

TG On the CD

TRACK 8 *Matchless Groove* shows off a variety of tones from this great amp. Using a Gibson Les Paul there's thick warm lead tones, vintage style overdrives and Marr-esque clean sounds. A minimum of reverb was added at the desk.

Guitars: Trevor Curwen

FACT FILE

MODEL Matchless Chieftain Head

OUTPUT 40W RMS

CONTROLS Volume, bass, mid, treble, brilliance, master, reverb

EFFECTS LOOP One - in parallel

MODEL Matchless 4x12 cabinet

FORMAT Open Back

SPEAKERS Four specially-customised Celestions

Alternatively...

In this price range you should also look at Soldano's Hot Rod 50 XL head (£999) and its 4x12 cab (£725). Further down the money ladder, it's worth checking out Marshall's classic JCM900 half-stack (100W head & 4x12 cab); £963 or try out Laney's LH50R 50W head and matching 4x10 cab at £748.

TOTAL GUITAR VERDICT

Matchless Chieftain

All-valve Class A head • £1,799
4x12 open-backed cab • £899

Construction	5
Features	3
Ease of use	4
Sound	5
Value for money	4

A great sounding, great looking all-valve head with all the classic sounds at the turn of a few knobs.

Total rating 84%

CONTACT

CLASS A DISTRIBUTION:
01392 494988

Matchless Chieftain

40W HEAD & 4X12 CABINET

Take two amps into the studio? Not TREVOR CURWEN. He's just discovered the Matchless Chieftain, all the sounds he needs in one box. Now he just rocks and goes...

MOST Escort drivers would love to own a Porsche, not just because it gets you from A to B but because it does so with such style, quality and class. But you have to pay for the privilege. It's pretty much the same for amplifiers – they all make a noise but some make a better noise, and do it with more style, quality and class. But again, you do have to pay for the privilege. The Matchless Chieftain is one of those amplifiers, the sort we all dream about but very few of us get the chance to use – unless you're a certain Mr Gallagher of course, currently sporting no less than two in his studio.

Matchless are an American company whose pursuit of excellence and quality control is legendary. Their Class A all-valve amps are entirely hand-wired and hand-assembled using extremely high quality components. Their first well-known amp the DC30 (based on the classic Vox AC30) became Hank Marvin's amp of choice, and now there are a whole range of Matchless models.

FEATURES

The 40W Chieftain is available as a combo in 1x12, 2x10, 4x10 and 2x12 speaker configurations, as well as a head that can be paired with a variety of cabinets. Our model arrived with an open-back 4x12 cabinet loaded with Celestion speakers which are specially customised at the Matchless factory.

Visually, the amp is a retro treat, with cool chicken head knobs and a plexiglass carrying handle. Turn it on and it looks even cooler as the Matchless logo lights up – switch it out of stand-by mode and the writing for the controls lights up too.

The Chieftain is a single channel amp and is simplicity itself in use; there is one input and seven front panel controls – volume, bass, mid, treble, brilliance, master and reverb. The volume and master knobs work together interactively, but as a generalisation the volume sets the amount of overdrive, from clean to full-on, and the master sets how loud the amp is. Round the back of the head you'll find the effects loop and three speaker jack outs for 4, 8 and 16 Ohm operation.

SOUND

Unsurprisingly, the Chieftain sounds absolutely wonderful and is capable of a wide range of classy sounds – there's no unpleasant harshness here. The four tone knobs are capable of wide-ranging tonal shaping, and try as I might I couldn't get

a bad sound out of it. The sound of this amp is harmonically rich with a sweet top end, and the 4x12 cab puts out, as it should, an immense, tight bottom end, which certainly seems louder than the 40w rating would suggest.

The Chieftain is all about tone, and I found I could call up a whole range – from the sound of an old Marshall (the output valves are EL34s) to Fender-like tones, helped by the reverb which is adjustable from a light wash to a real surf twang.

I work as a studio engineer, so I spend a lot of time recording guitars and adjusting amps to get the tone just right. I usually have a vintage AC30, an old Marshall JMP50 and a couple of Fender combos to do the job. The Chieftain's overdrive is so variable – through all the shades from clean to dirty (although you'd need a fuzz box for really out and out dirt) – to make it perfect for recording. If I could only take one amp into the studio to substitute for all the others this would be the one.

CONCLUSION

Okay, it's a great amp, but is it worth the money? I have to say yes. But if you want quality like this you have to dig deep. At the end of the day, my only criticism is that the red colour is a bit too 'regal' for my tastes. However, according to the catalogue, it's also available in Shower Curtain Turquoise. Now that does sound cool... **TG**



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ISSUE 35 SEPTEMBER 1997





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