

THE SESSION CONNECTION review

Award 'Sessionmaster' Guitar Preamp



From the designer of the highly acclaimed Session guitar amplifiers comes an inexpensive, D'able guitar preamp...

Review by Paul White.

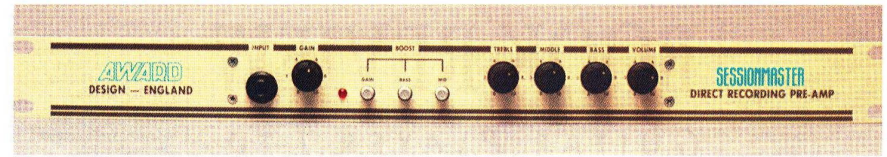
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It seems that this year, nearly every effects manufacturer has come up with a multi-effects guitar preamp, although I suspect many of us already have all the effects we need. What we could really do with is an affordable, D'able box that will give us a good, basic guitar sound to work with. By a million-to-one coincidence, this is exactly the conclusion reached by Stewart Ward who,

as well as being a connoisseur of guitar sounds, also founded the company which produced Session guitar amplifiers. I've known Stewart for a good many years now and I can't remember a time when he wasn't pottering around with some guitar circuit or other. So, when he brought me the first prototype of the Sessionmaster, I was quite eager to give it a go. After listening to my comments, and to those of ▶

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SessionMaster Direct Recording Preamps



▶ to mike up an amplifier. To this end, the Sessionmaster gives a more than reasonable range of both clean and overdriven tones, and works well in achieving those elusive, in-between sounds where so many effects pedals throw in the towel and simply splutter. It's quiet enough to use for even very serious recording projects, and the fact that it isn't bristling with programmable effects means that the cost remains sensible. It's also very easy and quick to set up once you've spent a few minutes getting to know it.

Though Stewart Ward assures me that the design uses totally new circuitry, I still feel that the sound has a kind of Sessionette smoothness and richness to it, so if you like Session amps you're almost certainly going to approve of what the Sessionmaster can do. With just a touch of reverb, what I got out of my studio monitors was very close to what I'd expect

to hear on record. I also managed to emulate quite a few classic guitar sounds, from early blues Clapton, raunchy Kinks and Stones and wailing Free, to more up-to-date Van-hooligan and mega-metal sounds. With a Strat-type guitar, you may want to try an additional overdrive pedal if you're into really overkill chain-saw sounds, but with humbuckers there's as much overdrive as any half-way sane player would ever want. And, as well as its obvious recording applications, the unfiltered output can be used into an ordinary guitar amp to produce the whole range of Sessionmaster guitar sounds live.

With guitar tone being such a subjective area, there are bound to be those who will still prefer to use their amps cranked up to breaking strain. However, it's important when evaluating units like this not to compare the sound directly with a live guitar amp, but with the kind of guitar

sounds you hear on record. After all, a recording which includes a miked up 100 Watt stack doesn't sound anything like being in the same room as that stack...

So, to sum up, the range of sounds the Sessionmaster can produce just keeps on growing as you experiment with the controls. And, given the limitations of your guitar, you can find just about every type of rock or pop guitar sound imaginable. I hope this unit does well, because it's sensibly designed to fill a real need – and without us having to buy a load of effects we either don't want, or already have.

RRP: £149.00

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"Sorry James, but it's played like this..."

