

little yellow THRILLS

by Chris Gill



WHAT DO YOU do if you're tired of the way your amp sounds, but don't have the bucks to buy a new one or to have some high-priced amp surgeon modify its innards?

Fortunately, THD has come up with the Yellow Jacket, a cost-effective, non-permanent amp modification that allows you to replace your existing power tubes with EL84's without rebiasing the amp. The concept is similar to that of 12AX7 preamp modifications like the Soldano Hot Mod, where you just plug an adapter and tube into the socket and you're ready to go. But unlike preamp adapters, which simply boost your amp's gain, the Yellow Jackets significantly alter the tonal and response characteristics of your amp.

The Yellow Jackets are available in four different versions: a set of four adapters for EL34- or 5881-based 100-watt amps; a pair for EL34- or 5881-based 50-watt amps; a pair for 6V6-based amps; and a pair for 7591-based amps. We tried the Yellow Jackets in a 100-watt Marshall Plexi reissue. Because four EL84's provide about 50 watts of output, the amp wasn't quite as loud. The treble response was enhanced, the midrange somewhat thicker, and the amp produced rich, glassy distortion and sparkling clean tones similar to those of a Vox AC30. The Yellow Jackets transformed the Marshall into a totally different amp. Best of all, it took less than five minutes to install the adapters.

THD's Yellow Jackets are the next best thing to getting yourself a new amp. Costing about the same as a good preamp or distortion pedal, they're the way to go if you want to explore new tones on a budget.