

From: aron (geoaron@geocities.com)

Date: 5/8/2000 9:43 PM

Subject: Dirty Little Monster - review/FYI

Some of you wanted to know a little more about the "Dirty Little Monster" Trainwreck Prototype so here's my take on it....

I got to play the Dirty Little Monster amp (Train Wreck prototype) the other day. It looked like a typical Train Wreck amp but with labels for the knobs. I played it through a two 12" celestion greenback cabinet (I think they were 16 ohm speakers???). I wish I had more details but I didn't have that much time to check things out that much.

It's an 8 watt amp I believe and it can get pretty darn loud for what it is.

How can I describe the tone???

The highs are crystal clear - and there's a twinge of "angry-ness" at the very top. Like a "biting" tone at the very top of the timbre. The lows are tight, yet complex, mids are fantastic. With the volume control of the guitar, the amp goes from crystal clear to angry and distorted. With a Strat/Fralins it went from extremely clean to beyond a bluesy tone - with a turn of the pot. You could easily play rhythm and then jump to lead with a turn of the pot. I played 2 or three Fender strats through it and you could hear each guitars tone.

However, even when dimed, it had just a tad too little drive for the over the top kind of liquid soloing I like.

Luckily I had my FET drive with me. For those of you who don't know, my FET drive/AKA Booster 2.5 has 2 Jack Orman Mini-Boosters in series tuned somewhat like an tube preamp (22uF bypass cap on first stage, 100 ohm resistor) to Marshall style 470K/470K voltage divider with 470pf high pass filter to 1Meg pot with .001uF treble "bleed" cap. This then goes to a 2nd stage into a tone control. This is all based upon Jack Orman's Fantastic Mini-Tubes preamp.

Man, what a combination! With just a little boost from the FET drive, this thing went from totally clean to singing sustain with BITE! You could get everything. Angry sounding leads to more "closed" sounding liquid leads using the FET drive as the distortion circuit.

I noticed the amp was fairly bright and I had most of the Treble control turned down almost all the way. There's only treble and bass I think and there was a peculiar pot that only worked when the Master was used. Yes, there was a Master Volume on this one.

My guess would be that the pot somehow affects a treble bleed cap across the master volume? That would explain why it only worked when the Master was used. There was another slope?

control and I guessed this to mean that it affected the slope of the tone controls.... I wish I knew more but that's about all I know.

I know this reads like an ad, but I wish I owned this thing. Well, I own the pedal. :-)

Went back to my Fender Bassman and oops - where's the clear highs with complex mids and lows.... Hmm... left back at Hilo I think.

Hehehehe

Aron

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From: JAY

Date: 5/11/2000 12:52 AM

Subject: Re: Dirty Little Monster - review/FYI

sounds like some really Cool stuff!
What kind of tubes were in there?

JAY

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From: Steve A. (steve_ahola@yahoo.com)

Date: 5/12/2000 2:56 AM

Subject: Re: Dirty Little Monster - review/FYI

Aron:

So who makes the D.L.M.? Any chance that you can sneak a peek inside to let us know what is going on in there?

--Thanks!

Steve Ahola

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From: aron (geoaron@geocities.com)

Date: 5/13/2000 12:43 AM

Subject: Re: Dirty Little Monster - review/FYI

The DLM is a prototype Train Wreck from Ken F. I guess it was some sort of proto amp for low power.

It's in Hilo and I live in Honolulu. Maybe the next time I can look at it - I'm not sure.

The thing is.... I mean.... look at the Express schematic - there's nothing amazing about it. I guess what you are looking for is the brand and values of certain caps and perhaps the tubes and transformers.

I can tell you one thing, this Wreck is bright. It has a biting high end and like I said, the treble was fairly turned down - sometimes all the way.

Man, that seems to coincide with the 50pf vs. 470/220pf issue.

It's WAY brighter than my Fender Bassman's normal channel.

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From: Steve A. (steve_ahola@yahoo.com)

Date: 5/14/2000 6:15 AM

Subject: Re: Dirty Little Monster - review/FYI

Aron:

So Ken Fischer is back in business producing guitar amps? Or is this maybe one of his "authorized clone franchises"...

The thing is.... I mean.... look at the Express schematic - there's nothing amazing about it.

Sometimes it is the simple designs that make the best sounds. BTW the Wreck Express design is quite unlike practically any amp that came out before it. Although the tone stack is placed after the first stage like a BF amp, the connection to the mid pot is like the 5F6A/Marshall tone stack (as are the cap and tone pot values). And compared to the Normal channel of the BF amps there is a third gain stage before the PI (which is much more like a Marshall than a Fender). So this beast is not quite animal or vegetable, so to speak.

You are right about the caps and trannies contributing to the unique sound; I also believe that KF fine-tunes each and every amp that he sells...

Steve Ahola

P.S. Did you notice what kind of wood the head was made out of? < grin >

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From: aron (geoaron@geocities.com)

Date: 5/17/2000 12:53 AM

Subject: Re: Dirty Little Monster - review/FYI

>So Ken Fischer is back in business producing guitar amps?

Not that I know. I think this is one he had around his house. My friend was very lucky to get it.

>BTW the Wreck Express design is quite unlike practically any amp that came out before it.

I stand corrected.

>So this beast is not quite animal or vegetable, so to speak.

I see. I haven't studied enough amp schematics to know what is unique or not I guess.

>I also believe that KF fine-tunes each and every amp that he sells...

I'm sure of this. Also he is extremely picky about each set of tubes too from what I have heard.

>Did you notice what kind of wood the head was made out of?

I better check. I could hear the difference if I put my can of soda on it. Really made a difference in the mids. :-)

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From: Steve A. (steve_ahola@yahoo.com)

Date: 5/19/2000 3:33 AM

Subject: Re: Dirty Little Monster - review/FYI

aron:

And I was thinking that you had just seen this amp in a store... You better make a complete set of photos of the inside of the chassis for your friend— you know, for insurance purposes if it ever caught on fire...

And experts recommend storing a set of backup files as far away from the originals as possible so you can send the backups to me for safekeeping. < grin >

If I seem to be overly enthusiast about the Trainwreck Express design (probably not entirely different from your friend's DLM!) it is because I have been hearing from so many people who have been building amps based on the Espresso schematics posted last year, and they have been really knocked out with the results.

--Thanks!

Steve Ahola

P.S. You better measure all of the plate voltages, too... for insurance purposes so that a like-for-like replacement could be built.