

## Traynor Custome Special 50 Roadtest

By: Rob Tardik

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The Traynor Custom Special 50 (YCS 50) is a 50-watt all tube combo amp that has a classic, retro look to it with a classy gold faceplate for the amp's controls and main Traynor logo. Upon initial inspection, the amp is built very well with solid plywood cabinet construction (no particleboard here folks), an all-aluminum/metal box chassis, and a grill cloth that is very strong. I can tell this is a quality amp that has been designed and built for the live music experience - squeaks and rattle are not in its future.

Traynor offers a two-year transferable unlimited warranty.

For most live playing situations, it's hard to beat a tube amp in the 50-watt range for enough power to cut in most gigging situations, even when there's no help from the PA system. The amp weighs in at 48 lbs, which is average for a combo this size. It features a single 12" Celestion Vintage30 speaker and a real Accutronics dual long-spring reverb.

The front panel, where the black vintage-style knobs are placed (I prefer it top-mounted for quick stage changes), you find that this is a 2-channel amplifier with separate tone stacks (EQ) for each channel - better than a shared EQ style. The amp comes with a British-inspired sound engine with three 12AX7A preamp tubes and two 5881/EL34 power tubes. The rectifier is solid state.

The tonal shaping ability of the amp has been well thought out while all the all EQ controls are smooth, responsive, and shift well to the ear through their tonal stack frequencies.

The clean sounds were clear, spanky, and very touch-responsive from my Archtop Hofner Jazzica and '52 Tele re-issue. From jazzy, mellow, dark tones to ample midrange and twangy Tele-inspired country licks, the amp was there. It features a standard brightness switch and a neat Expander switch, which adds nice bottom end and shimmering highs. This is a must-have-on. I also like the USA/Brit switch that changes the location of the tone stack in the signal chain. Like classic American amps from the past, it puts the Gain control after the tone controls for that LOUD clean sound, while the Brit mode moves the Gain control to the front end, before the tone stage, to get break-up and distortion early when the volume is turned up. The reverb has a nice vintage-inspired wash to it without sounding harsh and metallic.

Switching gears to my Strat with noiseless pickups put more testosterone-influenced tones at my fingertips. I really dug the boost switch for kicking in more overdrive for leads, and having it on the footswitch is great live. The Modern and Scoop switches allowed the rocker side to show - I got some pretty convincing bottom-end heavy metal sounds out of this smooth, plexi-style distortion amp. Plenty of ear-ringing volume (but still polite) and good sustain, with a wide variety of sounds, make this amp a winner for sonic versatility - although I think its strength is in the blues and rock vein.

A very cool feature is the ability to change this 50-watt class AB live stage amp into a 15-watt class A studio/club amp with a simple flick of a switch. Why is this so cool? By building in a selectable amplifier mode like this, players have the choice of either playing in class AB mode at a gig, where you can hear (and feel) an increase in headroom and tightness, and the response is punchier and less crispy on the highs, or operating the amp in class A mode where you get to overdrive the power section of the amp instead of the preamp (the key to its sound!), so the tones are a little sweeter and more sparkling on the top, and the distortion comes on sooner and is more touch-sensitive.

Other handy features are separate 1/4" in-line and parallel effect loops. The in-line loop is great for guitar pedals/signal boosters like EQs and compressors, which are intended to be inserted into the signal chain, while the parallel loop, which has its own EFX send level, is for external time-based effects like reverb and delays (non-signal boosting types of effects), or slaving another amp to it.

At \$850, this is a great-sounding, very versatile, feature-laden amp at a price that won't strain a working musician's pocketbook!

*Rob Tardik is a guitarist, contemporary artist, teacher, and clinician who performs regularly throughout the Toronto area and was just recently voted 2007 Established Performing Artist of the Year in Mississauga, ON. Rob is currently working on his second follow-up CD to his debut Without Words and is also the inventor of the Music Stamp Series, a series of educational accessories for teachers/students and working musicians. For more information, visit [www.robtardik.com](http://www.robtardik.com) or e-mail [rt@robtardik.com](mailto:rt@robtardik.com).*

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