

## Buying an Electric Guitar Amp

There is an ongoing argument among guitarists over the relative importance of a good guitar as opposed to a good guitar amp. It simply comes down to money. Not every one can buy the exact gear that they want so often it is a trade off. I am a believer in spending a bit more time and money on getting a good amp but many players I know and respect think the opposite. On that note I think it is best to try out as many different amp and guitar combinations within your price range as you can.

Remember a bad amp can make a good guitar sound bad and a good amp can make a bad guitar sound good. For this reason it is important not to neglect you amp when you are guitar shopping. For this reason I decided to write you a basic introduction this week to amps so you could at least know the basics.

There are basically four different types of guitar amplifiers: tube, analog (solid state), digital and hybrids. This article will give brief description of the different types of amps out there.

### Tube Amplifiers

The first amps ever made were tube amps and many players still prefer them over analogue or digital amps. The reason for this is that tube amps have a fat warm tone that many guitarists find natural. Also tube amps are generally louder than analog or digital amps with the same wattage. (There aren't many among us who don't like having more power on stage.)

Most tube amps have separate channels for distortion and clean sounds. The distortion in tube amps is generally made by overdriving the preamp. There are two major draw backs with tube amps: one is that tubes are made of glass and can be broken easily if you don't treat your amp properly, also tubes wear out and need to be replaced periodically.

### Solid State (analog) amplifiers

The reason that these types of amps are called 'solid state' is that they use transistors in their pre and power amps instead of tubes. The main problem with solid state is that they can often sound brittle and harsh. This is particularly the case with their distortion channels. The quality of the distortion on solid state amps can vary wildly and it is something you should defiantly check when you are looking at a solid state amp.

Solid state amps are very reliable, inexpensive and they don't have any pesky tubes to replace and for these reasons they remain popular with some guitarists.

### Digital (Modeling) amplifiers

Modeling amps use digital processors so that the amp can mimic many other amp sounds. They can copy sounds from old or new style tube amps using onboard software. These types of amps are quite popular at this time and will only become more popular as they improve in

quality and become cheaper. Some of these amps are better in quality than others, for those at the top of the range most guitarists will not be able to hear the difference between them and the real thing.

#### Hybrid amplifiers

Some guitar manufactures have come out with amps that combine a tube preamp and a solid state power amp. The most well known of these is the Marshall Valvestate Series of amps. These amps are a cheap way of getting a tube sound if you are on a budget.

#### Buying an amp

The best way to buy an amp is to shop around. Take your electric guitar (if you have one) into a few stores and try out a few different amps. Try amps from different price ranges to see if you can hear any difference. I also recommend that you take a more experienced guitarist with you. Listen to their advice and try out as many amps as you can. Try playing the amp at different volumes to see if it responds well. Check all the different channels to make sure it sounds cool both clean and distorted. Take your time buying an amp. If you choose wisely and you can get a piece of equipment that will make you sound better and should last you a long time.

Ben Edwards