

# soundcheck

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TESTING 1...2...3...

THE GEAR IN REVIEW

## RAGING BULL

*Mesa/Boogie Lone Star 1x12 Classic combo*

By **Eric Kirkland**

**A**BOUT A YEAR ago, Mesa gave me the heads up that it was developing an incredible new amp that had the entire shop at Petaluma

buzzing with excitement. Their enthusiasm was contagious: since getting that call, I've been eager to hear the amp that's caused such a stir in the Mesa facility. After all, it must be some amp to impress a group that routinely turns out awe-inspiring amplification products.

At long last, the amp has arrived, and I must say, it lives up to the buzz. Dubbed the Lone Star, it is simply the most responsive, musical and detail-rich amplifier to wear the Mesa badge.

### Features

On appearance alone, it's evident that the Lone Star is a departure from previous Mesas. While its cabinet style is not new for the industry, it marks the first time Mesa has used a split-panel design with a piped front and a control window. The amp's coat of blue tolex is dressed with silver rope accents on the joints and satin silver upholstery across the front grille, with a black leather handle and corner cuffs completing the refined attire. This grille cloth is not like the usual open weave we see on amplifiers; its antique vibe is appropriate for the vintage-inspired tones that blow through its fibers, and the tight nature of the fabric serves to filter and direct the semisweet highs from the classic, quasi-



able for use when you are in the 50-watt mode; otherwise, the silicon diodes are automatically active. Should you want a tone base other than that provided by the bold and beautiful 6L6s, the Lone Star can also accept EL-34s and 6V6s.

On the front panel, each of the Lone Star's two channels features Channel Dedicated Power (patent pending), which allows you to assign two or four power tubes to either of its channels for independent power ratings of 50 or 100 watts. Other controls for each channel include independent radio knobs for gain, treble, mid, bass, presence and master volume. Channel two takes advantage of two enhancements. First is an additional drive control that, when switched into the circuit, injects high-pressure gain to the preamp. Second is a three-way switch that governs the treble characteristics with normal, Thick and Thicker options; the normal position maintains the amp's natural sparkle, the Thick option fills out the top for a sexy

open-back cabinet and single 90-watt Celestion.

The Lone Star's glass bottle complement includes four 6L6s in the power section, five 12AX7s and a single 5U4 rectifier tube. The tube rectifier is only avail-



bounce and the Thicker setting deepens the treble further and adds gobbs of Mesa's famous gooey gain.

The Lone Star's power switch lets you choose between full power and the low voltage "brown out" of tweed power. When the FX loop is engaged, the output and solo controls become active, providing the user with a post-master volume control and an addi-

### THE FINE PRINT

MODEL	<b>Mesa Boogie Lone Star 1x12 Classic combo</b>
INPUTS	Instrument, footswitch
OUTPUTS	One eight- and two four-ohm speaker jacks, slave out
CHANNELS	Two, three modes
CONTROLS	Post master output and solo (bypassable); independent gain, treble, mid, bass, presence, master and reverb
EFFECT LOOP	Series (bypassable)
FOOTSWITCH	Switches channels and solo feature
PREAMP	Tube, five 12AX7s
POWER AMP	Tube, four 6L6s, with bias switch for EL34s
POWER OUTPUT	Channel Dedicated Power (patent pending) section, with 100-/50-watt switch per preamp channel
SPEAKER(S)	90-watt Mesa Black Shadow Celestion
CABINET TYPE	1x12 Classic semi-open back
OTHER FEATURES	Drive knob on channel 2, warm/bright reverb switch, switchable cooling fan, tweed power, three-way treble-voicing switch, switchable tube or silicon diode rectifiers, external-switching jacks for channels and solo function

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE ZEFF

tional output boost. The included two-button footswitch connects via a front-panel jack and allows you to select channels and engage the solo boost.

On the amp's back are separate reverb controls for each channel and a bright/warm reverb voice switch: the bright setting delivers old-school twin-style reverb, with lots of ringing overtones, while the warm setting serves up controlled, studio-quality reverb. To the left are the jacks and controls for the series effect loop circuit. These consist of send and return jacks, a true bypass switch and a send level control. Also on the back are two mini toggles for switching on and off the internal cooling fan and for switching between tube and silicon-diode rectifiers, plus external switching jacks for the channel, solo and reverb features, a bias switch to run EL-34 power tubes, eight- and four-ohm speaker outputs and a slave out with its own level control.

## Performance

Compared to the fighter-jet complexity of Mesa's MK IV, the Lone Star's operation is very simple. That said, the amp offers a multitude of tonal possibilities.

Channel one was absolute clean bliss at lower gain settings, allowing tones suitable for anything from spanking country to warm,

three-dimensional jazz. Turning up the gain made the Lone Star crunch hard and clip like a thoroughbred. Jazz-fusion players and Texas blues hounds will be thrilled by the soft sizzle and wavelike bloom that flows so effortlessly from the phenomenal circuit and 1x12 Classic cab. The reverb is astonishing, too: its gorgeous dripping echo is precisely what Mesa fans have patiently waited to experience.

Channel two created an amazing range of alternate clean tones and filthy-cool punchy distortion flavors without the drive active. (Somebody tell Keith Richards that his amp is ready!) With drive switched into the circuit

and the drive control dialed up, the Lone Star displayed a high-gain mood swing worthy of a pregnant rattlesnake. With everything but the master and presence dimed, channel two delivered feedback in pitch, never stopped sustaining and never lost its definition, dynamics or touch sensitivity. Truly remarkable.

## The Bottom Line

Built for a lifetime of enjoyment and reliable operation, the Lone Star treats enthusiastic players to an absolute adventure in tone. Like Clint Eastwood in a spaghetti western, this is a well-mannered ass-kicker that blows away the competition with righteous unapologetic perfection. Angelic clean, classic inspiring overdrive, musical deep reverb and soul-melting high gain are all child's play for this Mesa. It doesn't get much better than this at any price. ■

**PRO:** Amazing dynamic and defined tone, gorgeous reverb, versatile and feature laden

**CON:** Could use more switching options on the footswitch

**KA-CHING!**  
**"PRO NET" FACTORY DISCOUNTED PRICES:** 1x12 Classic combo (as tested), \$1,599.00; 2x12 Classic combo, \$1,699.00; long or short head, \$1,499.00  
**MANUFACTURER:** Mesa/Boogie, 1317 Ross St., Petaluma, CA 94954; (707) 778-6565; mesaboogie.com

