



The Supro badge is one of the world's first guitar amp brands, dating back to before World War II



FIRST PLAY



SUPRO 1606 SUPER COMBO
£699

WHAT IS IT? All valve 1 x 8 reissue combo with five watts RMS output from the 6V6 output stage



**SUPRO REVERB
1605R COMBO**
£999

WHAT IS IT? Enhanced version with three valve-driven line outs and treble and bass EQ

Little Giants

Supro adds two mini monsters of tone in a small, low output package. Perfect for big rock riffs? We find out...

Words Nick Guppy **Photography** Neil Godwin

There are few more iconic rock guitar images than a wall of 4 x 12s topped by 100 watt heads, and we'd all like to play on a stage with that kind of backline at least once, but ironically the biggest sounds on record often come from the smallest of amplifiers. Small single-ended combos are behind some of the biggest riffs in rock history, which is perhaps why we continue to love them so much. Under the guidance of New York-based effects pedal supremos Absara Audio, Supro's successful and long-overdue return as a leading US-amp builder has largely been based on recreations of combos that forged success back in the 1950s and 60s. Now, their catalogue has just been expanded with two new products that may just prove to be the most desirable yet, the 1606 Super and the 1605R Reverb.

1



Small single-ended combos like these Supros are behind some of the biggest riffs in rock history

1. The controls for the 1606 Super Combo are simply high and low inputs that run off some beautifully-crafted circuitry underneath

Both the new combos use the same toaster-sized cabinet, which contains Supro's Eminence-designed SS8 eight-inch loudspeaker, recreated from an original 1960s Jensen item with laser-scanning assistance from Iowa State University. Fitted out in authentic mid-60s livery with blue rhino hide vinyl and silver sparkle grill cloth, they both look the part and feel quite substantial, with generously large transformers.

Original Supros were built up on tagboards, making even the simplest of circuits look like a bewildering rat's nest of cloth-covered wire, resistors and capacitors. The modern versions use high-quality printed circuit boards with a clean, economical layout that helps to maximise signal fidelity. Metal film resistors

are used to keep hiss levels down, while wiring is neatly twisted to reduce hum. It's reassuring to know that just like their bigger brothers, these small Supros are built to last.

Both amps are simple, single-channel designs inspired by original circuits dating back to the 1960s and earlier. Based on the original design, the non-reverb Super is as simple as it gets, with just one control for volume and a pair of high and low gain input jacks, while the 1605SR Supro Reverb combo has controls for gain, treble, bass, reverb level and a master volume.

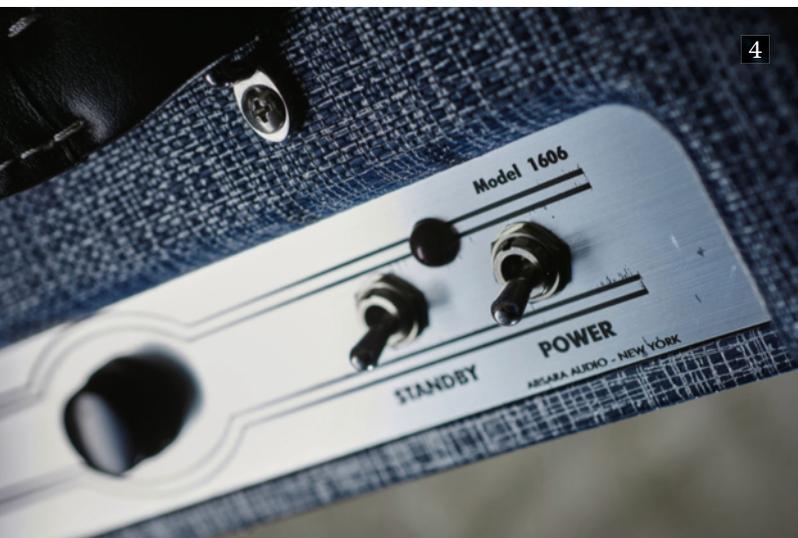
On the underside of the chassis there are three line outs – two fixed level ones for dry and reverb only, with a variable level mix output. This arrangement adds some useful if slightly quirky flexibility, allowing for separate processing of dry



2



3



4

and reverb signals. Plugging into the wet output removes reverb from the combo's speaker output and sends the reverb only signal down a cable to your choice of amp/desk. Plugging into the dry output does the reverse, letting you hear reverb only from the Supro, while the preamp signal can be plugged into another amp. The Supro Reverb has a single input jack – the second one on the control panel is for an optional reverb on/off footswitch.

With so many sockets on the rear (there's also a power amp input as well as two speaker jacks), it's good that Supro have thoughtfully fitted a useful information plate to remind us what each one does. Fitting the mains kettle lead to the chassis IEC connector isn't so easy in the confined rear access; we'd recommend using a 'P' clip

2. The single volume control of the 1606 Super commands a wide range of overdrive colours depending on how you set it in relation to your guitar's volume control
3. The authentic mid-60s livery with blue rhino hide vinyl and silver sparkle grill cloth give the amps a classy look
4. An original 1606 Super owned by Aerosmith guitarist Joe Perry was used to help voice the authentic tones of the 60s found in this version



The aggressive midrange tones of the SS8 loudspeaker overflow with vintage American mojo

to secure the cable once installed, to prevent accidental removal.

Sounds

Both amps power up smoothly and quietly, with minimal hum from the single-ended 6V6 output stage. We tried them out with a variety of single coil and humbucking guitars, including an original '72 Les Paul Custom and an old Strat loaded with Duncan Alnico Pro 2s. Supros have a distinctive midrange, which the new SS8 speaker captures really well. It's one of the strengths of smaller loudspeakers that the frequency range is compressed into an ideal bandwidth for the electric guitar, with little or no EQ manipulation to get a good sound onto a track. This is one of the reasons why

tracks recorded with small amps like this sound so huge; you're not removing any signal to make them fit into a mix, it's all exactly where it needs to be.

The Super's single volume control can produce a satisfying range of colours, from nearly clean to a full-on gnarly overdrive that sounds great for USA-influenced classic rock and blues. Supro actually used an original 1606 Super from Aerosmith guitarist Joe Perry's collection to voice their reproduction and the resulting tones are very authentic. As is often the case, the lower gain input is a little darker and best suited to bright single coils or active pickups, while the high gain input is fine for most passive guitars.

The 1605R's clever design gives it a lot of extra flexibility; the three line outs on the rear panel mean you can use it as a small combo with or without reverb, or as a standalone valve reverb. The quality of the reverb signal is great for this kind of amp – what it lacks in smoothness is made up for

- 5. The 1605R's reverb effect can be switched on and off remotely with a standard footswitch
- 6. Both 1 x 8 combos use a specially designed loudspeaker made by Eminence and based on an original item, laser-scanned at Iowa State University
- 7. The 1605R has separate wet and dry line outputs as well as a mix line output with level control



with plenty of vintage character that would work well for early blues or rockabilly vocals and snare drum as well as guitar.

Verdict

These new mini Supros are compact and portable with power and volume to spare, making them ideal for recording and practice. There's plenty of character and attitude too – the aggressive, edgy midrange tones of the SS8 loudspeaker overflow with vintage American mojo, reinforced by classy looks and excellent build quality.

The simplicity of the Super means you need to work with the amp to make your sound happen, something that players used to getting everything from a pedal may find refreshingly different, while the quirky nature of the 1605R will appeal to recording enthusiasts. The USA origin means they aren't the cheapest small amps out there but overall, we think you're getting good value as these have to be two of the coolest small amps out there at the moment. **G**



SUPRO 1606 SUPER COMBO

PRICE: £699
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: All-valve preamp and power amp
OUTPUT: 5 watts RMS
VALVES: 1 x 12AX7, 1 x 6V6
DIMENSIONS: 400 (w) x 300 (h) x 190mm (d)
WEIGHT: (kg/lb):10/22
CABINET: Ply.
LOUDSPEAKER: 1 x 8" Supro SS8
CHANNELS: One
CONTROLS: Volume
FOOTSWITCH: None
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: None
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: The 1605R costs £899

JHS
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www.suprousa.com

8/10

PROS Near-perfect replica of the original 1606 with none of the reliability issues

CONS US manufacture makes it a little on the expensive side



SUPRO REVERB 1605R COMBO

PRICE: £999
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: All-valve preamp and power amp
OUTPUT: 5 watts RMS
VALVES: 2 x 12AX7, 1 x 12AT7, 1 x 6V6
DIMENSIONS: 400 (w) x 300 (h) x 190mm (d)
WEIGHT: (kg/lb):11/24
CABINET: Ply
LOUDSPEAKER: 1 x 8" Supro SS8
CHANNELS: One
CONTROLS: Volume, bass, treble, reverb, mix line out level (on the rear panel)
FOOTSWITCH: Single button foot switch (not supplied) bypasses reverb effect
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Separate dry, wet and mix line outputs
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: The 1606 Super combo costs £699



9/10

PROS A cool retro-modern design with a great vintage-sounding reverb with output options

CONS Again, it's a little pricey, even for a US product