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Subject: Re: Price ranges

Posted by [Thermionic](#) on Tue, 30 Mar 2010 03:38:00 GMT

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Wayne Parham wrote on Mon, 29 March 2010 11:47

Wow, excellent, interesting information. Thanks!

You're welcome! I've been playing guitar for around 30 years, and servicing guitar amps for a bit over 25. I also build custom, made-to-order guitar amps designed to a customer's specific tonal preferences. So, it would be a cryin' shame if I hadn't learned at least a little bit of Fender history by now, LOL!

Wayne Parham wrote on Mon, 29 March 2010 11:47 I knew the 1960's Twin Reverbs and the like were the cat's meow for musician friends of mine.

Blackface Twins are THE vintage amp for clean country and blues tones, as well as certain clean jazz tones. They also have an incredible tone for funky, jangly chords played on a Strat with the pickup selector set to position 4. Actually, pretty much anything you play on a Strat or Tele into a blackface twin is gonna sound good, as long as it's a clean (not overdriven) sound you're looking for. Also, Gibson ES335-type guitars + blackface Twin = killer blues tone.

Wayne Parham wrote on Mon, 29 March 2010 11:47 But I now see Fender made some lemons too. I guess that's probably true for their guitars as well.

Yep, they made some hokey guitars too, again because of the bean counters at CBS poking their noses into things they didn't understand. Fender's guitars went to pot about the same time as the amps did. Any time (1) your sole motivation is maximum profit margin without regard to quality and usefulness, and (2) you place the design of artisan products in the hands of "white-coated engineers" that cannot comprehend anything but figures on paper, the same thing will always happen.

When CBS put Fender up for sale in 1983, it was still making money but just barely. Had it not been bought in 1984 by Fender's management and some investors (who were themselves musicians and as a result musician-minded) who resurrected it from the dead, CBS would have probably had to eventually close it down.

However, even those guys made some mistakes in the name of profit, such as scrapping the nice sounding point-to-point II Series amps in favor of the not-so-great PC board red knob amps. Simply taking those same II Series circuits to PC board construction would've been much wiser than designing a new circuit that sounded worse and taking it to PC-board construction! When faced with the same dilemma of rising manufacturing cost back in '74, Marshall simply translated their existing point-to-point amp circuits to PC boards. Well, they did cut a corner, in that they eliminated a filter cap to save money. But, it was still the same circuit, more or less.

Today, Fender is still living off of what Leo Fender did in the '50s and '60s. The classic Strat and Tele platforms are still their bread and butter guitars. Practically every "modernized" variation of the them (such as the late '80s "HM Strat," designed for playing "hair metal") has largely been a commercial failure. Ditto for most of their "modern" amps designed for playing rock and metal.

You won't find one professional using their acoustic guitars, or rock/metal amps and guitars, but you'll find oodles and gobs of 'em using the classic-style stuff.

The reason is twofold. One, players just don't associate Fender with guitars and amps designed for playing modern rock and heavy metal, or with PA systems, or with acoustic guitars. They associate the name with their classic products and the classic sounds they produce. Two, there are a hundred manufacturers who do things like acoustic guitars, PA systems, and rock/metal guitars and amps better than Fender in the first place.

Fender was probably wise to preserve the classic Strat and Tele platforms and offer reissues and "mod-variants" of several of their vintage amp models (which are among the best products in their lineup), instead of trying too hard to go head-to-head against other major manufacturers in areas where they simply cannot beat them. I guess this is one of those places where "if it ain't broke, don't fix" it applies en force. The fact that these products are still top sellers today, some of them more than half a century after their introduction, is a testimony to the unique genius that was Leo Fender.

Thermionic

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