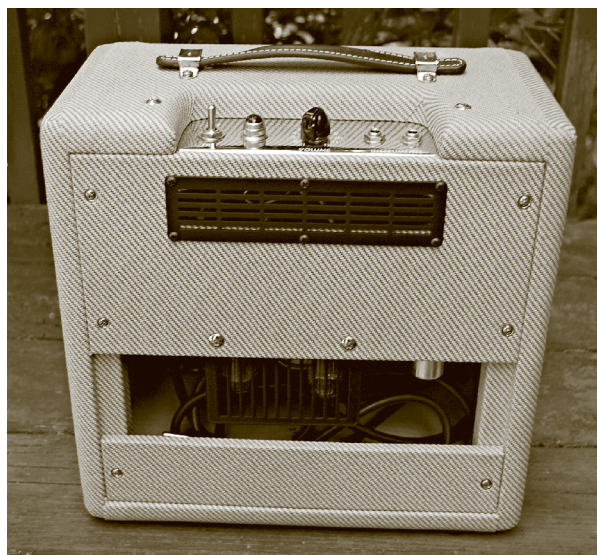


The new '57 Champ has acquired more volume, clarity and resonant tone than many older Champ amps. Fender used custom-made yellow coupling capacitors chosen specifically for their authentic vintage tone, a Weber Special Design 8 inch speaker with Alnico magnet, a pine cabinet and a completely hand wired circuit. The fit and finish of the Champ is exceptional throughout, and the hand wired circuit is impeccably finished.

Honestly, this Champ doesn't sound nearly as small as an ordinary 5 watt amp. It has a big tone, remaining clean up to 5 on the volume control, and gradually developing more gain and smooth distortion all the way to 12. And this Champ doesn't hit a wall at 8-10 on the volume control... Volume and creamy distortion steadily increase all the way to 12,



making this little amp very versatile. As we said, Fender also worked on the components like the coupling capacitors to create a rich vintage tone, and you can immediately hear the difference from the first chord. They addressed all the most desirable issues with this Champ and optimized it nicely. We have owned three vintage Champs, and none sounded quite like this.

Of course the Champ is a great amp for recording, and you can really get your yah, yahs out without disturbing your neighbors, the dog, or your family on the other side of the house. We absolutely loved the tones we enjoyed with the Champ, and the sustain, harmonic depth, and overdriven character of this amp are memorable, to say the least. The clean tones are righteous, too.

We give the nod to Fender for having done the '57 Champ right, and we think you will agree. Quest forth... **TQ**

fender.com

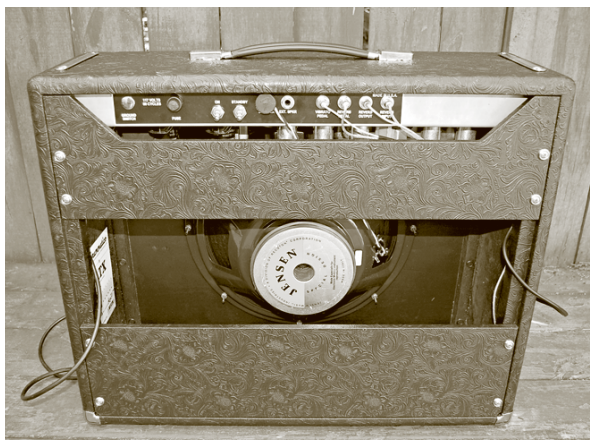
Worthy Of Its Name

Grammatico ATX Vibroverb

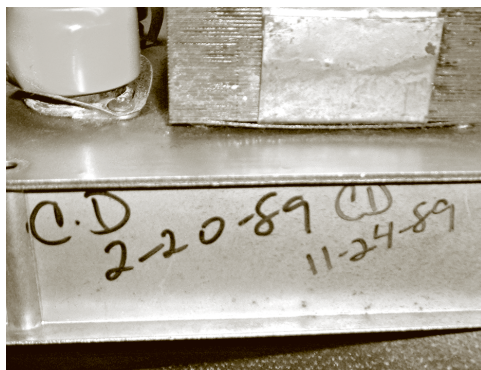


John Grammatico was apparently captivated by Stevie Ray Vaughan's Vibroverb, so much so that he asked us for pictures (chassis shots) when we had the amp in our possession. We were glad to cooperate, and it wasn't too long before Grammatico had built his own tribute to Stevie. Inspired by Stevie Ray Vaughan's original Vibroverb, John Grammatico has crafted a hand built amp worthy of the name. Stay tuned to our review of the ATX in next month's issue of TQR. Enjoy...

The desire to build this amp has been with me for many years. I had done a lot of listening to and dissecting of Stevie Ray Vaughan's tone and was my main inspiration behind the desire to build amps so I was thrilled when I was commissioned to build one for a local customer. He already owned a LaGrange and wanted another amp that would give him that dry, tough, clean/dirty Texas Strat tone. His favorite tone of Stevie's was with his Vibroverb's at El Mocambo. He wanted to be able to gig with it at a reasonable volume that would provide sufficient clean headroom, be a good platform for pedals and also have the full, meaty, roundness to work with lap steel.



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I've been incredibly fortunate to have Stevie's brother Jimmie as a client. Over the years he's bought a dozen

Grammatico amps and has even given some away as gifts. I have a tremendous amount of respect and admiration for Jimmie. I never felt comfortable asking him anything about Stevie and so I would never ask to see one of Stevie's amps. As much as I would have loved to explore them... Fortunately, David Wilson of ToneQuest most generously shared



with me, high resolution chassis pics of Stevie's stolen and recovered Cesar Diaz's modified Vibroverb #5 that he sent to me back in April of 2009. I would regularly zoom into these pics over the years to discover subtle details as I continued to learn new things in my own quest for tone with the hopes of one day building an amp like this.

The circuit was essentially stock Fender with an increase in the amount of global negative feedback for tighter, cleaner, throatier and punchier sound, and a cleaned up phase inverter. The main difference in components from a stock Vibroverb is the change to 600v orange drop signal caps, beefed up 1 watt plate load resistors where there were 1/2 watt resistors and Sprague 30D series electrolytic bypass caps. These all lend to the amp's muscularity and makes you have to really work for the tone.

Stevie customarily changed out his speaker to higher wattage speakers that all had large diameter hard dust caps and thick paper smooth cones with no ribbing to get that clean headroom with a tight and thunderous bottom end that wouldn't get muddy when pushed hard. Having JBL D130's on hand and EV15L's, I evaluated many current production 15 inch speakers that had this basic design. My Jensen

rep sent samples of the 120 watt and 200 watt Mod 15 inch speakers. To our pleasant surprise, they nailed the tone we were after and at a lower volume than the JBL and EV 15 inch speakers which would make the amp more usable at lower volumes. The 200 watt was a little louder and a lot cleaner. The 120 watt version is significantly dirtier and so it's offered as an option. This design of speaker is not forgiving with its hard, thick, heavy cones and dust caps and large magnets. To achieve that easy to play, small amp feel with such a speaker I went with a smaller output transformer so that it would have the saturation, singing sustain, bounce and bloom we were after, especially necessary for slide.

The transformers, choke and reverb driver are paper wound from a mix of Schumacher, Magnetic Components and Marvel Electric each chosen for their specific attributes in each section to achieve the vintage tone using current production components. The pots are made by CTS and are a carbon comp type with a brass wiper like the originals. The pots used for the volume have a very gradual algorithmic taper which comes on later and gives more volume control at lower volumes so it's easier to dial in. Sometimes vintage Fender's came with linear pots which would provide more gain earlier and then not much more as you turn it up. Of course a linear pot is an option



if the customer so desires. Current production reverb tanks sound thin, harsh, overly bright and separated. It was modified using proprietary techniques to sound more like a vintage tank, sounding

full, lush, warm, deep, and cohesive. Since the tone of the amp is voiced to have a lot of mid meat, a mid control was added for more tonal flexibility.

With all this discussion of parts I want to emphasize that there are other more important factors that once built, are not visible to the naked eye. Techniques and methodology applied make a far greater impact on the tone, musicality and player inspiration of an amp than the sum of its parts. That's where I believe the true art of amp building exists and what makes an amp a joy to play, sound musical and satisfying at any volume. **TQ**

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VINTAGE FENDER VIBROVERB REDUX

The Grammatico ATX



If you have been with us for a while, you may recall the story of the stolen Vibroverb belonging to Stevie Ray Vaughan. Terry Dobbs found out that it was for sale, and he traveled

to Texas from Indiana to meet with the sellers – two low lifes who had stolen it from Stevie's storage facility in Texas. With Riverhorse in tow for protection, Terry met the thieves, inspected the amp and bought it for \$5,000 dollars. He returned to southern Indiana, and subsequently came to Atlanta with the Vibroverb so we could check it out. We took it to Bakos Ampworks where Jeff could inspect and document it, and we fired it up (briefly). After a few chords the amp blew a fuse, but we were able to experience the Vibroverb's tone and power for a few minutes at least. After many false starts and a whole lot of trouble, Terry was finally able to contact Jimmie Vaughan and inform him that he had the stolen amp in Indiana. Jimmie sent someone to pick it up, but he didn't bother to offer Terry reimbursement for the five grand he had laid out to buy the amp. Terry gave it to him anyway, which was much more magnanimous than we would have been. You want it, you buy it would have been our offer.

We related this story to John Grammatico and he became somewhat obsessed with the Vibroverb. We sent him detailed pictures of the chassis, and he set out to duplicate the amp with the proper components and values as shown in our pictures. The only variable would be the speaker.



Jimmie Vaughan

John sent us his amp, and we now offer it for your consideration. Apparently Grammatico has built several amps for Jimmie Vaughan recently and the two of them are thick as thieves now.

The vintage Vibroverb was always cleaner-sounding than the usual 40 watt blackface Fender amp. It didn't spill over into

intense distortion like a Deluxe or Pro Reverb, but remained comparatively clean with a more subtle overdriven tone. The Vibroverb had a big sound with good balance between bass, mids and treble, and being cleaner, it excelled with pedals as you might imagine.

Grammatico's ATX amp is typical of the vintage Fender Vibroverb, with a big sound and lots of depth. Stevie's amp had been fortified with 600v orange drop signal caps, beefed up 1 watt plate load resistors in place of ½ watt resistors, and Sprague 30D series electrolytic bypass caps, and Grammatico duplicated these enhancements. The original work was done by Cesar Diaz, who worked on all of Stevie's amps and often advised him on potential modifications.



Paul Oscher

The difference between a stock Vibroverb and the Grammatico (and Stevie's original amp) are subtle. You get a slightly bigger and more stout sound from the Grammatico, but the tone largely remains the same as an unmodified

Vibroverb. When Stevie first started out he used a Vibroverb alone as his main rig and it significantly influenced his sound even when he was able to use seven or eight amps all at once in the studio. The Vibroverb is a big, round and warm amp with plenty of headroom, and it was perfect for Stevie's unique style of Texas roadhouse blues. The Grammatico ATX honors that sound quite well and we really couldn't detect a difference in tone, volume or feel between the two amps.

Grammatico chose an Italian-made Jensen 15 inch speaker for the ATX amp, and it was a good choice, exhibiting a wide frequency response, excellent power handling and a robust speaker cone. We hadn't seen this particular speaker before, and the speaker seems generic, with no model name. The label simply says Jensen – no model name or number.

If you want a big tone, clean and penetrating, the Grammatico Vibroverb is an excellent choice that we highly recommend. It has the wide frequency response, depth and vivid tones of the original amp, with plenty of authentically vintage Fender personality. Or you could buy an original Vibroverb, but unless you get very lucky it will cost you. We bought one for \$1900 perhaps ten years ago, and they will be much higher than that now. Quest forth...TQ

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