

SWEET NOTES

Lexicon SIGNATURE 284: THE ULTIMATE DIRECT BOX FOR GUITAR

by Daniel Fisher
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I have a confession to make: I've been a keyboard player for 30 years now and all that time I secretly always wanted to be a guitar hero, too. This passion got even stronger after working full time on Sweetwater's Ultimate Guitar CD-ROM for the Kurzweil, with its 115 different guitars. The killing blow came when Sweetwater started its highly successful "Custom Select" Premium Direct Luthiers program which put literally hundreds of top quality guitars and accessories in the same building where I work.



So I gave in and treated myself to an electric guitar. Being a trained musician and soundware engineer, but only a beginning guitarist, I currently find myself focusing more on tone than on highly technical playing. This has led me to explore all of the fantastic tone-shaping products we carry for guitars and I truly believe I've found the "Holy Grail" of all that is TONE! It's the new **Lexicon Signature 284** (list \$1099), an all tube, Class "A" stereo recording amplifier and direct source. This hand-built, all-tube amplifier was designed by tube guru John McIntyre specially for Lexicon.

What makes it so special? Well, one key factor is its low output power which allows you to get the sinuous touch and gorgeous tone that only a fully-cranked all-tube amp can deliver. With only 3 watts per side, its low-power design makes it ideal for recording as well as live performance applications where high

makes it ideal for recording as well as live performance applications where high volume levels are undesirable. The Signature 284's unique design combines a high-gain preamp with a low-wattage, stereo Class A power amplifier. The preamp section uses three 12AX7 tubes and incorporates a switchable high-gain stage and beautifully voiced tone controls. To put the finishing touch on the 284's tone, a stereo power amp uses two EL84 tubes in a Class A configuration. A tube-driven stereo effects loop lets you place effects in-line between the preamp and power amp for sonic effects that can't be obtained at the console. Simultaneous outputs let the amp drive any combination of stereo speaker, balanced recording and slave amp outputs. The speaker outputs can handle 4 or 8 ohm cabinets. Built-in speaker simulation lets you select "smooth" or "bright" independently for each recording output. For silent recording, the passive load is automatically connected when the speaker is disconnected. Because the slave outputs tap the signal after the power amp, they carry all of the Signature 284's characteristic tone and can be connected to any power amp and guitar cabinets for greater performance volume.



So what does this all mean to you, the guitar hero? It means that you can get the best fully-cranked all-tube sound all the time, whether you're practicing with headphones, recording to digital, or blowing away an amphitheater full of fans, using the same hand-wired preamp and power amp. It means that your high quality analog and digital effects can be used after the preamp tubes have shaped your signal. Then your effected signal can be power-amped with real tubes in stereo. It also means that you can finally send the true output of your stereo power tubes directly into your mixing board (no power-soak needed) for a fatness that no direct box could ever deliver.

You may wonder what Lexicon is doing making a custom "boutique" guitar amplifier. I asked Steve DeFuria of Lexicon for the story. It turns out that Steve needed a small, low-wattage, portable, all-tube, stereo amp with stereo effects inserts to research the development of their new **MPX G2** Guitar Effects Processor (list \$1799). Guess what? No amp like that existed, so Steve enlisted the help of tube guru John McIntyre to build him a one-of-a-kind research amp. Once the prototypes of the MPX G2 were ready, Steve traveled around showing the MPX G2 to many of the best engineering guys and guitar gods in the

the MPA G2 to many of the best engineering ears and guitar gods in the industry. Each and every one of them loved the G2, but always started out by asking, "Where the hell can I get one of those amps?"

After a while it became clear that modern guitar effects technology had outdistanced the amplifiers they needed to play through and the Lexicon Signature 284 was born. The electric guitar will never be the same again. There's even a specially designed stereo guitar speaker cabinet made for the Signature 284 called the **SB 210** (retail \$499). It's a stereo, split baffle closed-back cabinet loaded with 2 Mojo 10" speakers that are rated a 35 watts peak per side which are custom made by Mojo Tone.

To learn more about this amazing custom hand-made amplifier, call your Sweetwater Sales Engineer today for current availability and your outstanding Sweetwater price.

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