

BY CHRIS BUTLER

## THE NAYLOR SUPER-DRIVE 60

Naylor's sonic vision is radically different from both Tony's and Cesar's. Every

thing about the Super-Drive 60 is just a little bit different, a little more eccentric, classy and quirky than your average, run-of-the-mill, custom-built, gourmet, mega-buck amp. For example, whereas on many amps, master volume controls often act as a final, tone-squashing circuit—the root cause of



the infamous "I gotta be this loud to get my sound" excuse—the Naylor sounds *exactly* the same at any volume level. This is nothing short of amazing.

Roughly twice as powerful as the combos discussed above, and the only piggy-back in the bunch, the Naylor squeezes about 60 watts from a matched pair of Ruby (Russian) 5881 power tubes. Four Russian 12AX7WB's drive the preamp stage, which has both hi and low gain inputs, bass, midrange, treble and presence controls, a Bite switch (which shifts the mid and treble eq points "North" for more sting), the above-mentioned miracle master volume and, finally, the preamp gain.

Another Naylor miracle is the precise independence of the tone controls—they're designed not to interfere with each other so, for example, adjusting the midrange covers only the midrange. Other special features include two speaker outputs with a three-position impedance-matching switch, cane grille and trim, paper bobbin transformers, metal switches, brushed stainless steel front and rear panels, 16-gauge welded steel chassis and steel comers. In fact, there's steel everywhere, which makes the "Super-Drive 60" resemble a sleek DeLorean rather than that same clichéd "tank" all really well-constructed amps are usually compared to.

A peek inside reveals that, once again, there's nothing as pretty as a perfectly soldered, hand-assembled chassis. All the electronic components (except sockets, plugs and switches) are mounted on one long 1/8-inch, linen-grade, phenolic eyelet board that runs the *entire* length of the head! This seems bizarre at first, then makes sense when you try to wiggle it loose; it's not going anywhere, and would probably survive a harder fall than other more conventional wiring schemes. Additional inside curiosities are high-spec,

bright yellow metal polyester caps (with no value markings...a little nervous about circuit pirates, Joe?) and oodles of bright purple wire obviously chosen because, as we all know, anything purple sounds better. There might actually be something to this, 'cause this amp was unbelievably hum- and crackle-free.

While the CD-30 is, in Diaz's own words, "All-American," and the "Underground 30" seasons the best British combo with some California spice, Naylor says he's tuned the "Super-Drive 60" specifically for a hybrid "tweed Twin meets 'plexi' Marshall" sound. He hits that target, but I heard other things, too. When I told him that I thought his amp pulled off the impossible—reproducing a clipped, black-faced Twin Reverb with that wonderful, solid-state rectifier Fender "gur

gle" overtone—only at levels that won't get you kicked out of your band—he suggested another chameleon trick: "Try the low level input with both the volume and gain controls on full for a pure Hiwatt, *Live At Leeds* clear

Yet-crunchy tone "I did and boy was it righteous. Naylor's fiercely independent thinking also shows up in His speaker enclosures. He pairs his head not with a standard, closed-back 4x12, but with a unique open-back, tuned port, 2x12 compact cabinet.



Front-loaded with Celestion Vintage 30's, this enclosure sounded really open, uncompressed and flat across all frequencies, but again, this may take some getting used to by players who crave the tight low-end that closed-back cabs produce. Personally, I really liked the way this enclosure brought out the "wood" of my ancient Guild T-100 SP hollow body. The fat thump was there but it was coming out the small port on the *back* of the cabinet, which is where to place a mic if you're hung-up on getting that "super-thunk." Naylor does also make a 4x12 cabinet.

Focusing on this cabinet inspired me to try the Super-Drive 60 head with every bottom that had been gathering dust in my studio.

These included an early Seventies Vox closed-back loaded with antique Celestion green-backs (a Marshall "1/4 stack"), a Vox AC 100 (Super Beatle) open-back with four blue Celestion G 12H Vox "Bulldogs," a Fender Bandmaster cabinet with two Eminence twelve's, plus a "no-name" 4 x 12 that as a speaker enclosure made an excellent coffee table. With the amp head set on neutral, the individual characteristics of each bottom served as a reminder of how much speaker enclosures determine an amp's overall sound. The Super Beatle, which is almost exactly twice the size and volume of Naylor's enclosure, brought out the most Twin-ish, Hiwattisms inherent in the head...a dream sound for me and anyone else who aches for alternative sonic flavors.