

# THE BOTTOM LINE<sup>®</sup>

PERFORMANCE TESTING BY TOM MULHERN & ASSOCIATES, CAMPBELL, CA (408) 374-1353

**AT A GLANCE:** Volume and tone are important in an acoustic amplification system, but Fishman's Acoustic Performer Pro also provides unmatched versatility and portability. It includes a built-in digital reverb, three effects loops, anti-feedback notch circuitry, and a high-power, ultra-high-fidelity amplifier/speaker complement.

By Tom Mulhern

Over the past decade, acoustic players have taken centerstage with as much authority and importance as their electric counterparts. And it's causing an interesting bit of *deja vu*: Like 40 years ago when the appearance of solidbody guitars and rock and roll necessitated more powerful, more toneful amps, acoustic players today are faced with a similar situation. The big difference is that acoustic guitarists demand clarity and high fidelity, not just volume. After all, it's one thing to make a \$300 slab sound loud and fierce, and another to make an acoustic costing \$1,000, \$2,000, or even more sound exactly like itself—only louder.

Without a doubt, the Fishman Acoustic Performer Pro amplifier's clarity, power, and flexibility are on a par with the best acoustic guitars. This is noteworthy, since a guitar and its amp both contribute to the final sound. Therefore, it's a huge blunder to underestimate the importance of an amp's quality. A significant consideration, too, is that the Acoustic Performer Pro isn't merely a guitar amp. A high-quality, high-powered P.A. in a compact enclosure, it has multiple inputs and outputs, a feedback-control notch filter, and built-in digital reverb, plus EQ controls and phase-reverse switching for each channel. Its speaker complement exceeds most high-quality stereo systems for clarity, and it's able to withstand the heavy pounding that comes from amplifying the percussive sounds of a guitar.

The Acoustic Performer Pro's input section accepts the signal from a piezo or magnetic pickup and/or a guitar's internal microphone—a common combination in high-end instruments. The 1/4" inputs for a pickup and an instrument microphone have trim controls so that you can tame extremely high levels or match them to each other. There's one more 1/4" input jack for plugging in the TRS (tip/ring/sleeve) plug of a 3-conductor cord from a guitar equipped with both a pickup and an internal mic. That isn't all: You can switch on 15-volt phantom powering, great for condenser mics. Channel 1 has an XLR (3-conductor) input for plugging in an auxiliary source or a high-quality vocal microphone. It, too, has a phantom power switch; this one delivers 48 volts, just right for pro vocal microphones. Fishman even thought of another useful front-end feature: a Tape/CD input, which lets you plug in a sound source for accompaniment, or to provide "filler" music while you take a break.

When you amplify an acoustic guitar, feedback is often a problem. Thwarting it is easy with Fishman's built-in notch filter: Just dial in the offending frequency with one knob and use the second knob to cut out the source of the howl and screech. The notch can also be used to filter out any "wolf" tones (exaggerated pitches that come from too much resonance) in the guitar. Sometimes you can eliminate feedback with the Phase switch on either channel, which inverts the signal's phase and creates cancellation.

The built-in reverb is well-designed, providing five different reverb times via a rotary selector switch, plus control over the wet/dry mix through a second control. An extremely cool feature is the pair of switches for selecting reverb on either or both channels; LEDs tell you when reverb is assigned to them. The reverb has a good, musical sound, plus it offers a lot of headroom—

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## Fishman Acoustic Performer Pro Amplifier/Compact Performance System



Fishman's compact, powerful Acoustic Performer Pro (left) and Fishman Acoustic Monitor Pro (right) deliver crisp, clear sound.

whacking the heck out of my guitar, I found it virtually impossible to get it to distort. This is very handy if you're a dynamic player, because you get a solid reverb effect regardless of how you approach the instrument. By the way, when the reverb is assigned to Channel 1, the signal from the aux/mic input is treated by the reverb.

It's no secret that outboard effects can sound great on acoustic guitar. The Acoustic Performer Pro has an effects loop for each input channel, plus another loop for the master section. I tried using a harmonizer on Channel 1 (with only vocals through the aux/mic input) and slapback echo on my guitar in Channel 2; finally, I added a slight touch of chorus at the Master stage. The Effects wet/dry control on each channel lets you dial in the amount of effects you want—and reverb can be used with any of them.

The Mute switch is great for a couple of reasons. First, when you're tuning, the audience doesn't have to be serenaded by the activity (the tuner output is still "live" when Mute is selected). Second, when you take a break, you can hit the Mute switch to leave the amp in a "stand-by" mode, so you don't have to mess with the level controls. A rear-panel jack lets you plug in any on/off footswitch to control the Mute function from afar.

Fishman built the Acoustic Performer with the road in mind. It's compact—considering its output power and overall loudness, you might consider it downright small. The cabinet is designed to stand upright or lie on an angle to act as a monitor, and it even has mounting holes for an optional kit to set it up on a stand. Its construction is extremely solid, including a steel grille to protect the speakers, so it will come through the rigors of being bounced around unscathed. All knobs and switches are recessed, protecting them from being inadvertently snapped off if the amp is ever knocked over or treated roughly when it's tossed into a car, etc. Touring overseas? There's a dual-

# Fishman Acoustic Performer Pro

voltage switch in the power section, so all you need is the appropriate power cable to plug into a foreign socket.

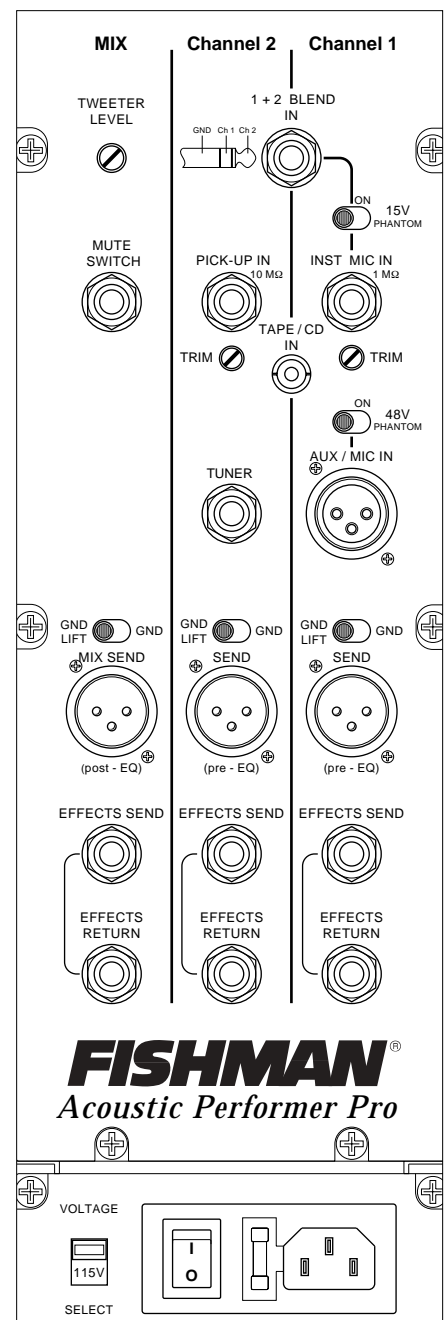
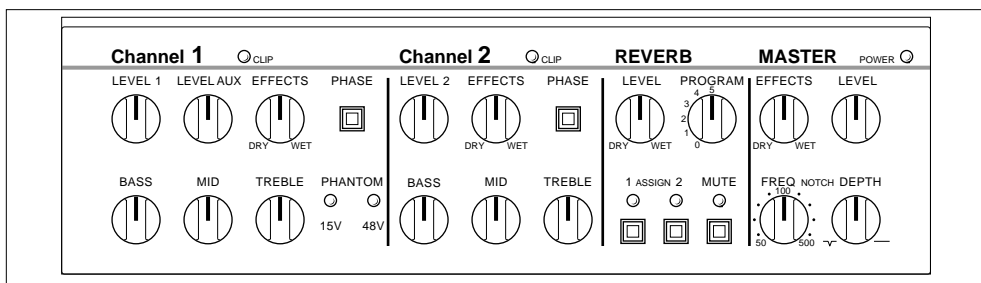
One of the real beauties of the Fishman Acoustic Performer Pro is that you can use it in any size of venue and have control over your sound. In a small place, you can use it as your primary amp, where you shape your acoustic sound and then set the volume to bring that great sound to your audience. In a larger venue, you can add an optional Fishman Acoustic Monitor Pro, which delivers 270 watts into its speaker complement. When you hit the big stage where a massive house P.A. is in place, you can use the Fishman Acoustic Performer Pro as your personal onstage monitor and then send line outputs from it to the P.A. The Acoustic Performer has three high-quality direct boxes built in, with XLR outputs—one for each channel and one for the mix output. In addition, each has its own ground-lift switch, which helps it interface with P.A.s and not introduce ground-loop hum in the process.

There are so many features and ways to use the Fishman Acoustic Performer Pro amp that it's hard to cover them all. Obviously, I've only scratched the surface. However, if you care about your acoustic guitar's tone, there's little doubt that you should consider this system as the way to

get your sound across to an audience. Every bit of tone that's in your acoustic guitar is amplified with brilliant clarity and all the tasty tone that made you choose your guitar in the first place. With its combination of great sound, flexibility, portability, and power, nothing else even compares with the Fishman Acoustic Performer Pro.



The Acoustic Performer Pro's front panel (below) offers EQ, effects-blend, and level controls for each channel, plus it provides switchable reverb and a notch filter. The many inputs and outputs on the rear panel (right) allow interfacing with guitars, mics, and effects, as well as P.A. and recording mixers. Both the Acoustic Performer Pro and the Acoustic Monitor Pro can be mounted atop a stand (above) for enhanced sound dispersion.



## INSIDE FISHMAN'S ACOUSTIC PERFORMER PRO

**Type of amp:** Acoustic guitar amplifier/compact performance system

**Features:** Compact size, steel grille, high power, extremely high-fidelity sound, multiple input channels, phantom powering, three effects loops, built-in digital reverb (switch-selectable for either or both channels), phase switching on each channel, anti-feedback notch filter, mute function

**Power:** 230 watts RMS into 8" woofer; 40 watts into tweeter

**Speakers:** One 8" driver and one 1" dome tweeter

**Front panel (L-R):** Channel 1 (Clip LED, Level 1, Aux Level, Effects Wet/Dry, Phase switch, Bass, Mid, Treble, Phantom power LEDs for 15-volt and 48-volt power), Channel 2

(Level 2 Effects Wet/Dry control, Phase switch, Bass, Mid, Treble), Reverb (Dry/Wet Level, Program selector, Channel Assign switches 1 and 2 with LEDs, Mute switch), Master (Power on LED, Effects Wet/Dry, Level, Notch filter Frequency and Depth controls)

**Rear panel (L-R, top to bottom):** Tweeter level control, Mute Switch 1/4" input jack, Mix Send XLR jack (post-EQ) with ground-lift switch, Mix Effects Send and Return 1/4" jacks, Channel 2 Pickup In (10 Megohms), Trim control, Tuner 1/4" output jack Channel 2 XLR Send jack (pre-EQ) with ground-lift switch, Channel 2 Effects Send and Return 1/4" jacks, TRS 1+2 Blend In 1/4" jack, 15-volt Phantom power switch, Inst/Mic In 1/4" jack (1 Megohm), Inst/Mic In

Trim control, Tape/CD In mini jack, Aux/Mic In XLR jack with 48-volt Phantom power switch, Channel 1 Send XLR jack (pre-EQ) with ground-lift switch, Channel 1 Effects Send and Return 1/4" jacks, power supply section (115V/230V selector switch, power on/off switch, AC cord receptacle)

**Weight:** 29 lbs. (13.2 kg)

**Dimensions:** 19.30" H x 15.15" W x 7.19" D

**Options:** Acoustic Monitor Pro (powered speaker cabinet for use with Acoustic Performer Pro), mounting hardware for Acoustic Performer Pro and Acoustic Monitor Pro

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