



**ZOOM** The Unico's top-mounted controls and I/O are easy to access. Note the independent volume, EQ, and Reverb controls for each channel.

## SCHERTLER UNICO

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

Schertler—a Swiss manufacturer of high-quality acoustic pickups since 1988—recently unveiled a new version of its Unico acoustic amplifier, which now features a *bi-amped* output stage (one amp delivers 150 watts to the bass speaker, and another pumps 35 watts into the dome tweeter). A compact wonder with four independent channels, the Unico resembles a small PA speaker. It has a laminated wood cabinet, a scuff-resistant textured finish, and a receptacle for stand mounting. All of the controls and I/O are top mounted, and a recessed, spring-loaded handle is located on one side. Thanks to its relatively light weight and centrally located handle, the Unico is easy to carry—although you have to be careful when picking it up, as the cabinet can swing around and bonk you on the shin. The Unico's control panel is equipped to accommodate a variety of input sources: dynamic and condenser microphones, pickup-equipped guitars (and other stringed instruments), and such high-output devices as CD players, effects processors, keyboards, etc. Here is a summary of each channel's features:

**Mic:** XLR input; High, Mid, Low controls; 48-volt phantom power; Reverb and Volume.

**Dyn:** XLR and  $\frac{1}{4}$ " inputs; High, Low,

Resonance controls; 10-volt phantom power; Reverb and Volume.

**Stat:**  $\frac{1}{4}$ " input; High and Low controls; Warm switch; Reverb and Volume.

**Line:**  $\frac{1}{4}$ " input; High, Mid, Low controls; Reverb and Volume.

In addition, the Unico has a Master section with an XLR direct out, a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " line out, a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " stereo (TRS) insert jack (distributes signal from an external processor to all outputs), a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " aux out with level control, a Low Cut switch (attenuates frequencies below 150Hz, while maintaining full bandwidth at the outputs), and Master Reverb and Volume knobs. Having all the controls and I/O laid out mixer-style on the top of unit is very convenient, as it allows you to easily make adjustments and/or change connections while seated by or standing above the unit.

With its 35 additional watts and more efficient power distribution, the new Unico sounds even better than its predecessor. Tested with a Martin D-28 fitted with a Sunrise soundhole pickup, a Takamine EAN16C (equipped with Tak's new Cool Tube electronics), and a Hamer Improv, the Unico delivered clear, focused tones with minimal fuss. The Dyn and Stat channels worked well with the acoustic guitars, clearly revealing the attributes of their respective

### INSTANT GRATIFICATION SCHERTLER UNICO

**WHO'S IT FOR?**  
Acoustic players seeking a small, powerful, and accurate-sounding amplifier.

**KUDOS**  
Bi-amp power. Four discrete channels. Light and compact.

**CONCERNS**  
None.

**PRICE**  
\$1,399 retail  
\$1,095 street

**CONTACT**  
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## SPECS

- Four channels
- Independent Volume, Reverb, and active EQ controls (15dB boost/cut)
- Master section with Aux Send, Low Cut, Reverb, and Volume controls
- Phantom power (10-volt/48-volt)
- XLR DI out, 1/4" auxiliary and line outs
- 1/4" line-in and insert jacks
- Spring reverb
- 8" woofer, 1" dome tweeter
- 185 watts (150 watts bass, 35 watts treble)
- 32 lbs

pickup systems with little added coloration. The EQ power on these channels is considerable—in particular, the Dyn channel's Resonance control offers dramatic midrange shaping—and while I didn't need to activate the Warm switch with any of my test guitars, this low-pass filter (which nukes high-frequency content) could be useful for smoothing out the plasticky tones that plague many piezo-equipped instruments. The Dyn and Stat channels can be pushed into distortion by high-output active electronics, and if your instrument is so equipped, you can always plug into the Line channel, which, handily, features its own 3-band EQ. The well-implemented reverb is spacious sounding and surprisingly non-springy for a spring design. Even when dimed, it adds only a miniscule amount of noise to this already quiet amp.

Compared with a Fishman Loudbox (reviewed March, '04), the Unico sounded somewhat more pristine and hi-fi, but couldn't get as loud or muster the midrange muscle of the Loudbox. Putting it another way, the Unico sounded more like a reference monitor while the Loudbox sounded

more like a ballsy stage amp. (Not surprising considering the Loudbox's 250 watts of tri-amped power and dedicated midrange driver.) The Unico also costs nearly twice as much as the Loudbox, but with *three* more channels, it obviously provides a greater degree of flexibility.

## UNICO FOR YOU?

The Unico is a well made and intelligently designed amp for players who desire a compact unit that can accommodate a variety of instruments, outboard gear, and mics. It's like a miniature P.A. system in this regard, and its power and speaker complement make it ideal for small rooms or as a personal monitor on a big stage. The accuracy of the Unico's sound ensures that the personality of your instrument comes through loud and clear, and that factor alone makes it a worthy choice for anyone with a high-end guitar and a sophisticated pickup system. The Unico even sounds great for cello and upright bass, so if you need an amp that can deal with a *lot* of different situations, this little powerhouse is a cool choice. **B**