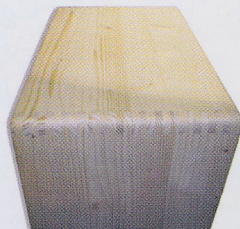


Barnett Davies

AMPLIFICATION

VALVE GUITAR AMPLIFICATION HAND MADE IN ENGLAND

Dave Barnett and Clive Davies both have had a deep passion for guitar-driven music for many years. Working originally on musical instrument electronics and studio equipment progressed to the development of their individual-sounding guitar amplifier combo – the FIFTEEN THIRTY.



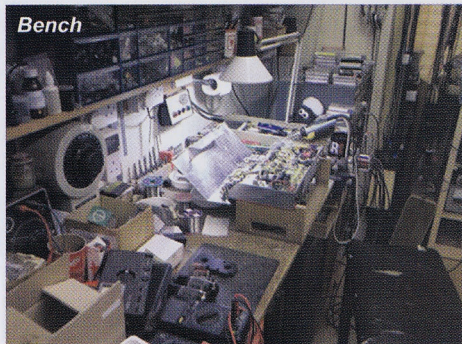
Cab

Walking into the workshop was like entering Aladdin's cave – an electronic lair where Dave weaves his magic. A testament to the other side of the business, repairing musical instruments and equipment, are

the skeletons of amps, keyboards and guitars waiting to be brought back to life.

Most of the work at the bench is carried out by

Bench



Dave and, without someone else to answer the phone, this means that occasionally the phone rings unanswered because Dave has a critical piece of work coming together, not allowing him to free a hand to pick up the call.

In between the construction and repair work Dave is always musing on new projects and ideas. He has plans for some new guitar effects, away from the usual overdrive, delay, etc. Also, he has thoughts on building a valve microphone pre-amp. One idea which he is working on at the moment is a head version of the Fifteen Thirty, thus enabling the use of customers existing speaker cabinets. Not far down the line after this will be various cabinet setups to go with the head if required. Another possibility will be a bass version of the amp.

From the outset one of the main design elements of the Fifteen Thirty was the attention to detail. The basic premise was a combo amp which could easily be carried into a gig with one hand, leaving the other free for the guitar. At the same time the amp needed to be capable of delivering suitable presence on stage.

With this in mind weight was always an issue. The chassis is welded aluminium rather than the usual steel hence lighter, better conductivity and no need for plating or painting. The latest models contain twelve inch Tayden speakers with excellent efficiency when it comes to converting the amp's output into sound. Also these speakers are three or four pounds lighter than conventional ceramic magnet speakers.

The cabinet is constructed out of solid wood – no mdf or plywood here – with beautifully sculptured comb-jointed edges. Never seen of course under the quality vinyl covering which is available in a choice of six colours. The size of the cabinet has been kept to the smallest possible still allowing for the internal workings. The positioning of the transformers was carefully considered to balance the amp evenly when being carried.

The well laid out control panel is slanted at forty-five degrees which means it can easily be read whether the amp is standing on the floor or up on a riser. An interesting aspect of the circuitry is that the clean and overdrive channels work separately – unlike most amps which add gain to the clean channel for overdrive. This means that both channels can be used simultaneously – and oddly you can hear both channels, even though the sound is coming through one speaker. Moreover, because the channels are controlled by earth switching it works silently.

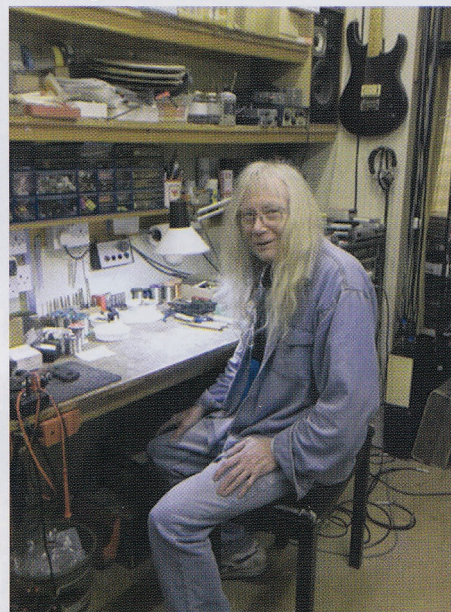
When you play through the Fifteen Thirty you need to remember that this does not set out to sound like a Marshall, Fender or whatever. It

stands alone in its transparency – allowing the individual guitar to influence the sound. The clean channel exhibits all the clarity you could need with a sweet full sound as you increase the volume. The overdrive channel, because it is completely separate, can be used as a second clean channel with an adjustable amount of thickening as required. Used as intended, the overdrive delivers an articulate minimum level up to the sound of a horde of hungry hornets when wound right up.

The channel separation comes into its own when you take the opportunity to use both channels simultaneously – the levels of clean and overdrive can be balanced to suit your needs then you have a choice of three sounds available on the footswitch; clean, overdrive or combined. While on the footswitch there's a handy adjuster underneath the reverb switch which can be used to set the lower level of reverb from nothing up to the setting on the amp control panel – very handy for changing to a different level of reverb rather than simply on or off.

The DI output delivers its sound from its own dedicated transformer tap and has been set to emulate as near as is possible the sound which would be coming from the onboard Tayden speaker.

All in all I liked the performance and sound of the Fifteen Thirty. That said it probably won't suit everyone but the same could be said for any amp on the market. The sound at 30w can be a bit bright, although this riches and warms when set at 15w with no appreciable difference in volume. However, if you're looking to buy a valve combo then it's well worth considering the Barnett Davies Fifteen Thirty before parting with your money. It's not cheap at £1595 but it is a very well put together, hand-made individual in its own right.



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