



Thank you for choosing the Fryette Aether amplifier for your next musical journey...

The Aether amplifier is not just another handwired amp or one of many clones of popular vintage amplifier platforms. It is an original design, built from the ground up utilizing many modern and time honored techniques to bring it to fruition. Aether is more than simply "point to point" wired, it is *true point to point* using a unique Single Turret Point technique to obtain an absolute minimum of connection points between components to complete the various circuits.

We believe in the ritual of preparing to perform. Restringing your instrument, setting up the intonation, wiping off the fingerprints, tuning, and plugging in the amp, are all things we do to mentally and emotionally psyche ourselves up to play. With the Aether amp, setting up is a little more evolved and intimate. Having a separate power amp module - this other cool piece in your hands - brings the ritual to another level, focusing your attention on the importance of the "other half" of your instrument.

Finally – and this is VERY important – you actually now have two completely different amplifiers. You will discover this after you have gotten used to the Aether personality, and it is no stretch to say that it is definitely a split personality. How you will gain access to the "other one" is stupefyingly easy: Simply remove the rubber feet! Once you do that, the big, wide, open spatial character will change instantly to a warm round, richly harmonic stew that will cause you to entirely reacquaint yourself with Aether's capabilities.

Welcome to the family!

The Aether preamp is very simple and intuitive. Likewise, this “manual” – actually, less a manual and more a letter of introduction - assumes you are already feeling pretty comfortable with basic operation, so probably not much need be said about that. There is however, one important thing to be aware of, and that is that the tone controls are active.

Unlike just about any other tube amplifier, the 12 o'clock position of the Treble and Bass controls really is flat. This is in stark contrast to most guitar amps which are heavily voiced and often very scooped regardless of tone setting. The idea here is to let the instrument as a whole speak for itself and allow the maximum amount of interaction between the “two halves” of the instrument – guitar and amplifier. Though you'll want to experiment with the treble and bass controls from time to time, for the most part the amp is so responsive with the EQ set flat that you may just decide to leave it that way.

The Aether preamp is fitted with the following tubes:

V1 – Tung-Sol 12AX7. This is the first and second gain stage.

V2 – JJ ECC83S/12AX7A selected. This is the Tremolo oscillator - NOT a signal amplifier stage.

V3 – Psvane 12AX7A. Psvane is a relative newcomer to the tube market and their 12AX7 is an exceptional tube in this particular application. This is the Reverb return stage and verb/dry mixer. It is also the final preamp output stage that feeds the power amp, and in this location is a balanced, low noise, low microphonic tube.

V4 – JJ 12AT7. This is the Reverb drive tube.

The Aether power amp module is fitted with the following tubes:

V1 – Electro Harmonix 6SN7. This is a big bottle dual triode similar in operation to a 12AU7 – only with more cajones. It serves as the power amp input gain stage and phase inverter.

V2, V3 - Tung-Sol 6L6 power tubes. We chose these as much for their visual appeal as performance.

V5, V6 – Sovtek 5Y3 rectifier tubes. These operate in a complementary (push-pull) design delivering consistent, reliable performance by combining the advantages of solid state and tube rectifier designs.

All of these tubes can be substituted with any equivalent brand or type.

The rectifier tubes can be 5AR4, 5Y4, 5Y3, GZ34 or 5U4GB. They must always be used in pairs (same brand and type). It's impossible to describe what every tube change will evoke in the Aether, but changing the rectifier tubes will yield surprisingly distinctive characteristics. For example:

5AR4 – Vintagey, crisp and responsive. This will accentuate the rock and roll vibe - Chuck Berry, Eddie Cochran, early Kinks and Yardbirds. A light touch goes a long way with these.

5Y3 – Clear, round, musical, extremely touch sensitive and expressive. Think Otis Rush, Wes Montgomery, Jimmy Reed, or Sun era Carl Perkins. Flatwound strings dream of sounding like this.

5U4 – Even straight bottle types like the EH5U4GB actually fit with the cover on! The best description with these is “gutbucket”. Neck pickup, guitar tone down and a fair amount of push easily gets you into Woman Tone and Spirit In The Sky territory.

Tube substitutions make dramatic differences in the Aether's behavior. Because the signal path is so simple and pure, tube subs will have a noticeably greater impact than probably anything you're used to. Even changing the tremolo oscillator will affect the tone. Not because signal passes through this tube, but because different tubes will cause slight changes in the voltage to all of the preamp tubes, and that will affect tone, dynamics and headroom. Even so, changing V1 and V3 will have the greatest impact.

About NOS tubes, we love them, no doubt. But we must admit 2 important facts:

- 1) *In a vacuum tube, the vacuum is not static, nor absolute. Oxygen and other molecules leach through the glass envelope into the bottle over time. This reduces vacuum integrity and therefore the performance of old tubes.*
- 2) *Other elements of the internal structure of the tube age – particularly the cathode - and decrease in performance over time. A big reason that transistors overtook tube technology was not because transistors would last forever or perform better. They were simply smaller, cheaper to replace, emitted less heat and used less energy.*

Please use and enjoy your NOS tubes in the Aether. You will find many new sounds to explore. However, do not dismiss the validity of new production tubes. Many are very well built and will last long enough to sound as mature in 40 to 60 years as your treasured NOS stash sounds today. Worry not! The Aether will certainly be around long enough to prove this point.

The tonality or sonic signature of the Aether is entirely derived from the behavior of the gain stages, the power amp character, the cabinet response and the speaker tonality. In fact, the speaker was specially designed for this amp. The Fane A60S is custom built to deliver the rich Alnico flavor with solid low-end handling capacity not normally associated with a single twelve open back cabinet design, which in this case is quite resonant. **keep in mind that the speaker will break in over time, and mellow accordingly. How long will this take? All depends on the amount and volume you normally play at. When it begins to break in you will definitely know it.**

The Aether responds very dynamically whether you keep the volume low and the guitar full up or the opposite. In fact, you will get the most amazing range of dynamics by turning the amp volume to around 2 or 3 o'clock and just running the amp from the guitar, Of course, how you set the volume control will affect the intensity of the bright switch, so please do spend some time finding the best balance between guitar volume and tone, amp volume setting and bright switch setting. Many players find that they spend much more time on this than they ever will on the tone pots, and you'll soon discover why.

The Aether power amp rear panel features a slide switch called "Ambience". This is a 2 position feedback switch that determines how much negative feedback - NFB - is employed as well as how much natural high frequency roll-off occurs as a result. The BOLD setting is the one with the lowest NFB. *If you switch this while playing it will make a scratchy noise. This is because the NFB is transitioning from low to off to high. Doing thus won't damage anything, but it is not a defect in the switch either. We just chose to use a slide switch to match the preamp.*

CAUTION: THE AETHER POWER AMP GETS HOT. THIS IS NORMAL. It is very important to be aware that Aether is a cathode biased amp, meaning that the power tubes are operating at **full output whether you are playing or not.** Due to the compact arrangement of the Aether power amp, it will get hot fairly quickly. **This is normal.** Once it gets to its optimum operating temp, it will typically stay there – meaning it won't continue to rise to any dangerous level.

Though there is no internal fan, there are ample ventilation slots to facilitate convection cooling sufficient for safe operation. Of course the standby switch will allow the unit to cool off when taking breaks. Keep in mind that the power tubes are running fairly conservatively and the transformers are designed to withstand much higher operating temperatures than they will ever see in this application. Most of the heat is coming from the power tube closest to the right side of the power amp. We've considered putting a fan in here, but once the temperature gets to a certain point it will not increase further. *You can actually leave it running this way all night long!* While a fan may make it seem safer, it won't necessarily make anything inside last longer. However, if you feel that you would prefer to have the power amp running cooler, we'll consider installing a fan for you. *Please remember that Aether does not require a fan to operate reliably and fans do make noise, which by itself is a pretty solid case for not installing one.*

We hope you will let us know your first impressions and we do hope it brings you as much inspiration and pleasure to play as it did for us to design – and to play. The Aether project has been a very rewarding journey from conception to completion.

Sincerely,

Steven M Fryette
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LIMITED WARRANTY

Subject to the obligations and exclusions found below, this product is warranted by Steven Fryette Design, Inc., (herein SFD) against manufacturing defects in materials and workmanship for the period of Five (5) Years from the date of purchase, with the exception of the tubes, fuses and speakers where applicable, which carry a 90 day warranty.

The warranty period commences on the date of purchase by the original user. Performance under this warranty must be obtained at one of the following: an SFD Authorized Service Station, by returning the unit to the SFD factory with prior written authorization, or (in countries outside of the United States) by a representative SFD distributor.

Obligations

- 1. This warranty will be honored only on the presentation of the original proof of purchase.*
- 2. Transportation of the product to and from an authorized SFD service outlet is the responsibility of the user. Units sent directly to the SFD factory for warranty repairs must be authorized by SFD and shipped prepaid.*
- 3. The speaker warranty covers damage specifically arising from defects in materials and manufacturing. Once the item has been received by SFD, Inc., and the fault confirmed, we will provide a replacement.*

Exclusions

- 1. This warranty shall not cover adjustment of consumer-operated controls as explained in the appropriate instruction manual, or products that have been altered or have missing, or defaced serial numbers.*
- 2. This warranty shall not apply to the appearance of accessory items including but not limited to, cabinets, cabinet parts, or knobs.*
- 3. This warranty does not apply to uncrating, setup, installation, or the removal and reinstallation of products for repair.*
- 4. This warranty shall not apply to repair or replacements necessitated by any cause beyond the control of SFD including, but not limited to, any malfunction, defects, or failure caused by or resulting from unauthorized service or parts, damaged or broken tubes, incorrect line voltage, improper maintenance, modification or repair by the user, abuse misuse, neglect, accident, fire, flood, or other Acts of God.*
- 5. Responsibility for the repair of any SFD product sold outside of U.S. boundaries is borne by the SFD representative in that particular country or territory. Also, the warranty term and conditions may be different from those stated above. Please contact the SFD distributor or dealer in your country for more information.*

The foregoing is in lieu of all other expressed warranties, and SFD does not authorize any party to assume for it any other obligation or liability. In no event shall SFD be liable for special or consequential damages arising from the use of this product, or for any delay in the performance of this warranty due to causes beyond our control.

Some states do not allow limitations on how long an implied warranty lasts and/or do not allow the exclusion or limitation of consequential damages, so the above limitations on implied warranty and consequential damages may not apply to you. This warranty gives you specific legal rights. You may have other rights that vary from state to state.

WARRANTY REGISTRATION

U.S. and Canadian residents: Your warranty is validated using the original purchaser's proof of purchase receipt. All other international residents please contact the authorized distributor your Fryette product was purchased from. For a list of international distributors please visit www.fryette.com/dealers.html

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