

LANEY A1+ & AER MM200 £279 & £1,199  
AMPS





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## What You Need To Know

### 1 Who is Monte Montgomery?

He's a Texan guitarist/singer/songwriter who has a unique approach to electro-acoustic guitars. Bluesy, rocky, grooving stuff is his bag, and the boy plays loud!

### 2 Doesn't he use lots of overdrive?

At times, but the AER is designed to be super clean all the way and offer tons of headroom. The overdrive is often coming off an additional electric guitar amp.

### 3 What if I don't need all that power?

Good news for you, then. Laney's just released one of the no-brainer bargains of the electro-acoustic decade...

# Laney A1+ & AER MM200 £279 & £1,199

Guitarist  
**CHOICE**

Two very different price points meet two very different acoustic amp needs. Which is yours?

WORDS **Mick Taylor** PHOTOGRAPHY **Joe Branston**

**W**e've said it before and we'll say it again: for many acoustic guitar players, a dedicated acoustic amp is nestling down there near the bottom of the essentials list: after all, why wouldn't you just plug into the PA? Well, Germany's AER, and Laney from good ol' Blighty have some fairly compelling answers, as it turns out, the former wrapped up in the formidable new MM200 Monte Montgomery signature amp, the latter in the Far East-built, far more affordable A1+.

Laney's smart black design is certainly contemporary, and its front-mounted control panel and handy upright or tilted back cabinet design sets it out as unique. The proprietary TuffStuff coating really does take the knocks, while the eight-inch bass driver and one-inch

dome tweeter are protected by a metal grille behind the foam front. That's good news, as there's no carry bag included. Practicalities are completed with an integral pole mount, so it can sit comfortably on a

standard speaker stand, and while 12.5kg is reassuringly weighty for such a small box, it's more than manageable as a one-handed carry.

The AER MM200 is physically bigger, but only 2.5kg



The Laney's controls are housed on the front, while the AER's are back-mounted



Laney's anti-feedback section will be a welcome addition for gigging guitarists

more weighty, a surprise when you find out it has two eight-inch speakers powered by two 100-watt transistor power amplifiers. It has neither a pole mount nor tilting option, but we know from years of experience with AER that it is built like the proverbial tank: totally roadworthy, yet still extremely classy in the looks department. It also has an included padded slip cover.

Both amps offer two independent channels; in the Laney's case they're identical, with a whole heap of tone-shaping ability on board. Combi jack/XLR inputs mean you can use a microphone in either channel, while channel two has switchable phantom power for use with mics that need it.

The MM200's channels each have slightly different features – anyone familiar with the popular Compact 60 3 will recognise it immediately – and only channel two has an XLR option. In fact, checking the detailed spec of the MM200

against its little brother reveals that the only obvious circuit differences are at the input stage; minor differences in sensitivity and impedance, but it's otherwise the same as the Compact 60 3, including all the controls, EQ values and so on. One important thing to note is that channel one on the MM200 has optional 9V phantom power that can power certain guitar electronics, those able to accept power on the sleeve of a stereo or TRS jack cable. Channel two, meanwhile, has 48V phantom power for mics or other sources that require it.

Both amps feature a global tone switch – called 'colour' on the AER and 'shape' on the Laney (Foo Fighters, anyone?) – both of which offer a relatively more mid-scooped/more hi-fi-like sounding option. One or the other position will more readily suit your particular guitar and pickup choice: there's no 'right' setting. The EQ sections are very different. AER goes for

a super-simplistic approach: no parametric mid option (no middle control at all on channel two, in fact), and as regular users of the Compact 60 3, we'll say that it's testament to AER's design that we rarely find a need for it.

However, the Laney's more powerful and tweakable EQ – including a 200Hz to 9kHz parametric mid – does enable some extra control over the main 'speaking' voice of your guitar. Equally useful is the Laney's anti-feedback section, that's aimed directly at body

resonance-type feedback.

If you've ever played loud with an electro-acoustic guitar, you will have suffered this, so Laney has tuned the feedback killer over a wide range from 30 to 3kHz to give you the best chance of getting it under control: it works, too. Before engaging it, we'd recommend trying the phase switch, which can be an instant solution for certain feedback types.

Now, if you've heard Monte Montgomery play, you might be surprised that he finds no need for a feedback-busting section,

The AER is built like the proverbial tank: roadworthy, yet still extremely classy in the looks department





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Both amps have XLR DI outputs, headphone sockets, effects loops and line outs

phase switches or any other extra features on his AER. The man plays loud – one of the reasons the MM200 is so heffing powerful – often with extra effects and overdrive in his sound (albeit through an additional electric guitar amp). In that respect, you might say that the Laney is aiming to be the jack of all trades, while the AER is focused on only the features that Master Montgomery needs and uses.

Both amps also have effects sections, headphone sockets, auxiliary inputs, tuner outs, line

outs and effects loops, and of course the all-important XLR DI outputs. The Laney has a mute switch on the front panel, while Montgomery requested that his mute be footswitchable, to whitt you get a top-panel mounted jack where a switch can be connected. There is not one included.

### Sounds

We tried systems including the Taylor ES, Fishman F1 Aura+, K&K Pure Mini and Fishman Rare Earth Blend with both amps, and it's immediately

obvious that the Laney A1+'s ambitions and performance are a long way north of its price point. The parametric mid proves its worth with the K&K Pure Mini (in its host Collings CJ35), for example; a dominant colour around 800Hz to 1KHz is easily tamed, while the Taylor has a bit of a nasal envelope just above that. The Laney tunes it all well.

Dealing with the same issues on the AER is harder. The controls do offer more flexibility than they might suggest; but the Taylor,

especially, is left wanting through the AER. The majority of guitars just sound good plugged straight in with minimum fuss, however.

Switching to the far more ubiquitous Fishman under-saddle and blend systems is less of a challenge for either amp. The dual channels enable you to deal with a split signal from a dual-source system, but again the Laney's more involved EQ enables you to tweak things more exactly.

The big departure between the amps comes with volume.



Channel two on the MM200 offers 48V phantom power for microphones...



...while channel one has a 9V phantom power input



The tidy appearance of the MM200's rear panel is matched by its sonic class

The AER's sonic integrity shines even at near-deafening volumes, if your guitar isn't howling at that point

While the Laney sounds pretty good up to the edge of its abilities – enough for small bar sound reinforcement and backline in small-ish bands – the AER's colossal lungs just keep on shouting way past acceptable levels, and they do so with the kind of musically dynamic interaction with your guitar that the Laney cannot match. The AER's sonic integrity shines even at near-deafening volumes, if indeed your guitar isn't howling at that point. Montgomery's often does, and it's something he uses to brilliant effect.

The onboard digital effects are a point of significant difference, too. The Laney's are useful for a bit of ambience, but don't have the depth and sonic sophistication of those in the AER, reverbs especially: played side by side, the AER's effects are noticeably more refined.

### Verdict

Acoustic amps are hardly very sexy, tending to be more often a slightly reluctant, needs-based purchase rather than something

driven by want or desire. However, that's a crazy situation if you're a performing musician who uses an electro-acoustic guitar, because a good acoustic amp can transform your tonal world, and can increase your enjoyment of performing exponentially as a result.

Laney's A1+ is an absolute value-for-money no-brainer: good sounds, versatile controls and a feature set that makes it a superb companion as electro-acoustic backline, or indeed guitar and vocals sound reinforcement for small bars and cafés.

The far more pricey AER MM200 is a professional-grade powerhouse, better suited to concert stages, and of course the specific needs of Monte Montgomery. To us, it feels like a Compact 60 3 on steroids, and what it might lack in EQ tweakability it more than makes up for in immense sonic integrity, dynamics and delivery at pretty much any volume level you can stand. Professional? Yup. **G**



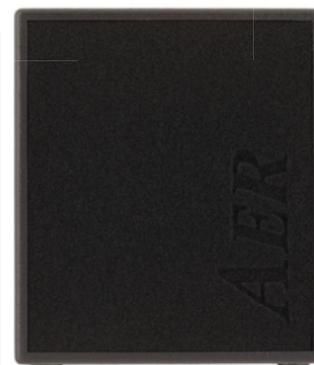
### Laney A1+

**PRICE:** £279  
**ORIGIN:** China  
**TYPE:** Acoustic guitar combo amplifier  
**OUTPUT:** 80 watts RMS  
**CHANNELS:** 2  
**LOUDSPEAKERS:** 1x 8" bass driver, 1x 1" tweeter  
**CONTROLS:** Shape switch, gain, bass, sweep, mid, treble (x2 for two channels), anti-feedback level, aux in level, effect select, effect level, effect send, master volume  
**CONNECTIONS:** 2x XLR/mono jack input, headphone out mini jack, aux in mini jack, DI out XLR, effects send and return (both 6.3mm jack), line out (6.3mm jack)  
**FOOTSWITCH:** Laney FS2 for effects mute and master volume mute (optional, not included)  
**DIMENSIONS:** 348 (h) x 387(w) x 312mm (d)  
**WEIGHT (KG/LB):** 12.5/27.5  
**Laney**  
**0121 508 6666**  
**www.laney.co.uk**



GUITARIST RATING	★★★★★
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

**Guitarist says:** Compelling performance and a competitive price make this a no-brainer acoustic amp choice



### AER MM200

**PRICE:** £1,199  
**ORIGIN:** Germany  
**TYPE:** Acoustic guitar combo amplifier  
**OUTPUT:** 200 watts RMS  
**CHANNELS:** 2  
**LOUDSPEAKERS:** 2x 8" full range  
**CONTROLS:** Channel 1: high/low gain switch, gain, colour switch, bass, middle, treble. Channel 2: line/mic input switch, gain, bass, middle, treble. Master: effects pan, effects select, effects level, master volume, level control for DI, level control for aux in, ground lift, 9V phantom on/off  
**CONNECTIONS:** Inputs: channel 1, 6.3mm jack. Channel 2: Combi TRS/XLR. Mute footswitch jack and switch. Rear panel: Footswitch, tuner out, line out, effects send and return, headphones out (all 6.3mm jack), DI out (XLR)  
**FOOTSWITCH:** Optional for internal and/or external effects mute and master volume mute (not included)  
**DIMENSIONS:** 420 (h) x 360 (w) x 300mm (d)  
**WEIGHT (KG/LB):** 15/33  
**Westside Distribution**  
**0141 248 4812**  
**www.aer-amps.com**

GUITARIST RATING 4	★★★★★
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

**Guitarist says:** Pro-level build, sound and performance with colossal volume. Probably overkill for 'normal' electro-acoustists!



# Six Acoustic Amps

Our pick of the best of the rest

## 1 Fender Acoustasonic 150 £442

A 150-watt (2x75W) monster with two channels that can handle instruments and/or mics, with pre-selected voicing options and string dynamics controls. It also has in-built digital effects and Fender's handy tilt-back legs. It has sound settings for electric guitar, too: very versatile.

Fender GBI, 01342 331700,  
[www.fender.com](http://www.fender.com)

## 2 Yamaha THR5A £199

This lunchbox-sized amp offers four kinds of digitally modelled microphone simulations for your amplified sound. Five watts is great for home practice and recording; just about enough for light sound reinforcement for tiny gigs. There's no XLR out, but it has a USB out.  
Yamaha, 0844 811 1116, [uk.yamaha.com](http://uk.yamaha.com)

## 3 Marshall AS50D £279

An absolute stalwart of the acoustic amp world, what the AS50D lacks in sophistication, it makes up for in functionality, reliability and sheer value for money. Often used as a PA-in-a-box, you can sing through it, play through it and use it for backing tracks/mp3s, too.

Marshall, 01908 375411,  
[www.marshallamps.com](http://www.marshallamps.com)

## 4 Fishman Loudbox Artist £659

The world leader in acoustic guitar pickups also makes acoustic amps. This no-nonsense 120-watter offers two versatile channels, in-built effects, anti-feedback and all the output options you'll need. It represents excellent value for money as a workhorse acoustic amp.

JHS, 01132 865381, [www.fishman.com](http://www.fishman.com)

## 5 Trace Acoustic TA200 £1,225

This 200-watt stereo powerhouse is laden with tone-shaping features, alongside some clever footswitching functions. Made popular during the 80s and 90s, the brand came to symbolise the modern acoustic guitar sound, and has now been upgraded and re-engineered for today's pro players.

Peavey, 01536 461234,  
[www.traceelliot.com](http://www.traceelliot.com)

## 6 Roland AC-33 £415

This stereo amp has guitar and mic/line channels, putting out 15 watts a side (30 in total). There are in-built digital effects and a 40-second sound-on-sound phrase looper, while the optional battery power makes it appealing for musicians on the move.

Roland UK, 01792 702701,  
[www.roland.co.uk](http://www.roland.co.uk)