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HEAVENLY TONE Supro's Black Magick 1695T

It's not every amp that can elicit an almost-enthusiastic shout from the reviewer's wife at the other end of the house, "Wow, what amp is that? Sounds great!" One is far, far more likely to hear, "Hey, could you turn that thing down?" But not every amp is the Supro Black Magick 1695T.

Designed by Supro's Dave Koltai (of Pigtronix fame) and Thomas Elliott, along with Bruce Zinky (former Fender amp designer responsible for the famed Vibro-King), the Black Magick will likely get that same response wherever it's played.

A bit of background. While recording the first Led Zeppelin album, Jimmy Page used a hot-rodged 1959 Supro, which he'd later revisit (along with a Telecaster, oddly enough, given his legacy with a couple of Les Paul Standards) to record the solo on "Stairway To Heaven."



So, Koltai and Zinky set about re-creating the single-most famous Supro of all time. They began with the same sort of cabinet – based on a '59 Supro 2x10 – then replaced the baffle with a 1x12 setup using a custom British-voiced Supro BD12 speaker. They wired a 25-watt cathode-bias Class-A design using four 12AX7EH preamp tubes plus two 6973 power tubes. And there's Supro's oh-so-cool tube tremolo. It's all dressed up dapper and vintage with top-mounted controls on a gold faceplate and period black-and-white rhino-hide Tolex.

Naturally, the first guitar we plugged in was a vintage Tele, in our case a '57 (cue the better half's quiz about why you suddenly sound so good).

The Black Magick's preamp has two channels wired in parallel, with independent Volume controls and a single, shared Tone knob. What that means in language us guitarists can understand is a built-in link between Channels 1 and 2 when you plug into the first input jack; this cascades, or doubles, signal gain – at any volume.

With 25 watts on tap, you can play quietly or loudly and it sounds like a \$2,500 vintage Dallas Arbiter Rangemaster Treble Booster is lending a hand. And the amazing thing is, the more you dig in, the better the amp sounds. You can truly sink your teeth into

the amp's midrange grind; bluesy rhythm riffs never sounded so good, while power chords are more powerful than ever. And yet the touch dynamics remain clear, even at peak volumes.

Plug into just the Channel 2 input, and gain is basically trimmed in half, taking off an aggressive edge while subtly sweetening the tone. Here you can dial up a warm, bluesy vibe with plenty of depth.

The standalone Channel 2 is also ideal for adding tremolo (which will work on both channels). With the usual Speed and Depth controls, you can go from mild to wild, adding a tinge of modulation or going completely psychedelic.

Price: £1,299
Info: suprousa.com
www.jhs.co.uk



The Black Magick is superb for blues, rockabilly (with an edge), classic rock, blues-rock, or punk, and it's ideal at home, in the studio, or in small clubs. Simply put, this is a perfect all-rounder. Plus there's an extension-speaker output (Supro will soon be serving up 1x12 and 1x15 extension cabs to go with the Magick).

Finally, it's American-made. The solid quality of the cabinet, handle, and electronics won't let you down – while also not breaking your back.

So, will your significant other suddenly say you sound great when you play through a Black Magick? They should, as should the rest of your audience. So excuse us if we gush, but we think the Black Magick is an instant classic. – **Michael Dregni VG**

