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SOME LIKE IT HOT

Allen Amplification Hot Blond 1x15 Combo

In the story of the Fender amp – after the tweedy pre-Army Elvis and before the black-face Deluxe British blues invasion – there appeared the blond, as Leo Fender transitioned his line cosmetically and sonically from righteous crunch to a sophisticated high-fidelity tone suitable for Camelot after midnight – warm and aggressive but in a cool, blond package.

Fender's blond 0early-'60s amps (most notably the piggyback Showman and Bassman) became integral to the driving, percussive sound of surf music (think Dick Dale and "Misirlou") that echoed, quite literally, across the world and influenced

countless others, including James Burton, the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, and Brian Setzer.

David Allen has come out with his take on the 1963 blond Bassman 6G6 circuit, and it faithfully reproduces the warm character of those big, busty blonds of the early 1960s. The Hot Blond sports a huge output transformer (would you expect anything less?) that yields the cleanest headroom possible out of a bodacious pair of 5881 power tubes (equivalent to 6L6GB tubes). The circuit also employs a plug-in solidstate rectifier and a high B+ voltage to keep this 40-watt amp clean even when cranked.

For those looking for less volume over

the range of available gain, Allen offers the option of an installed tube rectifier and the convenience of adjustable bias to set up the amp for 6V6 power tubes and 22 watts with either an 8- or 16-ohm speaker load.

Unlike the original blond Bassman, the Hot Blond features a built-in spring reverb to reach for that Dick Dale tone. Some reverb circuits can be a bit "flubbery" compared to better outboard effects, but Allen's reverb is solid, even at a slurpy 10. This may be due in part to Allen's "RAW" control, which acts as a cross between a mid-boost and gain-boost by "unscooping" the mids and flattening the EQ. With the "RAW" turned down, the normal tone pots (treble, middle, and bass) function as you would expect; as the RAW is turned up, the tone stack is essentially overridden and the Hot Blond begins to take on a bit of "tweed" character, operating as if it has a single tone control. While it takes a bit of getting used to, the RAW control is a nice feature that adds flexibility.

While we loved what the Hot Blond does to Les Pauls and Strats, this baby absolutely rocks a Gretsch or Tele. A Country Gentleman, strung with round-wounds, rendered a punchy, percussive tone that immediately reminded us of Brian Setzer's guitar in "Stray Cat Strut" (especially with some slap-back delay in front). And the Hot Blond produces a warm clarity when chicken pickin' a Telecaster. The crunchy tones achieved with various OD pedals were pleasing, too. It's an extraordinarily versatile amp.

The Hot Blond sports top-quality components throughout, including a stainless-steel chassis, glass epoxy eyelet board, Switchcraft jacks, and Carling switches. The pine cabinet is finger-jointed and covered in blond/wheat tolex with cream barrel knobs. The construction and soldering are impeccable. Grille cloth is available in gold or oxblood and the amp comes with a fitted cover. This cool blond is also available as a head and as a 1x12 or 2x10 combo. The amp tested came with a 15" Eminence Legend 1518 8-ohm ceramic magnet speaker, which does not compress as much as an alnico speaker and provides a firm low-mid – which, of course, is what you always hope for in a Hot Blond. –**Ray Wuolo VG**



Price: \$1,899 (list)
Info: allenamps.com