



## Naked Launch

**Satellite Amplifiers Neutron**

PHOTOGRAPH BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

**EXHIBITING A SIMPLICITY** of design and presentation that few amp builders have the discipline or confidence to embrace, Satellite Amplifiers of San Diego provides just two controls on its range of heads and combos: volume and tone. And that's more than enough for the professional guitarists who are discovering this brand, including members of Social Distortion, Supersuckers, and Willie Nelson's band.

Satellite offers burly, high-powered heads and combos as well, but we opted to test the more manageable 18-watt Neutron head with a 2x10 cabinet loaded with Celestion Greenback speakers. The amp is covered in a

handsome matte midnight-blue tolex (other standard and sparkle colors are available), and it sports sturdy and clean turret-board construction, Mercury Magnetics transformers, Sprague filters, Mallory decoupling caps, and other premium components.

Tested with a Nash S-57 Strat-style guitar loaded with Lollar pickups, the Neutron boasted a flattering and slightly spongy snap that was touch responsive and capable of great subtlety. The amp retained a distinctly midcentury Californian flavor, especially in the upper and high midrange. Plugging a 1968 Les Paul Custom into the front of the Satellite produced Hiwatt-like "on-the-verge" sounds and, when the amp was dimmed, overdrive reminiscent of Ron Wood's much celebrated Faces tone. Knob twiddlers should look elsewhere, but if straight-up tone and a spartan user interface fall within the orbit of your taste, this boutique bruiser should not be overlooked. **GA**

Head, \$1,450; 2x10 cabinet, \$300  
 Satellite Amplifiers, [satelliteamps.com](http://satelliteamps.com)



## FLOYD UPGRADES ACOUSTIC BRIDGE PINS

Adam Reiver and his Floyd Upgrades are well known to electric axmen looking to squeeze the last bit of tone from their tremolo-equipped guitars by replacing key parts with precision-engineered titanium and brass components. But the world of acoustic guitarists will soon be no stranger to Reiver's products. His new titanium and bronze bridge pins may cost a pretty penny compared to their plastic and wood counterparts, but what they yield in tone, clarity, and sustain make them well worth the price.

\$99 per set  
 Floyd Upgrades, [floydupgrades.com](http://floydupgrades.com)



## WAMPLER PEDALS PINNACLE DISTORTION

The Pinnacle Distortion boasts that it can summon the sizzle, nuance, and character of Edward Van Halen's classic "brown sound." In fact, the pedal achieves an eerily close facsimile of the tone that helped make "Eruption" and "Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love" such beloved guitar standards.

\$199.97  
 Wampler Pedals, [wamplerpedals.com](http://wamplerpedals.com)