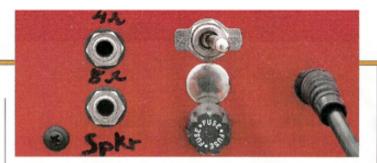


factor in its exposed tubes. On top is a blue "pilot light" and a robust-looking output transformer. The amp is housed in a cast-aluminum Hammond chassis, which beyond looking cool, has the added bonus of shielding it from RF interference.

Amps with octal preamp tubes do sound and react differently than amps with their progeny. Octals went by the wayside after their smaller/9-pin friends came along and offered not only more gain, but occupied less space on a circuit board. In terms of tone, octals offer lower gain and a stronger fundamental/more linear tone with less "fluff."

Using a PRS Swamp Ash Special with stock humbuckers, the Red Iron plugged into a 4x12" cabinet with Celestions offered a pure, raw clean tone. Labeling it "hi-fi" or it "low-fi" would be difficult, but as its Volume knob is rolled up, the amp very gradually becomes more aggressive, as its lone 6V6 is pushed ever harder. Fully cranked, the 5-Watter retains its fundamental tone, but layers a smooth, overdriven overtone. Plugging in a Fender Telecaster doesn't provide the same drive



without a pedal, but its single-coil shines nonetheless.

An open-back Celestion Goldloaded 1x12" naturally produced less low-end, but gave back some of the airiness (or "fluff") missing from the closed 4x12. With the Telecaster, you don't necessarily feel the need for a Tone control – kudos to Sanchez for doing an extraordinary job voicing this amp.

The 5-Watter is not just another entry into the very crowded "Ten Watt Or Less" boutique-amp club. It offers singular tone, hand-wired touches, top-of-the-line construction, and a fetching package that'll get you either noticed or arrested! – Zac Childs