

## **Rectoverb 50 by Mesa Boogie is one serious Guitar Amplifier.**

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I'll admit I didn't expect it. When I learned I would be reviewing a Mesa Boogie, I thought, "here we go, chainsaw guitar." Not a bad thing, after all there's nothing quite like that over-the-top, agro rage of a couple of Triple Rectifiers on eleven. But, I tend to crave that sweet, thick top end and tight, centered bottom epitomized by Alexander Dumble. So, I admit it. I'm a tone snob. Worse, I'm one of those tube snobs that judges amps with single coil pickups set on 7. Boy was I in for a surprise...

I listen and feel for a few basic things in a guitar amp. First, I want an amp that sounds good. Sure, that seems obvious, but take a trip to your local music store and walk down a row of guitar amplifiers playing a big, open G chord on each one (if they'll let you). Just listen. How many of those amps really sound good? ...especially if they are all set flat with little or no distortion and at a moderate listening level. The truth is most amps sound fine. Maybe fine is okay for most guitarists, but personally, I'd rather sound great! Let's start with the standard feature list...

### **Features**

- 50 Watts, Class A/B Power / 2x6L6, 5x12AX7
- Bias Select Switch (6L6/EL34)
- 2 Channels, 5 Modes (Channel 1=Clean or Pushed, Channel 2=Raw, Vintage High Gain or Modern High Gain)
- Independent Gain, Bass, Mid, Treble, Presence, Reverb and Master Controls per Channel
- Spring Reverb
- Output Level Control (over all channels)

- Solo Level Control
- Parallel FX Loop w/Mix Control
- Slave Out
- 3 Button Footswitch (Channel, Solo & Reverb)
- Slip Cover

**Available As:**

- Head (Width 25 3/8")
- 1x12 3/4-Back Combo w/Celestion Custom 90

**Power** Let's dispell a few myths about wattage right now. First watts don't measure audio volume, decibles do. So, when you're trying to judge whether the amp you buy will be loud enough for your band, it will be prudent to concern yourself with the "decible to watt ratio" rather than the rated wattage. Second, tube watts are not louder than solid state watts. Tube amps generally have a wider dynamic range than transistors which makes them louder, but a watt is a watt. Finally, yes the 75 watts of a light bulb or 1200 of a hair dryer are the same watt as an amp.

That stated, the Rectoverb is a 50 watt amp... and it screams! Indoors, outdoors, big stage, little club... doesn't matter. This amp is seriously loud. My test amp is the head with the 3 quarter back 2X12 cabinet (which needs to be the subject of a review in itself). The Rectoverb comes standard loaded with 6L6 power tubes. They deliver a meaty low end and all the top end sparkle you could want. Push the gain up and the amp opens up with an edgy overdrive that is thick and warm from quiet to LOUD. Crank the gain up even more (it has a very hot front end so, even metal heads won't need to max the gain) for serious grind. Even single coils get the push they need to deliver full-shred distortion. The amp sounds big and clear with any pickup configuration and on any setting.

The amp has two channels in the typical "clean/dirty" arrangement. Both channels can be voiced from to dirty. The clean channel is thick and chimes with rich overtones and all the headroom you could need. It has a switch which allows you to "push" the gain for a bluesy overdrive. Crank the gain and it really rocks. The "dirty" channel can be set from clean to metal and delivers to warmest, thickest lead tone I've ever played with. Turn your guitar up to 10 and it rock with a pure, overdriven lead tone you can't help but love. Back you guitar volume off a bit and it cleans up for rhythm without going thin. For most of my gigs, the amp would be fine with just this channel.

**Reverb** The spring reverb tank is perfectly matched to the amp. It's my understanding that the Mesa/Boogie Solo 50 is basically the same amp without the reverb. I can't imagine not having the reverb.

**Solo** A unique feature the Boogie guys are putting into most amps now is the footswitchable "solo" control. This allows you to preset a boost level for the overall volume of the amp which can be engaged using the "solo" button on the standard footswitch. Very convenient when you need it and in a sense, gives the functionality of a four channel amp.

**On the Gig** The reality is that a guitar amplifier that looks good on paper and sounds great in the store doesn't necessarily work as expected in a band. One of the problems is that frequency overtones from the bass and other instruments can collide with the guitar's fundamentals out of phase and cause phase cancellation problems (called "comb filtering") at certain points in the room. Regardless of what it's called, we're all familiar with the result. You turn your amp up to ear splitting levels but you can't seem to punch through the band.

The Rectoverb gets out front when you need it to be there without making ears bleed (unless you want that). Speaker choice has a lot to do with that (this one's a 3-quarter back 2X12), but the major component is that the Rectoverb is an incredibly dynamic and harmonically rich amplifier. It doesn't have the tendency squash out you attack (called "sag") unless you want it to and also, being so frequency rich, comb filtering is less of an issue.

But, how's it sound? The short answer is GREAT! I took it straight to a cover gig, no rehearsal or anything. I rolled out the footswitch, dialed in my clean sound, my dirty sound and solo level which basically meant setting everything flat with a little boost in the highs. Then, added a Boss delay and a Boss chorus pedal. For four sets, I played everything from Reggae to Stones covers and never once stepped on a pedal. By the fourth set, I had yanked out the pedals so they wouldn't buffer my signal. All of my sounds, clean to screaming solos, came from the same channel and the same settings on the amp! There are very few amps out there that let you back down the volume knob on your guitar without the bottom dropping out of your sound. The Recto just cleans up. It stays thick and warm, just cleaner. For solos, simply dime the volume. You'll be right out front with a tone that takes charge. I NEVER expected this from, of all things, a Boogie! You have got to try this amp!

**Conclusion** I bought one. You won't find a better sounding amp for rock, funk, fusion, jazz and probably country. Metal-Heads will love it, too. This one will be replacing a Rivera S120 (sorry Paul) which has kept me ignoring Mesa/Boogie for years. Try it...

# Mesa/Boogie Rectoverb 50 Guitar Amplifier - User Reviews

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**Great AMP...I wish it had a dedicated RECORD output though!**

Garry Myers <[g.myerz@verizo.net](mailto:g.myerz@verizo.net)>

Camarillo, CA USA - Thursday, June 05, 2003 at 15:25:53 (PDT)

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**Awesome amp...i have the 50 watt combo and it rules..best amp i ever had.. i have the old model with the tiny spring reverb... bad reverb.. well..non-existant.. but otherwise, it's the Rolls Royce of amplifiers...**

MrKlep <[milgs@travel-net.com](mailto:milgs@travel-net.com)>

ottawa, on canada - Tuesday, May 20, 2003 at 13:54:08 (PDT)

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**This amp is the best piece of gear I have purchased since 1979, when I started playing out.This amp is the cat's ass, any tone you want, it's there. Don't settle for less! I tryed the F series, and it doesn't hold a candle to this!**

Bud G. <[Budg@core.com](mailto:Budg@core.com)>

Traverse City, Mi USA - Friday, May 09, 2003 at 19:37:42 (PDT)

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**Just bought mine yesterday. It's been almost 35 years since I've had a tube amp. Why in the world did I wait this long?!? I'm gonna do my best to O.D. on TONE!!**

Jim Rowan

Cumberland, MD USA - Monday, November 18, 2002 at 13:19:22 (PST)

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**I agree with Luke that the Rectoverb is a great amp. I have the head and a 2X12 3 quarter back**

**Boogie cab factory wired to 4ohms. I begged Alex Dumble to build me an amp but he wouldn't. So, the Recto is right on track for that tone. I don't feel that the reverb is bad at all but, again, I have the head so maybe it's a different tank in mine. All in all, I've played through everything over the years; Rivera, Demeter, you name it, and love the Rectoverb. I've had it since they came out, maybe 5 years by now and I'm not changing anytime soon.**

Todd

San Francisco, CA USA - Tuesday, September 03, 2002 at 13:34:22 (PDT)

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**I got my Rectoverb 50 Combo in 1999 or so. I run it loud, into a jenkins cab with webervst spkrs. the reverb in the older Rectverb combos are peices of junk. its a little tiny 3 springer in side the amp chassis. it really sounded like crap so i pulled it out. hopefully boogie puts the floor mounted big spring reverbs now. check yours to see. anyway this amp is very very good, thats my only bitch about it. if you want an amp that will give dumbleish (no joke) tone for about a grand get one. be sure to use more than one speaker though.**

Luke Cutchen <[luke101978@yahoo.com](mailto:luke101978@yahoo.com)>

victoria, tx USA - Monday, September 02, 2002 at 11:55:06 (PDT)

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**GREAT AMP!!!**

Joe

Reno, NV USA - Monday, June 03, 2002 at 08:38:57 (PDT)

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