

GEAR Round



SPECS

Reeves Amplification

(513) 451-1071; reevesamps.com

MODEL	Custom 18
PRICE	\$1,599 retail/street price N/A
CHANNELS	One
CONTROLS	Gain, Bass, Mid, Treble, Cut, Drive, Power Scale, 3-way Bright/Mid Boost switch, Gain Boost switch
TUBES	Two JJ EL84 power tubes, two N.O.S. 12AX7s, one JJ 12AX7
POWER	20 watts
SPEAKERS	N/A
UTILITIES	Two speaker outs, impedance selector (4Ω, 8Ω, 16Ω)
WEIGHT	20 lbs
KUDOS	Killer distortion tones. Power Scale control is very effective.
CONCERNS	None.

Reeves Custom 18

THE LEGENDARY QUALITY AND SOUND OF THE Dave Reeves-era Hiwatt amps have inspired Reeves amplifiers, which feature classic-style handwired circuitry and cabinets made from 13-ply birch. The flagship model in Reeves' low-wattage series is the Custom 18, which sports front-panel Gain and Bright/Mid Boost switches, 3-band EQ, Cut, Gain and Drive (master) controls, and a unique Power Scale control that varies the power of the output stage to allow you to obtain full output tube distortion at any volume. With its pointer knobs and black Tolex covering trimmed with white piping, the Custom 18 exudes a purposeful Brit-style look. Peeking inside the aluminum chassis, we find circuitry that is right out of the Hiwatt/Harry Joyce school of electrical fabrication, with ruler-straight wire runs and the audio caps and resistors neatly arranged on the narrow turret-style board.

With its pair of EL84 tubes running in

cathode bias, the Custom 18 is ideally suited for smaller stages. That said, when played through the accompanying Reeves R1x12W cabinet (\$649)—a very efficient design with two internal deflecting panels that direct speaker back pressure to an angled slot opening in the bottom front of the cabinet—the Custom 18 was easily loud enough to use with a band, delivering a voracious palette of tones that responded beautifully to changes in guitar volume and/or picking intensity. In non-boost mode, the Gain control can be dialed to produce everything from sparkling clean rhythm textures to overdriven sounds with plenty of sustain for solos. I like the low-end girth and tightness of these tones, as well as their very tactile dynamic characteristics. Activating the Gain switch uncorks the preamp to dramatically increase its overdrive capability for lead playing and heavy rhythm assaults. This is definitely the Custom 18's rock mode, although some of the tonal mojo present in the un-boosted mode seems to get lost in the process. The higher gain mode is definitely handy, however, when you're looking for that extra level of sustain—especially from single-coil guitars. And for those situations where you need to keep the loudness way down, the Power Scale control helps to maintain the excellent dynamic feel and density of the tones at volumes that will keep you on good terms with your neighbors. The Custom 18 is a great sounding and very versatile amp, and it's attractively priced for all that it offers.

