

Wrecky 35

Housed in a stylish case made of sublime highly flamed maple this tiny gadget offers a great diversity of superior guitar tones hardly imaginable when considering its modest appearance and the use of only five potentiometers and a single 3-way toggle switch.

Contrary to all my other creations the design and circuit of this amplifier is not my own brainchild but a tribute to the late and great Ken Fisher who tragically succumbed to his fatal illness way too early in his life.

However, this amplifier is not another clone like many others being offered but a true tribute to the now legendary TRAINWRECK EXPRESS AMP by Mr. Ken Fisher, who has built approximately a mere seventy units extending over several years if not decades delivered to his customers with lead times up to four years due to his illness and inability to work on his amps. As a consequence, these amps cost in excess of fifty grand or even more on the second-hand market!

There are numerous schematics and layouts of the original Express design floating around the worldwide web consequently leading to this amplifier being one of the most popular DIY-projects of hobbyists around the globe rivaled in popularity only by the likewise legendary Dumble Overdrive Special. However, all of the schematics available to the public are not completely faithful to Ken's original design.

Those who may wonder why I boldly step forward and call my version a tribute rather than a mere clone must know that this statement is based on the fortunate coincidence of getting in touch with an individual who not only owns one but two of these legendary amplifiers and who was kind enough to send me countless hi-resolution pictures of the amp's guts and shared even more precious knowledge virtually unobtainable to the public.

The manufacturer of Ken's own transformers agreed in crafting several sets of trannies matching the exact specifications of the original Trainwreck specimen meaning that the heart and soul of any tube amplifier (the transformers that is) is virtually identical to Ken's own versions. Moreover, the tube complement comprises a set of those tubes originally preferred by Ken (NOS Tungstram ECC83 preamp tubes and NOS RFT EL34 power tubes)! All in all, I guarantee a perfect replication of the tone that otherwise can only be obtained by a real Trainwreck amplifier.

But be warned, this amp is not for those who are so used to getting their tones from channel-switching amplifiers no longer being able to use the guitar's volume control in order to obtain many tonal variations just like the ancestors of electric guitar playing did back in the day. On the other hand, this amp might be a dream for those who have preserved this somewhat forgotten art. They will be able to conjure up anything from several shades of clean to serious crunch to searing overdrive just by correctly dialing in their guitar's volume control. There is no need for channel switching or foot controllers of any kind when using a "Wrecky 35". By the way, you won't need any kind of "treble bleed" circuit in your guitar either. It all works without one due to the amp's shining but never obtrusive and always perfectly balanced treble. There is probably no second amp offering this kind of touch sensitivity reacting to even the subtlest movement of the volume control and slightest variation in pick attack.

The amplifier's fundamental tone is very woody and unmistakably "British" when using a set of EL34 tubes. But it simply requires re-biasing the circuit (using the internal adjustment pot) in order to enjoy the bluesy sweetness of 6V6 valves. This way, the amp's output comes down from a stout 35 watts to 20 watts probably being even more akin to the blues player's taste.

Posthumously, I would like to express my deepest respect and sincere gratitude to Mr. Ken Fisher for providing us with his rather simple but nevertheless ingenious concept in circuitry true to the slogan "As many components as necessary but as few as possible!"

I sincerely hope that my "Wrecky 35" lives up to Ken's legacy. Unfortunately, I cannot ask for permission in paying tribute to him by offering my own Trainwreck-style amplifier but I strongly believe that Ken has a smile on his face and takes a little pride in his own work when he is looking down on my tribute amplifier from somewhere high above.

Larry