





# FRIEDMAN BE-MINI HEAD

£299



How does a head this small sound so huge?

**D**ave Friedman's amp design career stretches back over twenty-five years, during which he's been a jealously-guarded secret for many of the world's top players, including legends like Eddie Van Halen and Steve Stevens, alongside contemporary wizards like George Pajon Jr. and the astonishing Doug Rappoport to name a few. There was a time when Friedman's legendary amp tuning and building skills were only available to guitarists who had achieved a certain degree of

tones and a price-tag to match that puts it out of reach for most of us. However, there's hope in the shape of the new BE-Mini, a solid-state design which shares DNA with Friedman's coveted BE-OD pedal, as well as being inspired by the Brown Eye Deluxe's lead channel. At roughly a quarter of the size of a regular amp head and weighing in at just under 2KG, the BE-Mini looks almost toy-like, but inside its immaculately trimmed cabinet there's a veritable volcano of overdriven lead tone waiting to be

affecting its range, while Tight progressively leans out the amp's bass response, stopping the low end from becoming flabby at higher gain settings. Talking of gain, there's a lot of it, even at low settings, while with things maxed out even the weediest of single-coil pickups can sound practically god-like. Like all Friedman amps the BE-Mini is made in the USA and internally it's built to last, with high-quality circuit boards bolted to a robust chassis. Power comes from a 24-volt laptop-style external supply which can operate almost anywhere in the world.

The BE-Mini's features are pared down to the bone; there's just one channel and no footswitchable options for anything remotely resembling cleanliness. Around the back there's a simple series effects loop and a pair of speaker outlets which handle a minimum total load of 8-ohms. The speaker jacks are wired in parallel, which means hooking up a pair of 16-ohm cabinets will give you that 8-ohm load, however a pair of 8-ohm enclosures produce 4-ohms. While many solid-state power amps can handle 4-ohm loads, the BE-Mini cannot, so pick your enclosures carefully.

## FF MOST OF A BROWN EYE DELUXE AT A TENTH OF THE PRICE

notoriety; happily, his supercharged vintage Marshall-inspired signature tones are available to us all today, with a generously large and varied catalogue including heads and combos and pedals, not to mention a new range of guitars co-designed with the legendary Grover Jackson in the pipeline.

Friedman's flagship is the infamous 'Brown Eye Deluxe', an all-valve head with eye-watering

unleashed through a thirty-watt class D output stage. Hooked up to the right cabinet, that's plenty of power for practice, recording and live gigs too, when they return.

The BE-Mini's reassuringly familiar control panel has knobs for gain, bass, middle, treble, presence and a master volume. Two three-position mini toggle switches called 'Cut' and 'Tight' add extra versatility: Cut acts on the BE-Mini's gain control,

### 1 FAMILIAR CONTROLS

The BE-Mini's familiar controls are easy to use, with a smooth-acting passive EQ aided by a pair of three-position toggle switches. 'Cut' acts on the gain control range, while 'Tight' trims the lows.

### 2 SERIES EFFECTS LOOP

On the rear panel there's a simple but high quality series effects loop. Positioned at the end of the preamp and before the output stage, this is the perfect place to plug in time-based effects.

### 3 SPEAKER OUTPUTS

The BE-Mini's dual speaker outlets are connected in parallel and take a total minimum 8-ohm load. Ideal if you want to use a pair of 16-ohm 4x12 cabs.

### AT A GLANCE

**TYPE:** Analogue solid-state head with 30-watt class D power stage and 24VDC external power supply

**POWER:** 30 Watts

**CHANNELS:** One

**CONTROLS:** Gain, Bass, Mid, Treble, Presence, Master volume, Cut switch, Tight switch

**EFFECTS LOOP:** Yes

**OUTPUTS:** Two 1/4 jack speaker outs

**FOOTSWITCH:** No

**CONTACT:** Friedman, [friedmanamplification.com](http://friedmanamplification.com)



## Analogue Advantage

Analogue still has a few tricks up its sleeve

While digital modelling continues to inspire many guitarists, the immediate feel of being able to grab controls that directly affect your tone is where analogue circuits still have an edge. It's why many guitarists swear by their favourite valve amp, although if truth be told it's possible to coax similarly great overdrive tones from analogue solid state circuits. Solid-state analogue has other advantages: it's not so power-hungry as valves and doesn't need big, heavy expensive transformers. And transistors don't wear out, while valves do. That great valve tone you got at yesterday's gig may disappear a few hours later, while an analogue solid-state amp will reproduce the exact same sound night after night.

The BE-Mini's 'Brown Eye' tone is Dave Friedman's unique take on classic 1970s and 1980s British rock heads, full of harmonic depth and so much gain that you can coax feedback squeals at almost conversation level. One advantage of using solid-state electronics in high gain circuits like this is that overdrive tones are easier to sculpt, with smooth, interactive tone controls making it easy to dial in great tones and find them again. We used the BE-Mini with our regular Strat and Les Paul, plugged into a 2x12 open-back cabinet loaded with Celestion Vintage 30s. The Friedman sounds equally



brilliant with single coils or humbuckers, with the Cut switch working to shift from classic rock tones to more contemporary high gain and the Tight switch progressively reducing excessive lows as the gain control is wound up. Classic rock stuff like Cream, and Led Zep is easy to replicate at the lower gain end, while you can easily add more for thick MTV-era ZZ Top, Jake E. Lee, Randy Rhoads and many, many more. Thanks partly to the beefy 24-Volt power supply, the BE-Mini's dynamics feel like a real valve amp, cleaning up as you back off and going into meltdown as you pick harder, with more than enough volume to stand up to an averagely loud drummer. Meanwhile, the series effects loop sounds great with time-based effects like chorus, reverb or delays and you can use the send jack to record into a desk with the loudspeaker disconnected, although the signal has a little more hiss than we'd like to hear.

Friedman's BE-Mini is instant sonic gratification; it's all about that amazing hot-rodged British-inspired tone and getting back to the basics of driving a great



amp from the guitar the old-fashioned way. The lack of a clean channel rapidly becomes insignificant as a wide grin spreads across one's face. While the BE-Mini can be a little hissy when used for quiet recording, you can't hear it with the amp plugged into speakers and turned up loud, which is what everyone who buys it will want to do. Best of all though, it's a real USA-made Friedman you can afford, offering most of the fun of a Brown Eye Deluxe at less than a tenth of the price. What more temptation does a guitar player need?

**Nick Guppy**

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

## ALSO TRY...

### LANEY CUB SUPERTOP

£329

Laney's Cub Supertop is a proper all-valve 15-watt head with footswitchable boost and a custom digital reverb effect. It has a ton of ready-to-shred boutique tone. A real steal.



### HUGHES & KETTNER VINTAGE SPIRIT NANO HEAD

£199

H&K are renowned for their solid-state prowess, and the Spirit Nano amps offer great tone with a serious 50-watt output stage in a package almost small enough to fit in your pocket.



### BOSS KATANA 100 MKII HEAD

£385

If you need the flexibility of digital modelling, then for a few quid more the best-selling Katana MkII has it all covered, with superb amp voices and effects linked to a powerful 100 watt output stage.

