

Magic Tone: The Wizard Modern Classic

by ZAC CHILDS

Wizard amps founder Rick St. Pierre has been the amp tech in charge of keeping AC/DC's Angus and Malcolm

Young rocking for two decades. In the early '90s he began building amps, and his latest offering is the Modern Classic.

A 100-watt head with a judicious nod to a hot-rodded vintage Marshall, the Modern Classic has a Lexan front panel with on/off and standby switches, indicator lamp, and knobs for Presence, Bass, Middle, Treble, Lead Master (with a pull boost), Lead Gain (pull to activate lead channel), indicator light for lead mode, rhythm volume (with pull boost), and High- and Low-Gain inputs. The back panel has a selector for choosing 4-, 8- and 16-ohm input, two speaker outputs, a line-out jack with its own level control, and footswitch jacks to control channel switching and boosts.

The Modern Classic's guts are made up of custom-designed **Mercury Magnetics** transformers, four EL34 output tubes, and a quartet of 12AX7s. There's also military-spec turret board wiring, done by hand. The matching black Tolex-covered 4x12 cab with basket weave grill cloth is made of birch plywood and has Wizard's proprietary Rock 20 ceramic-magnet speakers. It plugs in via a standard 1/4" speaker jack and there's another for an extension cab.

Teamed with a Gibson Les Paul running into its rhythm channel, the Classic produced the big, wide, full-frequency clean tone that can only be

had with a 100-watt amp with large transformers. The tones were firm and in-your-face, as you'd expect from stout transformers and four EL34s.

Turning up the Rhythm channel to full-on grind quickly reveals further benefits. Low-end response stayed tight and focused while the Volume knob was rolled up all the way. This channel is especially nice, given its ability to produce the clean-yet-dirty driving tones that help Malcolm Young do his thing.

With a Fender Stratocaster, you get less dirt, of course, but the tones are equally great; the pull boost does well getting the Strat on more-equal footing with a humbucker guitar. And this is a good time to say that Wizard makes a great-sounding cab. It offers robust tone with great late-breakup characteristics. The custom-made 20-watt speakers sound like a cross between a Celestion Greenback and an Anniversary G12H30 – a great combination of firmness and woodiness. Kudos to the speaker maker. Typical of a well-made 4x12, it weighs 85 pounds.

Switched to the Lead channel via the pull function on the Lead Gain control, the tone became a bit less bright and (as it should) offers more gain. Even



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at lower settings, it has a nice amount of drive no matter which guitar is plugged in. And even at maximum volume, the Lead channel held together with a tight, sinewy tone that never approached mush-out. Running with boost pedals, the amp not only responds well to added input gain, it seems to push back some in terms of touch and/or feel of the instrument.

The Modern Classic may not be the ideal club amp, given that its sweet spot is at a relatively high volume (club players should check out the 50-watt version). But it's designed for the traveling pro who needs an amp that will produce tight, gainy tones from the beginning of a gig until the end. Its build quality is second to none, and tonally, it's at the top of its class.

WIZARD MODERN CLASSIC
Price: \$4,495 (head) \$1,295 (cab)
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