



Vintage Guitar[®] Gear Reviews

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SHAW AUDIO TONE ROD SE

Price: \$849

Contact: shawaudio.com.

sonically, which the Tone Rod SE does. Can you say “hot rod”? Being fed by a dual-humbucker solidbody, the Tone Rod SE is ready to run; the pristine aesthetic of the Tone Rod hides a ravenous beast, like a street “sleeper” grandma car with a tricked out 454 LS6 under the hood.

Regardless of the instrument plugged in, the Tone Rod SE is *not* an amp for the faint at heart. Though it cleans up relatively well, this little dude has aggression issues – in a good way. It goes from cleanliness to crunchy in short order. Nudging the Volume to 12 o’clock or better, the Tone Rod SE opens up when pushed and has a super-cool crunchiness and warm overdrive – think ZZ Top’s First album or early Zeppelin, and you’re on the right track, especially if you plug in a Les Paul.

Beyond its oodles of lovely crunchiness, the amp responds with external drive devices. Hitting the front end with a mid-gain overdrive can make for exceptionally hip distortion. The mix of the Tone Rod’s natural crunch blends so well with the outboard drive it’s nearly seamless, and lends the illusion what you’re hearing is actually just the amp. Few amps interact this well with pedals.

Given its quality and the fact this is a boutique amp, it’s amazing that the price falls under a grand; Shaw is conscious of players’ needs as musicians, and conscientious in regard to their bank accounts.

The Tone Rod SE is a well-tuned machine. Mothers, hide the kids and clear the streets. There’s a hot rod a comin’! – **Sean O’Brian Smith VG**

Sleeping Giant

The Shaw Audio Tone Rod SE

Amp builder Kevin Shaw has a couple of distinct, yet somewhat intertwining loves – guitar tone and hot rods. Shaw restores classic cars, which requires a penchant for design detail and a knack for hand-on work. Both benefit guitarists who plug into his Tone Rod SE.

A single-ended head that takes the spirit of a Fender Champ or Gibson Skylark and runs with it, the Tone

Rod SE is a 12-watt Class A amp with a single input, individual Volume and Tone controls, solidstate rectifier, and a 10-pound audiophile-quality power transformer, all housed in an expertly crafted cabinet that exhibits a high level of craftsmanship. And while most amps in the modern (and crowded) “low-watt” market utilize a two-tube layout, the Tone Rod SE breaks from the pack by using two 6V6 tubes in its

power section, increasing its headroom to the point of eliminating any concern the amp might not be heard in a full-band setting.

Though relatively simple in design, Shaw’s amps are extremely tidy and tightly constructed. The cleanliness of its interior is impressive; there are no jumbled wires or mish mash.

Of course, a neat layout doesn’t mean a hill of beans if an amp can’t deliver,