

Guitar Player Sept. 1994: THD Speakers & Enclosures, by Andy Ellis (must change name to Andy Ellis- included in permission agreement)

Speakers-the final frontier! Okay, okay, that's overstating the case a tad, but speakers and enclosures are criminally overlooked elements in the tone chain. They're also the last stop before your signal becomes sound waves. It's amazing: Many of the same players who can expound in explicit detail why they prefer, say, lipstick tubes over humbuckers draw a blank when asked what speakers they play through. Make, model, wattage, and sonic properties? "Gee, I dunno. It's a Marshall cab, right?" Arguably, enclosures and speakers affect your sound as much as your pickups. Both are transducers and both are relatively easy to experiment with.

So here's some good news for tone freaks: THD has a cool new series of beautifully built, groovy-looking speakers cabs that improved the sound of every amp we tested them with. We wailed on four 8 Ω enclosures containing different combinations of THD Longhorn and Cotswold speakers.

Available in 30-watt 10" and 70-watt 12" models (\$95 and \$145, respectively), Longhorns couple extended highs and lows with a rather scooped midrange. They do clean and tight without sounding sterile. By contrast, Cotswolds (available as a 45-watt 10" only; \$115) have a bully midrange and are designed to sound brutish. I mean British. Not the banker with his umbrella, mind you, but the soccer hooligan-ripe, slightly hoarse, and reeking of warm ale.

All four closed-back cabs feature high-grade plywood, first-class hardware, sweet workmanship, and a tuned rear port. We were immediately taken with THD's brilliant 2x10/1x12 triple-speaker format. Mixing a pair of 10s with one 12 gives you thump and articulation in pretty much equal amounts. We tested two versions of this exciting design: an all-Longhorn box (\$649) and a dual Cotswold 10"/Longhorn 12" cab (\$689). The former, with its clarity and openness, was a staff favorite, although the aggressive Cotswold/Longhorn appealed to resident "won't back down" muscle-rockers.

We also dug THD's 4x10 (\$689) cab with two Longhorns and two Cotswolds. In this configuration the pushy Cotswolds seemed more smoothly integrated into the overall sound than with the 2x10/1x12 Longhorn/Cotswold model. Our unanimous fave: The Longhorn 2x12 (\$649), which delivers solid lows without a hint of flab. It actually produced more bottom-end beef than our lovely reissue Marshall 4x12 with Greenback 25s. The THD is smaller and weighs a lot less too, y'all. If you want big sound without slipped disks, this is the answer.

While not inexpensive, these lightweight, musical THD cabs can

improve your tone dramatically. The more heads you have, the more mileage you'll get from one of these enclosures. Black textured vinyl covering is standard; you can get brown, blonde, or tweed for an extra 50 bucks. If you can't pop for the whole package, THD offers its speakers as replacements. (We'd suggest an old 2x12 Fender Bandmaster stuffed with Longhorns.)

Just one question: What's with the cheesy names? No, really: Longhorn is an American cheddar and Cotswold (besides being a region in England) is an especially, ah, rank triple-layered sandwich of English cheddar that surrounds something resembling moldy toe jam. Whew! Our advice is skip the stinky stuff but, by all means, strap your favorite head to one of these five-star THD cabs.