

Anderson Amplifiers

LOOKING ONLY TO SPREAD the love by helping his son's amp sound better, Jack Anderson began repairing and modifying amplifiers by default in 1990.

"My son, George, was playing a 50-watt Marshall combo that needed new power tubes," he said. "So after referring to my old electronics books from Navy 'A' school, I was able to bias-in new EL-34s."

The amp sounded much better, Anderson added, and before he knew it, George had him modifying the amp for more gain.

"That led to my searching out every article and book I could find on repairing and modifying tube amps – I still buy just about every new one that comes out." And combining his knowledge with this newfound interest soon had him doing repairs and mods on amps belonging to George's friends. But he wasn't about to complain.

"I got my on-the-job training working on their old Fenders and Marshalls. Through word of mouth, I soon had a sideline business going, with people calling looking for repairs and mods... always for more gain!"

Ultimately, this "hobby" led to construction of a test amp of his own design. "I loved everything about building it and testing circuits," he remembers.

"It's rewarding to build an amp that's just what the person was looking for."



Photos courtesy of Jack Anderson.

That thrill of discovery led him to build a 50-watt head with a tone circuit and phase inverter that were, he says, "...the result of a lot of tweaking!" But it paid off big-time, and that amp helped launch his company in 1993.

"Developing and building that amplifier gave me the same feeling I used to get when I built hot rods in my younger days," Anderson said. "I loved everything about it. I'd always been a frustrated guitar player, and I just couldn't seem to progress with the guitar. So building that amp made me realize I could be involved in music in a different way."

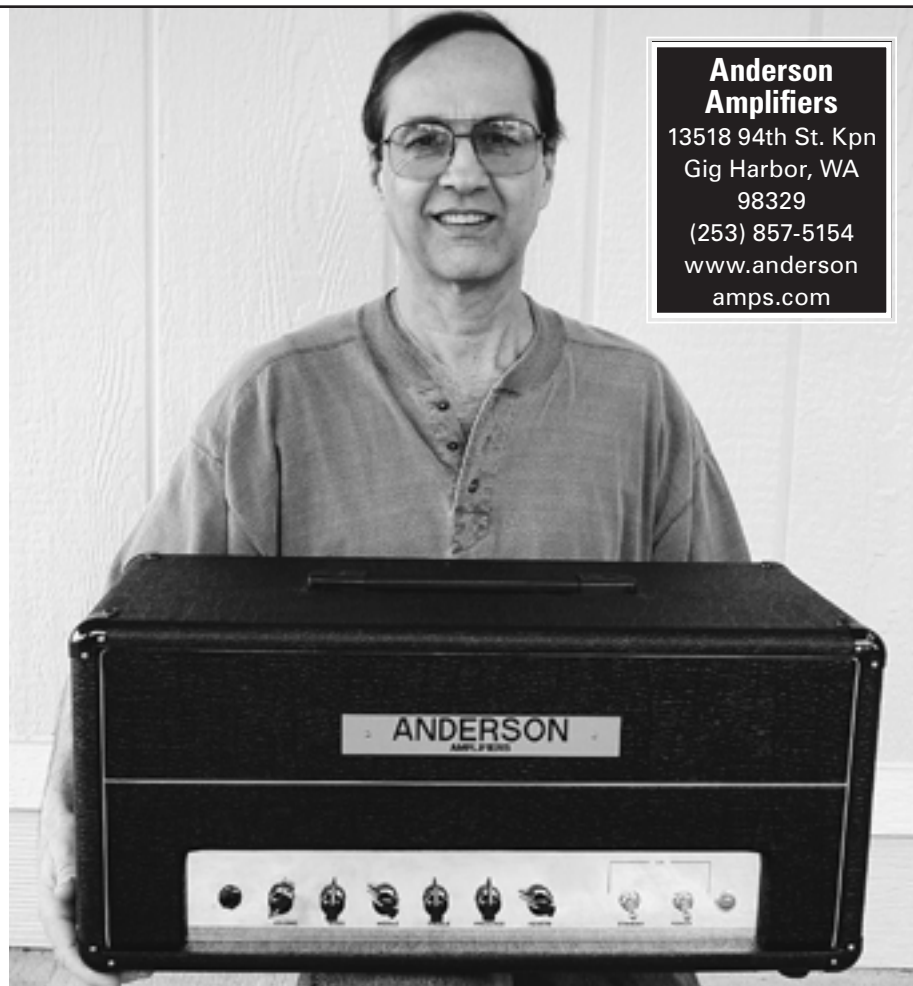
We recently asked Anderson to fill us in on his business, his designs, and his models.

Vintage Guitar: Was building amps something you tackled full-time from the get-go, or did you take it up gradually?

I worked part-time at first, building amps and working on new circuits until I retired from my primary job in 1999. Since then, I've been able to devote all the time I want to the business, which is a dream come true.

How many models did you offer initially?

For the first two years, I built a 50-watt,



Anderson Amplifiers
13518 94th St. Kpn
Gig Harbor, WA
98329
(253) 857-5154
www.andersonamps.com

single-channel, master-volume amp in head and combo form. I hadn't yet learned how to apply Tolex, so the first four were made of mahogany.

At what point did your line begin to expand?

I started exhibiting at two area guitar shows, and got a lot of inquiries about building amps with lower power ratings and with reverb, tremolo, and other features. So I worked out two more circuits with and without reverb and tremolo.

I now build amps with power ratings of 18, 20, 45, 20/45, 50, and 100, in single-channel and two-channel form. The 18- and 20-watt models have become my favorites to build.

My first customers were local players who were mostly involved in rock and blues. One musician, Dan McInerney, gave my amps great exposure because of his excellent guitar playing, and because he works in so many genres – jazz, blues, funk, rock, and country. The best advertising has

cated me in what a jazz musician might be looking for, and led to interest from other jazz guitarists.

What is it that sets your product apart?

I'm able to work closely with a customer wanting a custom amp, because I do all the work myself, except for the bending and welding of the chassis. I build cabinets out of pine or Baltic birch, and have 12 different colors and textures of Tolex that I use. I have eight different silkscreens for the front panels that I use, depending on the type of amp. So a customer has a lot of options.

I also keep a large variety of speakers and tubes on hand, so people can hear the differences between types and brands.


Do you have any help in the shop?

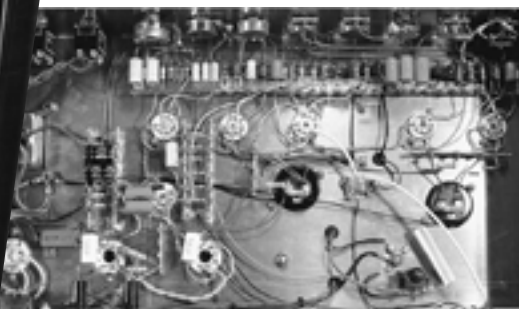
I work by myself. After spending my career as a lineman and foreman on a power line crew, I really enjoy working on my own!

What are your expectations for the future of the industry?

I hope the growing trend of small shops building custom amps and instruments continues. No matter how crowded the field gets, I think there will always be a market for a builder working to create high-quality, custom tools of the trade.

What are your goals for your own business?

I just hope to continue building amplifiers that guitar players really appreciate. It's rewarding to build an amp that's just what the person was looking for. A side benefit of building amps has been the great people I've met, and the good friends I've made. I hope that continues; it's been the best part of the business. 



An Anderson combo.

been having my amps on stages.

In 2001-'02, I built two amps for Bill Frisell, and I've since built one for Jerry Hahn. Building amps for them has edu-