

Suncoast

CUSTOM AMPLIFICATION



Dick Bauerle – **Skyline Special**
CUSTOM 50 GUITAR AMPLIFIER
USERS GUIDE

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More about the philosophy behind our amp...

Because of the diverse material I have to play- both on stage and in the studio, versatility was perhaps my (our) main objective. My performance repertoire ranges from Standards to Smooth Jazz, Blues and Pop Rock to Country and... beyond. I needed to cover all of those bases often times instantaneously by having an amp that could do so with a bare minimum of “knob twirling”. In short, I needed to have an amp that could cover all of that material once the “master settings” on the amp were established for any given venue. To that end, I wanted the amp to be truly “plug & play”. It had to have great clean tones and great overdrives as soon as it was turned on! It had to be “player friendly”.

To accomplish that goal, please note that both versions of the Custom 50 have been extensively studio and **gig tested**. We feel that final stage of our R&D was the most important! Many amps sound great online or in the local music store and then fall short or even fail in the “real world”. We did not want to join that “club”! Because of the vast musical spectrum I personally have to cover, my requirements may well exceed yours. But if we could get this amp to excel for my radical needs, it should easily excel for you as well. I couldn't be happier with where we ended up!

To get the most out of your Suncoast “Dick Bauerle” Skyline Special - Custom 50 amplifier, you'll find the following tips to be most informative and helpful.

Initial set up (normal input): We suggest setting the initial Volume control between 4 and 5 depending on how hot your pickups are. Remember: The setting here WILL have an effect on the overdrive level setting that occurs further down the signal path. You can have some fun by experimenting with the balance between those two controls, but the most “generic” place to start is as described above: 12:00. We also recommend activating the Effects Loop right away - BUT NOT the FET Input on the footswitch when you first get started, for reasons we'll explain shortly!

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Effects Loop should be turned on whether or not you have something plugged into it! It functions as a “Post Master Volume” tube buffer to drive the phase inverter. If the Send/Return volume controls are turned all the way down, you will hear little to nothing! We strongly suggest setting the SEND and RETURN controls to 12:00 initially. If you want more clean volume/ headroom, you can increase the RETURN volume to 2:00 or beyond to obtain that.

Here’s another fun fact: If you increase the SEND volume control- you can increase the “pre gain” of the amp as you will then be hitting the EFX loop preamp tube harder, causing more initial compression to take place.

But to “learn” and enjoy the amp right away. You can keep things simple by using the tips found earlier in this section. Once you’re comfortable, you can experiment further! The amp sounds great “generically”, these types of experiments are more “nth degree” than essential in getting a fabulous tone out of your Custom 50.

Sounds: We suggest you set up your clean sound first. This is easy to do as in most cases you can leave the tone controls in the 12:00 position. For a humbucking guitar, you may want to slightly increase the treble and slightly cut the bass. The opposite could be true for single coils. Of course- this is also dependent upon your speaker choice, “playing touch”, and what YOU want to “feel and hear”. There are NO bad sounds on this amp- keep it “neutral” at first and enjoy playing through it for a while before you start going too crazy with the tone controls. Speaking of tone, be sure to check out the presence control, it works! It is a great tool in the final fine tuning of your tone. I have found that 6-7 works great for Humbuckers, while 3-5 works well for guitars that tend to be more on the brighter side.

Once you establish your clean tone and volume, kick in the overdrive! The Custom 50 has PLENTY of drive, so reduce the level & ratio controls before activating it to protect your ears! Now increase the LEVEL control to get the desired amount of drive. You can then balance the clean and overdrive volumes by using the RATIO control.

What is that FET (Field Effect Transistor) control all about? Jim and I are both very proud of this unique feature on our amp! We call it our “secret sauce”!

Let’s keep this section performance related and not technical engineering “overkill”. You may have noticed that “certain” amps, like ours, have two inputs: NORMAL and FET. You may have also noticed that you seldom, if ever, see anything plugged into the FET jack. So why is it there?

It was in theory designed to provide a higher (15db) input jack for weaker, piezo equipped guitars. In theory, plug your electric into the NORMAL input and your acoustic into FET input on gigs. That’s the simple applied theory.

But we have found that the FET can do really nice things when MIXED into the NORMAL sound (and jack). It adds a “certain” added dimension and bigness to the overall tonality of the Custom 50. So set the FET volume control to around 12:00, hit the footswitch, and you’ll hear the amp bloom even more both in clean and overdrive modes. The combination function occurs via the footswitch. Feel free to also plug directly into the FET input to see what it does independently of the normal sound

Remember though, the FET can add a LOT of extra gain, that’s why we strongly suggest a setting here between 12 and 1:00. If you exceed that by too much, you will get a “buzzier” overdrive that will likely not be as pleasant for the “generic” user! But feel free to experiment here so you can hear for yourself what’s going on. You WILL HEAR a gain and volume boost as you turn this control clockwise. Don’t forget, if you still need more clean volume, you can get that from the Effects Loop RETURN control. The SEND control, as mentioned earlier, will also add more overall gain whereas the RETURN control is just clean volume. Increasing this control will not affect your gain staging.

At 50 watts, the Custom 50 will handle most every gig situation with ease without needing to increase the volume with the RETURN control. But it’s there if you need a little more “push”- think of it as a 2nd Master Volume.

The PAB (Preamp Boost) section.

Other amps of this “lineage” all have PAB boosts, but NONE of them has the control we have put on the Custom 50. You have 2 types of PAB to choose from: Normal and “Flat”. Normal is the typical style PAB boost where the lows are reduced and the mids and highs are “automatically cranked” to produce a singing, saturated overdrive tone. Many PAB’s also create a substantial increase in volume when activated which can cause a volume control “juggling act” on stage. We have corrected this issue by adding in a volume control for the PAB signal! The Suncoast Custom 50 allows you to regulate (control) this boosted volume so that it blends in nicely with ALL of the other overdrive modes at your disposal. You have four overdrive modes to choose from at all times: basic, mid boost, PAB boost and even all of them together! We have also added a “Flat switch” to the PAB. When PAB Flat is engaged, the PAB Boost bypasses the tone stack to create a Flat Frequency Response preamp WITHOUT EQ. Both options sound great, simply choose the one that works best for you. Set the volume and enjoy!

The EQ and other controls on the amp such as reverb are pretty intuitive and self-explanatory, but there is one more thing to talk about:

Master Volume: In many amps you may have owned, the master volume control typically gets louder in noticeable increments from “off” to about halfway up. That’s the main range, as the volume does not get much louder from that halfway point and up. Our amp is set up a little differently. You will notice smaller incremental volume changes in the early sweeps of the control. You will notice that the major “volume bumps” occur around 4, 6, and especially at 7. This amp gets plenty loud at 7! So the bottom line is don’t be afraid to “crank” the master volume if you need more stage volume! In fact, we suggest that you adjust the master volume FIRST- BEFORE you resort to using the Effects Return volume control as an additional source of overall amp volume. As you “crank” the master volume, you may have to slightly tweak the other volume controls: input Volume, Level, Ratio to further fine tune your sound. But it’s easy enough to do and remember as YOUR set up!

To Conclude:

This amp is designed to be as friendly and “plug and play” as possible, but if you have any questions or get “stumped” on anything, please feel free to contact the Suncoast Support team, we are here to help you LOVE your new amp! And we know you will....

Dick Bauerle
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cc. Jim S., Robbie K.