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Musicians seeking purity of sound and uniqueness of design find both in RedIron Amps built by Paul Sanchez. [View photo gallery.](#) Photos by Phil Houseal

Details:

Find out more about Paul Sanchez and his RedIron Amps at www.redironamps.com, 512-801-2993.

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RedIron Amps: Echoes of eternity

by Phil Houseal
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It sounds like a joke: what do you get when you cross an electronic tube with a mesquite tree?

That is exactly what Paul R. Sanchez did to create his RedIron custom guitar amplifiers. They are no joke; they are one serious amp.

No question the amps catch your attention. Especially when you stumble upon them while strolling through the annual Mesquite Fest on MarktPlatz. Amid the mantel pieces, coffee tables, wooden bowls and polished pens, someone plays guitar through an amp made of wood - highly polished mesquite, defiantly displaying gnarled edges, bug runs, and knotholes.

The first thought is "why would anyone do this," followed quickly by "why didn't someone think of this sooner?"

"I love building tube amps," answered Sanchez, the talented craftsman behind these wired wooden works of art. When he was 15, he came across an RCA tube manual. Its instructions on how to put amps and tubes together to make an amplifier opened a new world to the young musician. But then came a few years of "life's hard knocks." Sanchez set aside his hobby, only to rediscover it about 15 years ago when he came across another 1950s manual.

"That sparked me back to life, so I decided to start pursuing it again," he explained.

Sanchez used his electronics training from the military to get a job with an amplifier manufacturer in Pflugerville. When the business relocated, Sanchez decided to try to make a go of it on his own. He haunted flea markets, digging up old electronics components, fixing them up and selling them online.

He had his *eureka* moment when he realized he could combine his real love of building amps with his other love of working with wood.

The result is a piece of equipment that is striking in appearance and pure of sound.

at least two weeks in advance.

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Each amp is a custom order, hand built one at a time. Sanchez begins with a chassis of Purlin, an extremely durable metal that he powder coats in red (hence the company name RedIron).

He installs the electronic components, then applies the wood work, leaving slots in the top to show off the tubes and transformers. The face sports just three knobs: one for volume, treble, and bass.

"Simpler is better," he said. "I'm after purity of tone. The more things you put in the signal chain, the more obstacles."

For the enclosure, Sanchez thinks outside the box - literally. His is trapezoid shaped, with each side angled slightly.

"Speakers don't like parallel surfaces," he explained. "They cancel the sound."

While Sanchez has had good feedback at music industry shows in New York and Los Angeles, he is content building his amps for people closer to home.

"I am building for guys like you and me... guys who used to play 20 years ago and still have that love in our hearts for it," he explained. "We might have a family and can't do that stuff any more, but I have back room where I can sit and pick and grin to my heart's content."

Speaking of family, Sanchez notes that women come by and smile and tell him, "I would have that in my living room." Ah... the amp as furniture. Who decided amps had to be ugly and black?

No matter how nice they look, Sanchez is more obsessed with tonality and dynamics. Only tubes give that sound.

"I want the amp to talk back to you, then inspire you to play," he said. "If you have 10 people that speak with the same voice, it's going to get boring. But if you have an authentic voice, then you are going to stand out in a crowd. That's what I'm looking for."

And that is what his customers find in a RedIron amp, which retail for around \$2500.

"The thing people tell me most often? They hear eternity in it," he said, nodding and pointing his finger heavenward. "At first I just put these together. You couldn't stop me from building them now."

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