

TRAYNOR

Custom Special 50



Canadian-based Traynor has been around since the early '60s, quietly making amps that live up to what is now a workhorse reputation. The company's Custom Specials are no exception. They are well thought-out, well made, and priced very reasonably considering what you get. We took a look at the Custom Special 50 combo (there is also a 90 watt 2x12 version), which is simple in operation, but packed full of useful features.

FEATURES

The 50-watt, class AB amp has a master volume with independent gain and EQs on two foot-switchable channels. Its 12" Celestion Vintage 30 speaker is powered by two 5881 power tubes (the head version comes with EL34s), and the preamp section is driven by three 12AX7s. The rhythm channel features a Brit/USA voicing switch and the company's Expander circuit, which is often described as being able to give you near-acoustic tones. The lead channel features a boost and dedicated buttons for achieving scooped and vintage

tube-driven tones. The amp also features presence and resonance controls, reverb, and parallel effects loops. Chickenhead knobs and brown grill cloth with white piping give the Custom 50 a somewhat vintage vibe.

SOUND AND EASE OF USE

My first impression was that the amp is bright, but it's possible the Celestion just needs some playing-in time and will mellow a bit with use. The control panel is laid out logically and easy to read. I had no problem dialing in a number of voices with a few easy adjustments.

The clean channel's Brit/USA switch makes the amp react differently by changing where the tone stack sits in the sound chain. I found both voices to be pleasing, with the USA giving a nice Twin-like sound with plenty of top end, and the Brit to be a bit more rounded at the top. The clean channel's palette goes from fat jazz tones to sparkly Fender-type ones with ease. The Expander circuit offers a mid-less version of clean that indeed gets you somewhat in the range of acoustic tones.

The overdrive channel offers an impressive range of distortion. I particularly enjoyed being able to dial up a wide range of mildly gritty sounds. Going over the top was fun, too—the amp is quite capable of Santana-style sustain. The two-button footswitch (channel/boost) is rock solid and uses a standard stereo cable to connect to the amp.

IS IT FOR YOU?

It's clear that Traynor makes amps for musicians who get out and play. In addition to its tone-shaping ability and durable, plywood construction, the amp has plenty of FOH options and user-friendly features that make it ideal for gigging: it has a DI output, a variable control for the effects loop send, a preamp out, and a front panel standby switch that's easy to get to. The Custom 50 will reward you for spending time learning to tweak it to suit your needs. It's affordable for its class and quality and sturdy enough to take a beating. The Custom Special 50 really does seem to pack the most different sounds into the least number of knobs of any class AB amp I have seen, and will give any amp in its price range a run for its money.

—PAT SMITH **GE**

IN A NUTSHELL

- 50-watt class AB or 15-watt class A
- Plywood cabinet
- Brit/USA voicing switch on clean channel
- Accutronics spring reverb
- 2 footswitchable channels
- 48 lbs.

MSRP \$1,149
traynoramps.com



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