



By Jim Basara - GJD

In the last issue, I discussed some of my favorite guitars at Winter NAMM. Today's award is for Supporting Products. In the past, I've reserved this for a variety of products from humidifiers to tone circuit upgrades. However, at this year's NAMM, I didn't find any of the secondary items that could measure up to some of the new amplifiers that are now hitting the market. So, this year's Supporting Product awards are going to amp companies for three outstanding new products.

First up is Elmwood Amps with their new M90 Modena. Ken Volpe introduced this amp a short time ago with his [Elmwood M90 Modena Review](#). As someone who constantly struggles with amp selection, Ken's review intrigued me greatly. My problem is that I am on the "friends circuit" meaning that I get together with various groups of friends who play everything from clean folk, to country, to blues, to classic rock, to metal. As such, I've always maintained a large array of pedals from which I select those that I need for the particular style. Overdrive and distortion has always been an issue since I've never found a tube amp that could provide feel and responsiveness, but was still able to offer up a wide range of gain settings.



The M90 seems to solve these problems. It offers perhaps the best combination of responsiveness and feel of any boutique tube amp. Ken referred to this as "the perfect amp" for me, as I had an absolute blast playing with it. The boost/drive knob is what I love about this amp is that each setting, whether it's clean, lightly overdriven, or full overdrive feels like the amp was specifically designed for that particular sound. Many of the boutique amps that I've played have a clear sweet spot and everything else sounds like you're stretching what the amp was really meant to do.

Also, being a townhouse dweller, I was thrilled to find that the M90 sounds awesome at low volume levels, even fully overdriven. Sure, it opens up wonderfully when cranked, but even at levels quiet enough to hear a TV at the same time, the amp is very responsive and provides great tone. I expect Elmwood to quickly build a fan base with this amp.

Next up is MI Audio's Revelation 60W Head. The Aussie pedal company has launched this new amplifier that it refers to as 'Beyond Boutique', and they may have a valid point. This amp is absolutely loaded with features. The Revelation offers 4 completely independent channels featuring Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble and Volume. Each channel is independently voiced with unique design architecture, meaning that changing channels feels more like changing amps, not simply changing gain. Each channel also has 3 gain modes, low, mid, and high, allowing any of the four differently voiced channels to act as a 'clean', 'crunch', or 'overdrive' channel, or the amp can be set up for four distinct clean tones, or four different overdrive variations. The amp also features four FX loops that can operate at line level and guitar level, leveraging ultra low noise buffered circuitry.



Two different operating modes and a foot controller where you can switch to 128 programs. Mode uses the optional six-button foot controller where you can switch to 128 programs for blending settings for channel, gain mode, master volume, FX bank, and more. This level of Midi control is rare indeed for a boutique, all tube head.

Like the M90, the Revelation should definitely be considered by anyone looking for a boutique head. It sounds great and provides incredible levels of flexibility.

Last but not least, we have the new Laney Class A Lionheart L5T-112. A 5-watt Laney sounds a bit like an oxymoron, but this new offering from the proven amp manufacturer delivers everything you'd expect from an amp with the Laney logo on it. Laney says that the amp is designed to provide the 'evocative, classic tones of hot tubes pushed hard, but at a volume level your neighbors can live with.' Well, the first part is certainly true, but this is the loudest 5 watts I have ever heard.

The NAMM Awards: Best Supporting Products

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