

Schertler David Amplifier

A compact combo with two bi-amped channels, spring reverb, a host of practical connection options, and crisp, clear tones.

by Shawn Hammond

For more than 20 years now, Switzerland-based Schertler has developed state-of-the-art transducer technology in an effort to surpass the sound quality available from traditional piezo pickups. Schertler transducers are used by such notables as John Jorgensen, Chris Thile, and Charlie Haden, and they're also offered as standard equipment in select Martin, Gibson, and Santa Cruz guitars. In the late 1990s, Schertler also began producing PA

loudspeakers, such as the PUB280 Active Loudspeaker System, and in 2003, they unveiled their first acoustic-instrument amplifier, a 180-watt, three-channel combo called the Unico (reviewed in the March 2004 AG).

Their latest acoustic amp, David, is a pint-sized, 80-watt, two-channel unit with smart features and multiple connection options for conquering the pub and coffeehouse Goliaths out there.

SMART FEATURES, SIMPLE OPERATION

Manufacturers of feature-laden products are probably tired of comparisons to ultrahandy Swiss Army knives. The annoyance is likely increased for companies actually based in Switzerland. But the comparison is apt here, and I hope the people at Schertler will forgive my saying so: David is flat-out stacked with features—spring reverb, two phantom-power voltages (one for vocal mics and one for

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At a Glance

HIGHLIGHTS	Clever, versatile features. Hi-fi tones.
THE SPECS	80 watts. Bass-reflex cabinet with 6-inch woofer and 1-inch dome tweeter. 40Hz–22kHz frequency response. Spring reverb. Master Volume and Master Reverb knobs. Two channels, each with Volume, Reverb, High, Mid, and Low controls. XLR (Mic/DYN channel) and 1/4-inch (Stat/Line channel) inputs. Phantom-power (10 volts), Stat-Line, and Warm switches (Stat/Line channel). Phantom-power (48 volts) and Mic/DYN sensitivity switches, and a notch-filter knob (Mic/DYN channel). Global Low-Cut button. XLR DI output. Quarter-inch stereo Insert jack and Line Out jack. Quarter-inch Auxiliary Out jack with Auxiliary Volume knob. 115/230-volt switch. Ground-lift selector. Stand mount. 20 lbs. 12 x 13 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches. Made in Switzerland.
WATCH FOR	Side-mounted handle makes for awkward on-the-fly repositioning.
THIS IS COOL	Myriad connection options. Two levels of phantom power. Insert jack accommodates Schertler Unico volume pedal.
BEST FOR	Fingerstylists who need sophisticated features in an easy-to-use package.
PRICE	\$1,099 list/\$800 street.
MAKER	Schertler: (425) 822-0102; www.schertlerusa.com.

guitars with internal mics), a stereo Insert jack (for, say, connecting outboard effects using a single 1/4-inch cable), a Line Out jack (for driving a subwoofer or separate cabinet), an Auxiliary Output (for connection to a drum machine, sampler, or MP3 player), and an XLR DI output. Schertler pickup users will also appreciate that the amp was specifically engineered for friendly interfacing with the company's Bluestick pickups (Stat/Line channel), and their DYN soundboard transducer (Mic/DYN). (The manual offers tips on how to connect and configure channel settings for optimal performance.)

CLEAR, DETAILED TONES

I got to know David using a Durango B-46 outfitted with L.R. Baggs Dual Source electronics, an Expression System-equipped Taylor 614ce, and a Martin OMC16RE with a Fishman Aura preamp. After plugging in the Baggs



system, I quickly realized how well-voiced the Stat/Line channel's EQ is. Keeping the Treble, Mid, and Bass knobs at (or slightly below) noon yielded a crisp, robust, balanced sound—yet there was still plenty of tweaking room to accommodate other guitars, electronics, and playing styles. Where other acoustic amps can sound a little too woolly when I solo my guitar's internal mic, David sounded best to my ears when I favored the mic and added just a smidgen of the undersaddle pickup's signal for better articulation. I prefer detailed high end, muscular (but not boomy) bass, and an open, airy sound that leans toward the vintage end of the tonal spectrum. (This works well for my mixture of gentle fingerstyle, twangy chicken-pickin', and alt-rock flatpicking.) With the Durango/David pairing I sometimes found the tones a little bright and in-your-face. However, I appreciated how the Stat/Line channel's Warm button (a low-pass filter that tames high frequencies) alleviated some of those qualities and made the tones breathe a little easier.

Subsequent experimentation with the Taylor and Martin guitars—both smaller-bodied instruments well-suited to fingerpicking—confirmed my conviction that David's forte isn't strummy singer-songwriter or folk fare. But it also proved that the amp excels at setting fingerpicked arpeggios and complex chords awash in sweet, clear trebles.

To get a feel for how the Schertler DYN contact pickup sounds through the amp, I slapped one onto the Durango and a Samick ASDR dreadnought. With the DYN attached to the treble side of each guitar's bridge, both yielded a strong, direct signal with lots of midrange and treble detail that would stand out well in a mix of instruments.

PLENTIFUL JUICE, LUSH REVERB

I found that David sounded more powerful, sparkling, and full the more I opened up the Master Volume—reining in decibels with each channel's dedicated volume rather than reducing the master. Doing so proved the amp has enough juice to take on coffee shops, cafes, and bookstores, while its DI enables it to

be connected to PA systems in bigger venues. I was also impressed that, even at significant volumes, the amp resisted feedback extremely well with each of the test guitars. Even so, it was comforting to know that the Resonance (notch-filter) control was there, just in case.

**David has a
crisp, robust,
balanced sound.**

David is the first acoustic amp I've used that had a spring reverb; most have digital units. And even though I love the excellent digital reverbs I've encountered in some acoustic combos, my time with electric-guitar amps has also made me a big fan of spring units. Nothing complements a solid-body ax quite like a good spring tank, though I can also see how some players might worry that a spring reverb could give their acoustic a sound better suited to a Strat. But I'm happy to report that David's tank adds an authentic ambience that's often hard for digital units to copy, and even at very wet settings, it doesn't sound splattery.

THE WRAP

Schertler's David combo offers an impressive feature set, and its interface is simple to operate, easy to read, and logically laid out. While the amp offers clarity and fidelity that will suit a variety of players and styles, its audiophile sensibilities and crisp tones are likely to appeal to fingerstylists and modern players who will appreciate how David's detailed midrange and transparent trebles reveal nuances often lost in lesser combos.

AG



The Schertler David's control panel is easy to navigate.



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