



GEAR

REVIEW

AS SEEN IN
Vintage Guitar
magazine

PLAY THE BLUES

The Louis Electric Gattone

Got the blues? Have we got the amp for you.

Louis Rosano has been building boutique amplifiers from his workshop in New Jersey for 20 years, his first inspired by a '58 Fender narrow-panel tweed Twin. His version was called the Twinmaster, and one of them wound up in the back line of Danny Gatton, who retired his own Twin in its favor.

Little wonder, then, that Rosano's new Gattone amp is a twin-speaker tribute to Gatton.

Whereas the '58 high-powered Twin peaked at 80 watts and boasted two 12" speakers, the Gattone is a 35-watter with a 2x10 setup. And with its oh-so-cool beveled front, it's more reminiscent of the classic 18-watt 1947 Fender Dual Professional.

That's a fine thing. The Gattone has more than enough power, volume, and all-round *oomph* for playing at home, in the studio, or in most any club—no matter how enthusiastic your drummer is.

The fixed-bias amp uses custom power and output transformers. In the preamp stage, Rosano opts for three 12AX7 and one 12AT7 tube; the output runs through two STR6L6s. The rectifier is a 5AR4. The Gattone features two input jacks and controls for Volume, Treble, Middle, and Bass. The onboard reverb has controls for Reverb, Speed, and Intensity. All of that componentry pushes the signal into two Celestion G10 Vintage speakers with a speaker load of 4 ohms.

Yet those specifications don't begin to hint at the beauty of the construction. From the aged tweed with its gorgeous golden hue to the sweet chassis wiring and that front "face," the fit and finish are stunning. A true Dual Pro would downright blush—no vintage Fender tweed amp ever looked this good back in the day.

No one would ever accuse the Gattone of being a lightweight amp, tipping the scales at about 65 pounds. You'll want to have spent some time in the gym before serving

as your own roadie. But it's that rock-solid construction you're hefting around—and it pays off in the tone and, one would assume, the amp's longevity.

So, with Mr. Gatton in mind, we tried out the Gattone with a '56 Esquire and '54 Gibson ES-295.

With all those chicken-head knobs twisted to the midway point (excepting the reverb), the amp has a truly vintage sound—call it "old-souled." The tone is dark, but in a rich, mysterious way, making it ideal for blues rhythm vamps.

Tweaking the sound into mid-range territory, the amp gets warm and throaty while still being clear and not husky.

Dial in some treble, and that dark tone turns to a knife-edged "noir" sound. Add a little more and switch to the bridge pickup on the ES-295, and you're firmly and happily into rockabilly territory.

Going the other direction, the amp has a big, spanking low end, especially for 10-inchers. Yet even with all that bass, the note articulation remains defined. The amp's cabinet construction does not use a baffle board, which Rosano says makes for a tighter bottom end, even at louder volumes. To challenge that, we turned it up. Play it softly, and the Gattone overdrives with a luscious, creamy sound. Play it hard, and it can truly honk.

Time to try out the reverb. With a quick reverberation, the signal is accented wonderfully, boosting the amp's tone. Set on slow, the sound is lowdown and swampy. You can almost feel the humidity.

Rosano's amps are all handbuilt by none other than Rosano himself. Plus, he tests and ear-tunes each one himself. With an unapologetic love for '50s tweed Fenders and plexi Marshalls, his goal is to bring those vintage sounds into the present. With the Gattone, the result is a 35-watt, all-purpose amp that can play sultry blues, trebly country, and driving early rock and roll.

Danny would be proud.

—Michael Dregni



Price: \$2,595 (list)
Info: www.louiselectricamps.com