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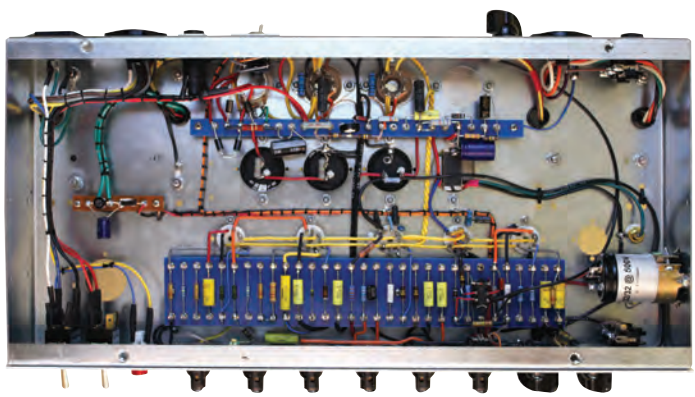
Reeves Space Cowboy

Guitar Player EDITORS' PICK

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

REEVES AMPLIFICATION IS BEST known as heir apparent to the military-spec rock machines produced by Hiwatt founder Dave Reeves and company in south London in the late '60s and '70s. But that hasn't stopped this Cincinnati-based company from adding some new inspiration to the formula. One of the company's newer creations is the Space Cowboy, which springs from the same Hiwatt DR-504 circuit as Reeves's flagship Custom 50 and 100 models, but adds a few twists to the preamp: a built-in footswitchable Boost with rear-panel Level control, and two-knob, tube-driven spring reverb with controls for Send and Mix (footswitch for Boost and Reverb included). In addition to the three 12AX7s and one 12AT7 that get all these front-end duties done (with another 12AT7 in the phase inverter), the Space Cowboy is powered by a pair of KT77 output tubes. Reeves main man Bill Jansen tells us, "We were looking for a tube that had a mix of EL34 and 6L6 characteristics, and trying to attract players that might want something with a touch more 'American' tone, as in Hiwatt meets Fender."

Although the amp's EQ section of Treble, Mid, Bass, and Presence appears akin to the Marshall template, this is a very different tone stack, and highly interactive as well. Also, the signal runs through more preamp-tube gain stages here than in a plexi (not including the reverb circuit),



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yet it's far from the high-gain creation this might imply. As with vintage Hiwatts, the Space Cowboy ramps up the gain gently with the goal of a big, broad soundstage with loads of clarity, depth, and dimension, rather than preamp-generated sizzle. Surrounding all this tubey goodness, the chassis displays some of the finest workmanship you'll see anywhere, along with military-grade components and accurate Partridge-reproduction transformers.

I tested the Space Cowboy with several guitars through a Port City 2x12 with Fane and Celestion speakers and a StoneAge 1x12 with an Electro-Voice EVM 12L Classic. To get right to it, this is one of the finest clean machines I've ever experienced, but if "clean" implies dull, I've got some serious explaining to do. With the Volume at around 11 o'clock and Master dialed to suit the room, this amp takes what the Strat gives it and gushes out sweet, silky goodness with notes that shimmer and bloom seemingly right before your eyes. The amazing thing is, it does the same with a PAF-equipped Les Paul or a P-90-loaded LP Special-style guitar. Once you get it up past 2 o'clock or so things do eventually break up, and beautifully too, with elegant control and a sweet, crystalline note separation. Dosing it with the Boost issues further chewy delights that are pure classic-rock heaven. The reverb is easy to dial in, and I don't think I've ever played a better pedal platform, either. The Space Cowboy took on an Xotic EP booster, a Blackout Effectors Musket fuzz, a Menatone Blue Collar overdrive, and several others in succession and translated them into gloriously virile shades of gain. The crazy thing is the Space Cowboy might stand in for your blackface Twin Reverb just as well as for your arena-wrecking classic-rock amp. And while the Master Volume is certainly effective, the amp breathes best with that knob up past noon, and sounds its very best with the Master dimed. (Fryette Power Station and Komet Air Brake attenuators helped me out with the volume there.)

The bottom line: This is an outstanding amp for the serious gigging guitarist, and it's not overly expensive either, considering that other makers are charging $1,000 to $1,500 *more* for this kind of build quality and sonic veracity. All of which makes the Space Cowboy a shoe-in for an Editors' Pick Award.

SPECIFICATIONS

SPACE COWBOY

CONTACT	ReevesAmps.com
PRICE	$2,499 street
CHANNELS	1
CONTROLS	Volume, Reverb Send, Reverb Mix, Treble, Mid, Bass, Presence, Master Volume
POWER	50 watts
TUBES	Three 12AX7 and two NOS 12AT7 (preamp), two KT77 (output)
EXTRAS	Boost with rear-panel level control, 2-button footswitch for Boost and Reverb, dual speaker outs with 4/8/16Ω switch, external Hum Balance control, internal bias adjustment point.
WEIGHT	42 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Stellar build quality. Outstandingly bold, lush tones with impressive punching power and great reverb.
CONCERNS	None.