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From:	jeff (jrtoor@aol.com)
Date:	2/8/2002 5:53 AM
Subject:	Trainwreck

There is an Express on e-bay.... It says that if you're in the New Jersey area that anyone can go check it out. Please, somebody get over there and ask to take it apart..... answer this question of what makes a 'Wreck a 'Wreck.

We all want to know. It doesn't make sense to keep it such a secret any longer. Ken is not making amps any longer and when I talked with him over the phone about a year ago it didn't seem like he was going to start again. Also, as we all know he's not a psycho-goo covering man "don't open my amps" like Dumble, he's helpful and friendly.

Jeff

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From:	Greg (MusicWard@aol.com)
Date:	2/8/2002 6:25 AM
Subject:	Re: Trainwreck

Why dont you do it yourself Jeff?

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From:	jaysg (jayfbv@yahoo.com)
Date:	2/8/2002 6:35 AM
Subject:	Re: Trainwreck

We all want to know.

True enough...that sound clip of Mississippi Queen is still giving me shivers.

It doesn't make sense to keep it such a secret any longer. Ken is not making amps any longer and when I talked with him over the phone about a year ago it didn't seem like he was going to start again. Also, as we all know he's not a psycho-goo covering man "don't open my amps" like Dumble, he's helpful and friendly.

So you're arguing that hogy's komet is more of a distant cousin since it's higher powered and meant to be a more balanced product? Tricky ethics, morality, et al. Maybe someone can ask Ken & Hogy?

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From:	Morris Mitchell (mitchellm@gosaints.org)
Date:	2/8/2002 3:38 PM
Subject:	The Express and the Komet are different.

The amps are different in many ways, although the basic topology is similar. Here are some big differences that I know of:

Komet->choke, Express->no choke
Komet->60W, Express->around 40W
Komet->cut control, Express->no cut control

The wattage difference is most likely the result of lower plate voltages and a higher OT primary impedance in the Express. I think the Express has an OT with a 6600-ohm primary, which is almost twice what you would find in a standard Marshall EL34 amp. I'm not sure about the OT primary in the Komet, although I doubt it could produce 60W with EL34's and an OT with a 6600-ohm primary.

Hope this helps.

Morris

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From:	Rich (richard.prokup@grubb-ellis.com)		
Date:	2/8/2002 10:01 PM		
Subject:	Re: what is fair game?		

Just curious, what is considered fair game for cloning? Are people backing off of Ken's designs because he is a good guy or because there is a code about only cloning amps not currently in production?

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From:	John Kelley Brown (ledboots@attbi.com)		
Date:	2/8/2002 11:36 PM		
Subject:	Re: what is fair game?		

I just think it's good to respect someone's wishes, especially someone who's contributed as much to tone and is as helpful to the homebrewer as Ken Fischer. If Ken doesn't want the details revealed about the Express then I can respect that.

That said, considering that he no longer makes the Express and therefore a homebrewer cloning it would not cut into his income, I'm surprised that he would be protective of the design. Maybe he intends to someday have someone produce them like Hogy does the Komet. Rumor is Hogy is going to start making Ken's Rocket so there is precedent, who knows, the Express could be next.

The feeling I got from the long conversation I had with him, and I agree with this, is that we should be coming out with our own designs, he's more than happy to spend hours talking on the phone helping the budding amp maker with every minutia that could help the amp sound as good as possible. At one time I wanted to clone an Express, but after a 2.5 hour conversation with him I was all fired up to go off in my own direction. And you know, I bet more homebrewers have learned more about amp design and tone from trying to get their Express clone to sound good than they ever would if there was an exact schematic with all transformer and component specs.

Kelley

START NEW THREAD	REPLY	PREVIOUS	LIST
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From:	Steve F. (steve@small-pond.com)		
Date:	2/9/2002 5:25 AM		
Subject:	Re: what is fair game?		

I do not know Ken Fischer nor have I ever spoken with him - also have never played through a Trainwreck amp. But having said that....

It could also be that he feels some responsibility to those who own the Express to do what he can to preserve the uniqueness of the amp. I know I would, if I were in his place. Part of the appeal of owning a hand-built amp (or anything else) is to have something of the highest quality that is not easy to duplicate.

I don't think his attitude, as I understand it from what others have said after speaking with him, is all that unusual among accomplished people in many fields - lots of writers, for example, are happy to talk writing with anyone in the interest of improving the state of the craft, but still don't appreciate having their ideas appropriated for someone else's work.

regards,
Steve F.

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From:	hogy		
Date:	2/9/2002 3:22 PM		
Subject:	Re: what is fair game?		

John Kelley Brown wrote:

"Maybe he intends to someday have someone produce them like Hogy does the Komet. Rumor is Hogy is going to start making Ken's Rocket so there is precedent, who knows, the Express could be next."

Sorry John, but that rumor is not based on truth.

For what it's worth, Ken considers the Rocket, Liverpool, and Express to be "obsolete designs". Those amps were designed around tubes and speakers which, for practical purposes, are no longer available. If you own an Express, I'm sure you'll make sure you'll spend a few grand on a lifetime supply of the correct tubes, but for a production amp, that's nonsense.

Ken doesn't like the idea of modifying his old circuits to work with current production tubes, as it results in a "watered down" version of the real thing.

Currently Ken is working on a new amp design that might at some point become the next Komet amp model. It will be based on modern tubes and speakers. The clean sound should be similar to the old Rocket, but with more of a lead sound available as well. That was mentioned on another board, and it's probably what started the rumor.

Hogy

START NEW THREAD	REPLY	PREVIOUS	LIST
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From:	dutch (pylot@aztec.asu.edu)		
Date:	2/9/2002 6:07 PM		
Subject:	Re: what is fair game?		

after a 2.5 hour conversation with him I was all fired up to go off in my own direction. And you know, I bet more homebrewers have learned more about amp design and tone from trying to get their Express clone to sound good than they ever would if there was an exact schematic with all transformer and component specs.

Kelly--

You just hit the nail on the the head for me here.... I've been lurking on these Trainwreck threads, and reading Mook's and (via the quotes) Dave Funk's hints, and I put some of the info into my modded piggyback Bassman head to **great** effect. It has a 2204 Marshall topology (three gain stages then EQ & master volume) with tweaked values in one of its two channels and the other channel is quite similar to the clean channel of Bogner's Fish preamp.

Step 1: The first thing I did was to put all 3 gain stages of the overdrive channel on the same filter cap node (which they share with the clean channel). This made a huge difference in the "feel" and sustain of the thing and a small improvement in low end. So, I guess that bit (the one about

the current gyrations of the first and third gain stages outweighing those of the second and getting a tad of positive feedback happening through the power supply), is true.

Step 2: I replaced the 22- μ F cap for the preamp with a 15 μ F cap. This hugeley increased the low end response of the overdrive channel, and added a bit of "bounce" and "swirl" to both. It also changed the nature of the overdrive channel's overdrive slightly, making it sustain, feed back, and sing *very* easily on the same preamp gain setting (4) that used to just sound like a "cranked" amp, even with the volume set to reasonable levels (like small-gig or rehearsal level). Now it really does sound and feel "cranked", with all the "bounce", sustain, and feel I could want in a real nice 50W plexi

cranked to 11! Suddenly I found myself playing the intro to "Barracuda".... 🎸 It cleans up great via the guitar volume control, too, giving nice Hendrix/Trower "dirty-clean" sounds. "Wind Cries Mary" never sounded so good on this amp!

Step 3: Changed the FX loop stage's filter cap from 22 μ F to 15 μ F. This tamed the overdrive channel's low end a tad, but gave the clean channel a bit more "bounce" and bottom.

Step 4: Changed the PI filter cap from 22 μ F to 15 μ F. This didn't do anything that I can adequately describe, but it sounds and feels better than with the 22 μ F in there. The clean channel got more from this than the overdrive channel did.

Step 5: Changed the power tube screen supply cap from 22 μ F to 15 μ F. It immediately took life and power away from the amp. 😞 The 22 μ F cap went right back in. 😊

Step 6: Changed the two 100 μ F caps in the power tube plate supply to 68 μ F. This improved "bounce" and "feel" a bit, at the cost of introducing a smidgen of 120Hz noise and losing some of the subharmonic intermodulation rumble you get when you play a couple of low notes together. It sounds more "focused" now than before.

So, all this talk about Trainwrecks has led me to some really productive tweaks to my hopped up Bassman. I hope that my descriptions help someone else find out how to get what they want out of an amp, even if it's what to avoid doing.... 🎸

C ya,
Dutch

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From:	MBSetzer (QualityAna@aol.com)		
Date:	2/8/2002 11:26 PM		
Subject:	Re: what is fair game?		

I think fair game for cloning is something that can be duplicated just by assembling the components without listening tests until after you are done, and even then only if you are not going to change anything regardless of the outcome of the listening tests.

Anything else, why waste your time, it won't even be close to a clone of the tone even if it uses the exact same components.

JMHO,
Mike

START NEW THREAD	REPLY	PREVIOUS	LIST
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From:	dpcoyle (dcoyle@nm.net)		
Date:	2/9/2002 3:51 AM		
Subject:	Re: what is fair game?		

I take MB to be speaking of what is worth cloning. More interesting to me are the ethics. I have trouble resolving them.

If someone creates something they have the right to control it, be it a song or a device, IMO.

Leave aside the crap that is patented because of a failure of the patent office to hire people that are familiar with prior art and the ludicrously corrupt patenting of human genes, (excuse me, I AM the prior art), I believe in the concept of intellectual property.

OK, that said, I own a VHS machine that allows recording, and the distinction between me and a pirate is that I don't resell it. Of course, I don't buy a pre recorded video either.

(My guess is that most ampagers are members of the statistically tiny set of people who are not buying a Komet because they figure they could build something like it themselves.)

If Carl Z or Ken F or Alexander D or Rudy Gelder or Colnel Sanders doesn't want to tell us how they do it, that's their proprietary right. If it is not patented, they don't have the ability to keep you from using, so they have to hide it.

Some folks, like Ken F or Carl are willing to help others, so it's particularly cold to take the knowledge he has developed and that he is making a living on and disseminate it so some big smuck can patent it.

That said, I am eager to know how to get an amp to sound like Ken does. It's the same reason I started playing or working on amps. I want to make that noise myself. I'll try to figure it out from hints or anything else.

It is a little like I want to see your wife naked, but I don't want you to see my wife naked. I want to see/learn what other people are doing but I respect their right to keep me out.

Dan

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From:	Ross M. (ross1201@crosstel.net)		
Date:	2/9/2002 7:15 AM		
Subject:	Re: what is fair game?		

Hey stay away from my wife! 😊

I didn't even realize he didn't want his ideas copied, I guess that was my own oversight. If he wants it that way, I can see how it would be for the best. If all ampagers got together and talked about building "the" amp for a few hours, then went off in separate directions and did it, you would have many creative and different designs, rather than many clones of one amp that sound relatively alike. I think I've changed my views on this somewhat because of reading about the guy though. I wish I knew how to contact him, but I wouldn't want to pester a man who is so ill right now into talking to someone who knows relatively little about amplification.

START NEW THREAD	REPLY	PREVIOUS	LIST
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From:	Steve A. (steve_ahola@yahoo.com)		
Date:	2/9/2002 8:08 AM		
Subject:	Re: what is fair game?		

Mike:

Anything else, why waste your time, it won't even be close to a clone of the tone even if it uses the exact same components.

If you start with a time-tested recipe for almost anything, there is a good chance that with you will eventually come up with something pretty good, even if it doesn't resemble the original once you've fine-tuned the design a bit.

I like working out arrangements of good songs... my timing and rhythm is usually nothing like the original but with a decent structure to copy I often end up with something that has a lot of harmonic movement to it (especially compared to my own mindless noodlings!)

I got an email once from a guy who wanted to know where he could buy the transformers needed to build a clone of a Peavey Classic 30... I never could understand how someone would want to **build** a Classic 30. If you are going to all of the trouble to build an amp from scratch why not start off

with a killer design and see where it takes you? But its even better if you have some original ideas that you would like to try out...

--Thanks!

Steve Ahola

P.S. I suspect that most of the "clones" we've built here at AMPAGE have more differences than similarities to the originals. (Okay, lets exclude the 5E3 clones! 😊)
