

# Award Session SP75

## GUITAR PRE-AMP

**FACT FILE**

- ORIGIN** UK
- INPUT** High Z guitar in jack
- OUTPUT** Low Z amp out jack
- EFFECTS** Two modes of distortion/PAF emulator
- POWER SUPPLY** 1 x PP3 battery or any 9-30V DC mains adaptor
- TONE CONTROLS** Treble, middle, bass EQ

**Alternatively...**

Closest to the SP75 in spirit are the SansAmp range of pre-amp effects. The SansAmp GT2 is a brilliant pedal, with a fair range of amp sounds for £149.95. Mesa Boogie's V-Twin uses real valves, but is pricier at £295. Rack-mount pre-amps start at around £400 – the Marshall JMP-1 (which we use for the TG CD) retails at £495. For those on tighter budgets, the Marshall DRP-1, at £106, also gives a good range of classic rock tones.

More than an effects pedal, the SP75 pre-amp supercharges your guitar and gives your amp a kicking. Could this be yet another item on RICHARD RILEY's credit card bill?

**A**WARD Session's SP75 is a guitar pre-amp based on the sound of the classic Sessionette:75 transistor combo. The Sessionette was a huge hit in the '70s, with artists such as Brian May and Eric Clapton opting for its smooth, bright tone and convincing valve-style warmth. The SP75 is designed to recreate the sound of this classic combo, and can be used with any guitar amp – valve or tranny. It acts as an additional set of tone and distortion controls that work before your effects pedals or amp input. It's got a low noise output to drive up to 100m of cable with little line loss, and it will also act as an impedance matcher for your other effects.

**CONTROLS**

Using the SP75 is simple – input level is controlled by the drive control, which also adds distortion to the sound. Two levels of gain can be selected with a push button; the normal setting gives a mild overdrive, while the heavy crunch setting has that familiar 'British rock amp' sound.

Next there's the Super-T tone system with treble, mid and bass controls – even further useful tonal variation comes with the PAF humbucker emulator, which boosts low mid frequencies and increases gain. Sessionette designer Stewart Ward recommends using this setting with the neck pickup on a Les Paul for classic hard blues sounds. Finally, the whole system is controlled by a master output level control.

**TG On the CD**

**TRACK 10** *Top Show* uses the SP75 in a variety of positions. First we used an Epiphone Les Paul with coupling with the SP75 on a medium setting in the left speaker. This is doubled up with a Fender Jag-Stang's humbucker spread wide over the right speaker. Next there's a Fender Strat Plus with Lace Sensor pickups with the SP75 in heavy crunch mode. Finally the Epiphone returns with the bridge pickup in heavy crunch mode with the PAF emulator.

Guitars: Richard Riley

**SESSIONETTE SOUNDS**

You'll get the best from the SP75 if you have a guitar with low-powered pickups and you regularly use a long chain of effects. In this case, it will give you a higher output and a crisp, smooth tone – plus all the extra options from the tone system. The actual sound of the SP75 itself is warm and clear with plenty of authentic valve 'zing' on the high notes. This leaves this bottom end a little thin, something that was always a problem on the original Sessionette:75, but you can boost

this with your amp.

The screen-printed legend on top of this pedal says "The Original Sessionette:75 Guitar Amp Sound". I've got a Sessionette:75 and I reckon this thing comes pretty close.

Personally, I like the sound of my old Sessionette so much that I use it as a pre-amp and monitor, and I'd use this pedal in much the same way.

It could use an extra footswitch to bring the heavy crunch distortion in – the SP75 is so useful that I'd leave the pre-amp on all the time and use the high gain distortion for solos. Apart from that it's damn near perfect.

Dead useful, instant benefits, loads of features and a good price too. **TAG**

SansAmp: 0171 723 7221  
Marshall: 01908 375411  
Mesa Boogie: 0181 450 6666

**TOTAL GUITAR VERDICT**

**Award Session SP75**

Guitar pre-amp • £79.95

Construction	4
Features	4
Playability	4
Sound	4
Value for money	5

A handy floor-based pre-amp pedal that kicks out some classic rock sounds and beefs up your amp.

**Total rating 84%**

**CONTACT**  
Award Session: 01258 477 222



**Discontinued**

# Award-Session JD20

**Price: £119** Upgraded twin channel overdrive/distortion stomp box or direct recording preamp? Jerry Donahue uses it for everything, but you decide...

**T**he JD20 started life in the mid-minuties as the rackmount Sessionmaster AW10. Tonal improvements, the change to a foot pedal design and the endorsement of Jerry Donahue produced the JD10; now we have the twin channel version, the JD20.

Essentially the JD20 is a solid-state twin-channel overdrive or distortion stompbox with more bells and whistles than any other. It can be used in front of your amp, direct to a PA or recording desk for a convincing amp'd sounds, thanks to its accurate G12T speaker simulator improved on this new version).

The JD10 featured a classic/rock button to engage more gain. On the JD20 that switch is now the additional 'heavy' footswitch - which complements the active/bypass footswitch. And to juggle levels between what is now a twin-channel unit we get an additional balance control. Joining that on the front panel are drive depth, treble, middle, bass and output level.

On the rear panel is the high-impedance jack input, the G12T speaker simulator button, a power adapter input (which accepts virtually any power source between 9V and 30V), and the multi-purpose, low-impedance jack output. You can still run the JD20 from a 9V battery but, no doubt due to lack of space, the flip-top

battery compartment is gone - you have to unscrew the four screws that hold the metal top and bottom of the chassis together to access the battery.

**Sounds good?**

Firstly we auditioned the JD20 as a direct-to-tape preamp, where it sounded beautifully natural and organic. In active mode (classic overdrive) the clean to crunchy gain responds just like a good amp to the input of different guitars, their volume settings, pickups and your pick attack. The EQ is broad and sensitive to the slightest change, which gives massive tonal variation. It helps to have some experience of amp sounds, and how to get them, but there's nothing stopping you from just being creative - easy when there are no push-buttons (except the speaker simulation) or edit menus. The midrange is broad and probably the key tone-change device. Most of a passive amp's midrange is covered in the first third of the control's travel - after that, you're into active boost territory, but unless set to extremes it avoids sounding too pushy or boxy. Heavy mode really does up the gain. On pretty much minimum, with

**The rivals**

- Visual Sound Route 66 Overdrive **£115**
- Tech 21 Tri-O.D. **£189**
- Carl Martin Crunch Drive and Rock **£79 each**

**Spec check**

**AWARD SESSION JD-20**  
**PRICE:** £119 **ORIGIN:** UK  
**TYPE:** Twin channel overdrive/distortion stomp box/direct recording preamp  
**PROGRAMMABLE:** No  
**CONTROLS:** Drive depth, Balance, Treble, Middle, Bass, Output level. **FOOTSWITCHES:** Active/Bypass, Heavy  
**CONNECTIONS:** Input, low impedance output **POWER:** 9V battery or virtually any mains adapter (positive or negative) between 9 and 30V DC **OTHER FEATURES:** Switchable G12T speaker simulation **OPTIONS:** None, apart from the fab range of Session amplification that is! **CONTACT:** Radius International 01256-477-222

Pack the JD20 in your gig bag, if your amp goes down this'll get you through.

In these days of POD and the whole new generation of direct-to-tape recording devices, the JD20 seems almost archaic. But that's only one application of the JD20. As a controllable stompbox the JD20 excels, it's simple and intuitive and as a tonal 'Mr Fix-it' nothing compares. In short this JD20 is probably one of the best kept secrets in our industry. I dare you not to find a use for it!

Dave Burrlick

**AWARD SESSION JD20**

BUILD QUALITY	●●●●●
FEATURES	●●●●○
SOUND	●●●●●
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●●
VERDICT	●●●●●

**WE LIKED** Sound, flexibility, organic feel.  
**WE DIDN'T LIKE** Lack of easy battery access, could do with a gain control for both channels.



**Discontinued**