



# Seymour Duncan SFX-03 Twin Tube Classic £199

## SEYMOUR DUNCAN SFX-03 TWIN TUBE CLASSIC

**PRICE:** £199

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Twin channel valve-driven overdrive pedal

**CONTROLS:** Individual volume and gain controls for rhythm and lead channels, master bass and treble tone controls, two individual footswitches select effect on/off and lead/rhythm circuit

**CONNECTIONS:** 6.4mm jack input and output

**FEATURES:** Two 6021 dual triode preamp valves

**POWER:** 16-volt AC transformer (supplied)

**OPTIONS:** None

**RANGE OPTIONS:** The SFX-02 Tweak Fuzz is £99, while the SFX-01 Pickup Booster is £89

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After the success of the Pickup Booster and Tweak Fuzz, Seymour Duncan branches out into valve power... by Chris Vinnicombe

Although best known as one of the world's paramount pickup manufacturers, Seymour Duncan's forays into the world of effects pedals have so far been most impressive. We first encountered the SFX-01 Pickup Booster back in issue 244, and then later the SFX-02 Tweak Fuzz in issue 263. Launched earlier this year, the SFX-03 is a clear step forward from the simplicity of the older single-function models in the Seymour Duncan range, bringing twin channel functionality and genuine vacuum tubes to the table.

The valves in question are a pair of military-spec Phillips Sylvania 6021 sub miniature dual triodes similar to those that we previously encountered in the power stage of the ingenious ZVex Nano Head amplifier (see issue 261). The SFX-03 is bundled with a 16-volt AC transformer, required to power the pedal's internal transformer, which in turn supplies the valves with a high plate voltage. Often many products

feature valves integrated into the circuit that are only run on low voltages, meaning that in practice they function like a clipping diode rather than a preamp valve. The Twin Tube Classic should respond and behave much more like the preamp section of a genuine valve amplifier thanks to the increased plate voltage. Arguably it would be simpler to employ an external AC cord and equip the Twin Tube with an internal high voltage transformer, but this would inevitably add to both the cost and physical size of what is already a pretty chunky stompbox.

Construction-wise, like the other two Duncan stompboxes, the pedal's heavy-duty metal housing feels road-worthy and dependable, and looks great in what we'd describe as metallic burnt orange with cream and black decals. We were also pleased to note the presence of air vents on each side of the casing to prevent overheating and keep the unit functioning at optimum temperature.

**The voicing of the dirtier channel has a middy growl perfect for allowing blazing lead lines to jump out of the mix, but this is primarily a blues-rock soloist's dirtbox**

The valves themselves will last much longer than a conventional 12AX7/ECC83, which is just as well as when perusing the Twin Tube's manual we are advised to seek professional assistance in the event of replacements being required.

Unless you are a blushing pedal virgin, the Twin Tube Classic's controls should be fairly self explanatory, consisting of global bass and treble controls for equalisation, and independent volume and gain controls shaping the pedal's rhythm and lead sounds. One robust footswitch toggles

| SFX-03          | TEST RESULTS |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Build quality   | ★★★★★        |
| Features        | ★★★★★        |
| Sound           | ★★★★★        |
| Value for money | ★★★★★        |

■ **WE LIKED** Slick low-noise performance; robust construction; a high quality array of blues-rock tones

■ **WE DISLIKED** Whether the voicing works for you will be genre-dependent

the effect on and off, while the other flips between channels. When disengaged, the circuit is true bypass, ensuring that the sound of the rest of your rig is uncorrupted by its presence in the signal chain.

**SOUNDS:** Beginning with a clean sound with a hint of grit from our Orange AD30TC head, engaging the Twin Tube Classic's rhythm channel with the gain set at around one o'clock adds a juicy helping of raunch that responds well with either humbuckers or single-coil pickups. Moving to a guitar with a pair of P-90s we enjoyed a tweedy rasp reminiscent of a small valve amplifier working hard that is perfect for grimy riffing, where humbuckers smoothed things out and provided a more civilised voice for restrained blues lead. Below this level of gain, the rhythm channel can be set up as a clean or low gain boost by balancing the on-board equalisation and channel volume control with your basic amp tone for the desired results.

Winding the gain up above the one o'clock mark on the rhythm channel introduces a overdriven rock voice that may well be dirty enough for non-metal players, and it is certainly fluid enough to handle lead work, particularly when the neck pickup is selected. Even at its dirtiest, the rhythm channel responds well to changes in the guitar's volume and tone controls, cleaning up musically when the volume is rolled back. The lead channel's gain set around two o'clock is essentially on a par with the drive level of the rhythm channel on full tilt, but feels more compressed, with more harmonic content emerging as you wind up the gain. The voicing of the dirtier channel has a middy growl perfect for allowing blazing lead lines to jump out of the mix, but this is primarily a blues-rock soloist's dirtbox, and thus it may not be the first port of call for modern metallers or indie kids from the grungier side of the tracks.

Overall, the Twin Tube Classic has an amplifier-like sonic fingerprint of its own and it feels less synthetic than many overdrive units, be they diode, valve or otherwise. Although there's something to be said for the punch of square wave distortion, what you have here is more refined and seems voiced primarily for lead playing. The shared




The Twin Tube's identity is so strong, it's like stepping on an A/B selector

EQ requires something of a balancing act between the channels when shaping your sounds, although their voicings are similar enough to mean that this is not a huge issue for most applications. The amp sound that you set up has a big influence, and it's possible to go for either a traditional clean/crunch/lead situation or something naughtier like a dirty/dirtier/dirtiest arrangement if your amp is growling to begin with.

### Verdict

So you've found your perfect guitar amplifier in the form of an old school single channel valve combo, but you still yearn for more flexibility and an organic dose of extra valve gain. The

Twin Tube Classic could well be your solution; it has such a strong sonic identity of its own that it's almost like stepping on an A/B selector and selecting a different amplifier. If you just want to give your amp sound a kick up the proverbials then there are a number of more transparent boosters out there. But if you want to supplement the clean or crunch tone of your single channel amplifier with additional valve-driven rhythm and lead sounds with a voice of their own, we'd recommend auditioning this little beauty forthwith. 

### Seymour Duncan SFX-03 Twin Tube

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

### The rivals

|                       |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| Mesa/Boogie V-Twin    | £TBC |
| Fulltone Full-Drive 2 | £259 |
| Bad Cat Two Tone      | £349 |

Currently discontinued, the Boogie V-Twin is still one of the benchmarks for stompbox overdrive. Although originally extremely pricey, it does boast the kind of build quality that would survive almost any onstage abuse so be sure to snap up a second-hand unit if you track one down. Another vision in chrome, the Bad Cat comes packing a pair of preamp valves and tone inherited from some of the world's most desirable amplifiers. Finally, there are no vacuum tubes in it, but more professionals than you can shake a Strat at swear by the righteous lead tone of the Full-Drive 2, now available in anniversary Mosfet edition