model as the production guitar?

I wanna think a presentation scheduling production to commence and arrive on the dealers' floor in Summer 2005 is probable... Exacting detailing is demanded for this superb 6-string.

**TQR:** We spoke for a bit about your "Crate V-50" amps and how you scored with Louis Vitton and the special hyde coverings...



Our studio enjoys the presence among a legion within

the rap community and... one fine afternoon, the place became teaming with some ultra rides in the parking yard. The real eyecatcher, a slammed Chevy ragtop, sported the entire interior and top with the famous chocolate and gold insignia! The entire thing! The logical move allowed approaching Ted Kornblum to fabricate his fine 'V-50' covered with the same fabric. Ted went so far as to appoint these specials with a solid Gold badge, as well. Crazy, yet just right.

**TQR:** So you're using the two Crate 2x12's for stage volume and presence, while your traditional standby Marshall 100W rackmount amp and iso cabs with hemp Tone Tubbies are feeding the house system...



Quite correct. Can't say enough about the killer-ness of the V-50. Tube-powered with that indescribable TONE... Nothin' need be added on the Marshall side either! Just the cornerstone, and again, great, indescribable TONE.

**TQR:** Pedals remain invisible on your stage... However, as you've mentioned, some FX are indeed cued up and available for Elwood's assistive ignition in the back side of the rack?



Yes, the usual array... Taking advantage of an onboard FX loop, the line-up features a delay, some form of Flanger, a very old ring modulator by Maestro, the '50s Rowe tremolo control from DeArmond, and now, Mr. Elwood's fave, the newly recreated foXX Tone machine. Wacky sound, that thing!

**TQR:** We were really glad to hear from you that you have ordered a Balls amp from Danny Gork, especially since we originally introduced them a year ago. What prompted your renewed interest in the 18W Marshalls?

The trip in St. Paul over to Solidbody Guitars (solidbodyguitars.com)... On their floor is an original, early '60s Marshall 18, complete with a pair of Silverroad 12" speakers. The thing is killer. One session with Les Paul in hand with a sound that 18 watt fanatics label as "Beano" and "Bluesbreaker." I was hooked. And, to add even more mystery to the tale, the 18 watt.com website showed up. There's a host of offerings for fabricating 18's, from parts and pieces, to complete turn-key outfits. Jeff Swanson, DST, GDS, Trinity, Mojo, Paul Ruby, Ceriatone, 65, Mojave, Aiken, Blockhead, Allesandro, Jenkins, and as you mentioned, Balls 18... The list is stunning. So is the sound. Yeah, there's more than meets the ear when experiencing the mysterious 18...

**TQR:** You mentioned plans for another record, recording to commence this year, 2005. What have you been designing in terms of the tones and textures to be explored with this new release? Have you acquired anything new that you'll be using in the studio?

Yeah, well, for starters, both of the house engineers, Mr. Joe Hardy and Mr. G.L. G-Mane Moon, have expressed their curiosity to light up the 18. Fortunately, we do have an original Marshall 18W 2x12 to lean on with a range of additional 18's to boot... That oughta spark it up to begin... And there's more lurking about for extending the horizon of special FX... How fuzzy can the frazz get...!?!?!?

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**TQR:** ZZ TOP travels the road extensively, especially over the recent couple of years, and you played a lot of dates in Europe. Were you energized and affected by the obvious passion the world still maintains for our music – perhaps our greatest export? Any memorable stories from Europe? – any notables to mention sitting in or hangin’ with you all?



Europe is a trip! The good news is we still place playing above all else and it’s a passion, any place and anywhere... Seems the ZZ TOP experience is spreading and the Texas inspirations keep us totally satisfied.

It’s what we are and what we do. And the many fans and friends we meet can definitely dig...! And now with Eric Clapton’s Crossroads festivity available to the world, friends and fans can get up close and front-row with the heroes that make performing so enjoyable.

**TQR:** Touring the USA is one thing, but how do you handle the weighty considerations of nailing your tone abroad? What special challenges exist and how do you handle them?

Power. That’s a challenge... There are conditioners which tame the voltage differences and cycle-converters to tame the 60/50 bit... that’s the way. It’s a matter of both voltage and cycles which one may address to keep the circuits buzzin’... And, most sound services are equipped with huge, monstrous power machines to travel just about anywhere.

**TQR:** One final question... ZZ Top was recently inducted into the R&R Hall of Fame, and the band has never sounded better now, over three decades following the release of ZZ TOP’s “First Album.” That’s a high watermark that few can claim. Upon reflection, what has enabled you to maintain such an obvious passion for and unbridled joy in the music that chose you so many years ago? You don’t have to tour anymore, and platinum is your middle name... What inspires you to continue writing,

singing and playing at such a high level, and are there any personal lessons you’ve learned along the way that you’d care to pass along to your fellow guitarists?

Well, let me think about that... Keith Richards probably says it best... “Muddy Waters said, ‘You don’t have to be the



‘best one,’ just be a good one.”  
‘Nuff said! ! Gracias ! **To**

[www.zztop.com](http://www.zztop.com)  
[www.ballsamps.com](http://www.ballsamps.com)

## 65 the London 65

*When we introduced our Balls 18W head and cabinet to Sheryl Crow guitarist and senior TQR advisory board member Peter Stroud, who knew it would inspire the creation of a new amp by Peter and partner Dan Boul? The London 65 is a deliciously versatile 18W 2x12 combo that captures all of the tones you could possibly want from a low-powered British amp, and it compliments virtually any style of guitar and pickups. What more could you want? Here’s the story of the development of the London 65 straight from Dan and Peter...*

**TQR:** What inspired you to build this amp in particular? Were you chasing a sound that never existed in the past, the memory of a vintage amp, or a combination of the two?



Peter called me up one day a couple of years ago very excited and said, “I just played a killer amp. You should really check one of these out!” It was the Balls M18 18 watt clone (still one of our favorite amps). Peter told me it did a lot of

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what he needed for his gig at a reasonable volume. After checking out many of the 18 watt clones for sale and not wanting to spend \$2700, I decided to build one for Peter myself, and if he didn't like it, I'd keep it.

The first amp came out great but it was really limited in its vocabulary. Peter played it in my shop in L.A. and liked it a lot, however, we both agreed it might be a little limited. Being the tone geeks that we are, we started incessantly tossing around ideas about how to expand the amp's vocabulary and we both got really excited about the possibilities. I experimented endlessly, one experiment lead to another, and here we are. The second part of your question is excellent because



you nailed it. I was chasing a sound from the past, but sort of an amalgum of my favorite British amps – nothing specific, although I have my favorites: JMI-era Vox AC-15, 30 & 50's, JTM45's, saturated Plexi's, etc. When Peter joined in he added a lot of great thoughts about his desires, and between the two of us we hit a sweet spot for our favorite vintage tones.

**Peter:** When I first heard the Balls 18 watt the dynamic sensitivity, the feeling of the strings under your fingers jumping out of the amp and the rich harmonics knocked me out. It was the first amp that gave me that high volume, *cranked* feeling at a level you could stand in front of. I had never heard this circuit or an original 18 watt Marshall before, so this was a new sound and feel to me as a guitarist. Just after I had first heard the Balls amp, Dan asked me what I thought would be a great smaller amp to have. I told him about the Balls and the whole 18 watt thing. Next thing I know he's telling me he's building one! My ultimate hope behind building our amp was to achieve a great sound at a useable stage volume. Stage levels are a lot lower these days to where even an AC-30 is too loud on most occasions, much less a Super Reverb or 50 watt Marshall. I've been searching high and low for an amp that had the sound I'm looking for at a lower volume. I've tried just about everything, and having worked on my amps for years, I've established clear ideas of how to get the sound I want.

**TQR:** What did you set out to accomplish in terms of sound, feel and dynamics?

We really weren't intending to become an amp company when the London was conceived. I was just building an amp for Peter. We wanted to build an amp that satisfied our ears and hands, and we're both really really hard to please. I personally like amps that have a human/organic quality to them i.e., they breathe and have personality. This amp has a lot of breath and a surprising amount of detail that really makes it "talk" and "communicate" with you and your guitar. I always find that I start taking a lot more chances with my right hand because the amp has the ability to correctly translate my actions on the guitar. So to directly answer your question, something rich, expressive, with broad dynamic range, extremely articulate yet dirty and raunchy as you want to be. Most of all, it's important that the guitar still sound like a guitar no matter how much gain or distortion is in the signal. I want to hear the strings and pick attack no matter what, not just fuzz. *Inspiring* might be a better word. This amp inspires me to play better because it seems to work *with* me. I don't have to adapt to it. Only a few of my favorite vintage amps can do that. Of course, much of that is subjective to one's playing style.

Dynamically, our main requirement was that we could run the amp wide open and either back down the guitar or soften the hands and the amp would clean up. We both love the idea of having a large vocabulary with the right hand. When I was playing for a living, I always had a non-master Marshall of some kind turned up really loud, and I played my guitar on 3-5 and just opened it up for solos. Primitive, but very effective when you're young, broke and need a reliable rig. I'm not a big footswitch and pedal board sort of player. I like having



control at my fingertips. This amp does a great job of that. With the amp on 10 you can clean up very easily just by backing your guitar down and you don't lose an ounce of tone.

**Peter:** I'm in love with that clean, naturally compressed, cathode-biased feel. We wanted more clarity, less grit and crunch, and the ability to play clean without a stiffness or relying on a compressor pedal, but still get the crunch when you bear down on the strings or crank the amp on 10.

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**TQR:** In terms of the architecture of the 65, how does it resemble specific amps of the past and how is it different from them as well?

The London definitely has some serious roots in the Marshall 18 watt and the early EF86-based Vox AC-15's – about 60/40 respectively (with a little Matchless DC-30 thrown in as well). We made some necessary circuit changes to blend those two very different preamp sections together, however, the layout has changed quite a bit from those. We called a friend of ours, Tracy Norton, who is a JPL Engineer in Pasadena and also happens to be a complete tube amp nut and super nice guy, to boot. He was always telling me that while old amps sounded great, we've learned a lot since then and there are many ways to improve the way they are put together. So we asked him to start from scratch on the layout and optimize the circuit board and component placement for maximum performance. We now have much greater isolation of power and preamp sections, more logical component placement, no flying components and less actual wire in the amp than old amps have. If you look at the board pics on our website you'll see that inside of our amps do not resemble Marshall or Vox at all.



With respect to components, this really is a 'no compromise' amp, unlike the vintage amps we all love. Each component is the best performing or sounding we could find and there is a logical reason for each piece we used and where. Cost had nothing to do with our choices. Remember, initially these amps were just for us. My first amp was intended only for Peter, and I wanted to make certain it was the best it could possibly be.

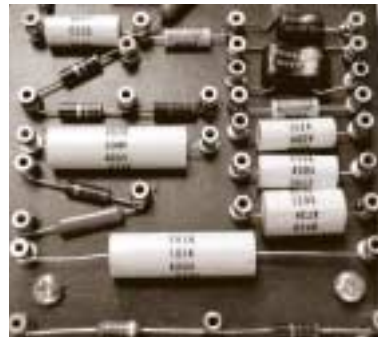
**Peter:** Beyond the 18 watt circuit, Dan was big on the EF86 pentode preamp tube circuit reminiscent of the early Vox AC-15's, so we included that for a broader 'vocabulary' as Dan likes to say. There's a 6-way Color switch that shifts the midrange voice on the EF86 channel. We also wanted a Cut knob like an AC-30, so we added that. Most amps, even early Marshalls and Fenders, are derivative of something that preceded it. Ours is no different. We just know what we like. Where you get the individuality and personality is in the choice of components, from their manufacture to their values. Since we're both guitarists, we know what sounds good to us and how to achieve it. We have been able to tweak our amp from a player's approach – what actually works tonally on stage or for recording – pick attack,



tube compression, what the unappealing sounds are and how to get rid of them or avoid them.

**TQR:** Describe the sonic tests you conducted when selecting components, speakers, transformers and the cabinet design, specs, and materials.

How much time do you have? I started out by reading 18watt.com relentlessly. There are many very knowledgeable and generous amp builders there who really know their stuff. I highly recommend that site for anyone thinking of building amps for the first time or the 100th time. The guys are all great there and I now consider many of them friends. I just asked one question after another of the gurus on the board who really know the original 18 watt circuit well. I then tried every resistor, cap, tube, speaker, transformer, etc. that people talked about on the board until I came up with a recipe that pleased us. We spent months and lots of money buying everything under the sun and methodically changing components in every combination until I hit configurations that made us happy. Sound is so subjective that I just had to hear it all for



myself. I was already very familiar with the standard list of manufacturers for board components, but I had a lot of fun experimenting with crazy Hi-Fi stuff, NOS stuff, stupid stuff, predictable stuff, ancient radio stuff, etc. I even tried some old Beeswax caps used in 40's radios!

**Peter:** We're constantly experimenting with caps, resistors, transformers of all brands... Any buzz we hear about some new component or circuit, we chase it down. It has not only allowed us to fine tune our current amp, but has inspired many future design ideas we have. Our 'sonic test' is to try it! If it sounds good, *great!* Maybe we can incorporate it somewhere.

Cabinet design was partially based on what is tried and true, but also for practicality and aesthetic value. Dan's good

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friend, Bill Malone, came up with the initial design. One consideration on the cabinet size

was simply for it to fit in an existing AC-30 roadcase. We had built a couple of prototypes that varied a little in size. The deeper one was a bit too wooly on the low-end. Structural roadworthiness was important. We've tried different back panel sizes and have chosen what delivered the best balance of lows, highs and openness.

**TQR:** What did you hear specifically in the SOZO caps that was not present in the others you tried?

SoZo's are extremely well made and consistent, but I heard a little more detail and warmth that I didn't hear in others. I spent months going through caps and these were the first ones that grabbed me right away.

**Peter:** Smoothness, no harsh, overriding top end, warm, tight low-end. Incredible caps! They have a substantial impact on the tone. John Gaynor truly has one-upped the tone of the original mustard caps that he modeled them after.

**TQR:** One of the characteristics of the 18W Marshall amps is that they are essentially one-dimensional, although they certainly do that one dimension extremely well. How did you set out to make the 65 more versatile?

Indeed, the Marshall 18's trick is a darn good one. We did several things to bring out more from this circuit. Obviously, the EF86 Vox-inspired channel is the largest thing. The pentode reacts so differently than a twin-triode, dynamically and tonally. I love that channel. EF86's are finicky tubes but seriously fun!

We also spent a lot of time and money working with Mercury Magnetics to get the transformers just right. I spent a lot of time scouring eBay and every Internet resource imaginable for a Radiospares EL84 output tranny to clone. There are about 7 different types of RS EL84 trannies and we were lucky to find one of the good ones that was NOS. We started with that one and proceeded from there. As you know, Sergio is a real artist with his transformers and ours turned out exceptionally well. The vocabulary of the amp dramatically



increased when we put in our final revision. We're extremely pleased with it. Can't say

enough good things about Mercury.

The last big thing is our choice of speakers. The Celestion Alnico Blue and G12H30 are a fun combination with a broad palate of tones. Both speakers are great in pairs, but when you combine them they seem to be very versatile and fun. Our cabinet is larger than the standard Marshall "Mini-Bluesbreaker," and with this speaker combination the vocabulary increases quite a bit.

**Peter:** The 18-watt circuit seemed like a great starting point for a design and our amp evolved considerably from there. 18 watt Marshalls *can* be sort of a one trick pony. It gets its sound incredibly well and the character of every guitar comes out of it. When you plug a Strat in, you hear a damn good Strat! Same with a Les Paul or anything with P-90's. We wanted to broaden its variety of tones and we've



tuned it considerably according to our own tastes. A large part of it is in the transformer design, and the tone stages – the Cut and Color knobs enhance the ability to achieve a wider variety of tones. Again, it was plenty of experimentation to pull more of what were hearing in our heads out of this amp.

**TQR:** We're seeing more and more rotary tone controls on amps reminiscent of the old Selmers. How does your 'Color' control work exactly, and can it be varied for individual players?



It's pretty simple – just a 6-way switch with different value caps for voicing the channel. We can definitely customize the range of caps for individual preferences. We've even thought about having different types of caps on the switch as well just to vary the tonality, and not necessarily the bass or treble. Lots of fun

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options to play with there and we're happy to customize.

**Peter:** It allows you to change the focus of the mids, which has an impact on the lows, highs and gain. When you move the switch to the higher numbers, the mids move up, the lows thin out a little, and it cleans up a bit. I have my favorite settings depending on which guitar I'm using.

**TQR:** Who does the assembly of the 65's and where is it done?

We have a multi-step process. The chassis rough assembly is done by a company in L.A. These guys build most of the SWR line for Fender and work with some other large manufacturers. The gentleman that runs the shop was the head of production for SWR and he went to Fender with SWR's purchase. He's since gone "contractor" with Fender and picked us up as a client. We're very lucky to have them – they do outstanding work. You can see from the chassis pics on our website that the inside of the amps are meticulous and super clean. From there, the chassis go to Don Butler, the infamous "Toneman" for QC and conformation. Don, as you know, is a monster amp guy and we love working with him. He's a big fan of our amp and he's generously offered a lot of advice



and guidance to Peter and I. We always learn something cool from Don every time we talk to him.

Finally, Peter and I burn in the amps, double-check everything, push them really hard for many many hours to ensure reliability and weed out sub-par components. Since Peter and I are often on different sides of the country, we do the final assembly at our respective shops. Peter assembles the amps East of the Mississippi and I assemble the ones West of the Mississippi. We put them together and spend a lot of time taking care to get all the vibration out of the amp. We really



want the amp to be a reliable old friend when customers take delivery. Most of our amps are

going to working pros who rely on the London to make a living, so this level of QC is imperative.

**Peter:** We perform an extensive burn-in on each amp to break in the transformers, caps and speakers. Then we live with the amps a bit to make sure everything's right – no tube rattles, buzzes, the best tube combination tonally and any particular tweaks requested by the buyer.

**TQR:** Where are the cabinets built and can you describe their construction?

Our cabinets are made in a shop that makes the cabinets for many of the top ten boutique amp manufacturers in the U.S. They are 5/8" Baltic Birch cabs with finger joints, just like the old Brit cabs. We obviously had some unusual requirements with our vents and front "split window," so we had to really shop around to get the right people.

**TQR:** How would you describe the tone and voice of your amps?

I usually tell people that it's a "high-function/low powered amp" that will do many of your favorite vintage tones. It's not limited like most low-powered amps. The amp is super rich in even-order "musical" harmonics and has an organic, human quality that really offers exceptional touch response, dynamics and tonal range.

**Peter:** Open, incredibly sensitive to the touch on the strings, and more than most any amp I've ever used. You pick lightly, it's clear and soft. Pick hard, it jumps out of the amp. The pick attack is unbelievable. There is pronounced, compressed punch and the EF86 channel is total vintage Brit smooth. Paul Stacey, who is currently touring with The Finn Brothers, has his favorite AC-15 that he won't take out on the road. He says our amp gets that sound better than any other he's heard and it's louder than his Vox. The 12AX7A/Trem Channel has the edge and clarity, chime on clean settings and very raw and open cranked on 10.

**TQR:** What's ahead?

Our 36 watt "Marquee Club" will be out soon. It's very similar to the London, only four EL84's and a little more robust tone circuitry without the Tremolo. We also have plans for another amp based on different power tubes that are not commonly used. We're working with Mercury again to create a special OT that will optimize these tubes. We are also offering a Germanium-based booster pedal that is designed by Don Butler for 65. We actually have a division of 65 Corp. other than 65 amps – 65 Pedals. We're very excited about it! Don has the rights to the Rangemaster name and this pedal is sort of a Rangemaster on steroids. Don added a 'Color' knob

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to it like our amps and it's voiced to compliment them. It has a much wider tonal range than a regular Rangemaster and it's is very useful.

**Peter:** Two new amps models! We hope to introduce the Marquis Club at NAMM in January. Also, the new Rangemaster pedal sounds incredible. We should have that available by early 2005 as well. We're really thrilled to be working so closely with Don. He has incredible ears and a deep knowledge of vintage amps. **To**

[www.65corp.com](http://www.65corp.com), 770-496-1800

## The London 65 Review

Living just a few clicks from Peter, we were able to play both an early prototype and the final version of the London 65, and this amp rocks. It's a big-sounding combo that really moves some air while creating a formidable presence that holds up on stage without the need for faux overdrive *or* attenuation. You feel more 'connected' to this amp, and the dynamic clean and overdriven interplay you can create simply by rolling off the volume on the guitar is absolutely liberating. Throw some reverb on the '65' with a EH Holy Grail pedal, dial the crunch down a little, and you'll also have a mind-blowing blues amp.



Amp designers are increasingly using the EF86 pentode to deliver stunning overdriven tone. The London 65 overdrives

brilliantly, but the distortion is warm, musical, harmonically rich and pleasing. You have no doubt heard the opposite over the years when experimenting with various amps and pedals, and there isn't a strident, scratchy tone to be found in this box.

We were also impressed with the responsiveness and lush character of the entire 65 circuit, which reflects the care that has been taken in selecting exceptional, complimentary components. The sweep of the tremolo pulse covers all the 'feels' that it should, from a slow throb to an almost whirling Leslie effect, and all of the tone controls exhibit a broad sweep, enabling you to dial in the amp very precisely when switching between different guitars, pickups and effects. In addition



to all of the usual single coil, hum-bucking and P90 variations, we were completely knocked out by the rhythm tones we created with a

budget DeArmond M75-T guitar with DeArmond pickups. As Peter described it, the Color Control shifts the midrange emphasis in a fashion that allows the London 65 to achieve chameleon-like versatility, from deep, midrange-heavy tones, to a stinging, snappy and brighter voice. One of our favorite tricks is to select a specific pickup that is the tonal opposite of the amp setting, such as selecting the neck pickup with the brightest Color and Treble setting, or mating the bridge pickup with the heavier midrange tone and bass settings on the amp. Try it.

We've said this before – when you can find an experienced and utterly talented player who also understands how to shape the sound of an amplifier, you have struck gold in the quest for tone. The London 65 reflects the builders' exceptionally solid comprehension of tone, dynamics, innovative circuit design, and simply how important an amplifier is in inspiring great music. With the capable, hands-on involvement of Peter Stroud, Dan Boul, Don Butler and Mercury Magnetics, 65 Corp. has succeeded in creating an amplifier that simply sells itself with every note played. Knowing the people behind the company as well as we do, we're hardly surprised. **To**

*Midtown Music is an authorized dealer for 65 Amps and ToneQuest approved.*  
[www.midtownmusic.com](http://www.midtownmusic.com), (404) 325-0515  
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## Marshall HAND-WIRED REISSUES with Mitch Colby

*With all the attention that the 18W discussion page has been getting from players and ampheads, it was really only a matter of time before Marshall jumped in the pool... You'll recall that we first suggested to Jim Marshall in our September 2002 interview that that the vintage 20W Marshall Lead head be resurrected, and Marshall & Co. introduced the hand-wired Lead & Bass 20W amp and 2x12 slant cab along with the 1x12 18W combo at the January 2004 NAMM show. We received both amps for review, and we have also remained in contact with Ernie King at the Gibson Custom Shop as he continues to play his new Lead & Bass rig every weekend on*

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