

## Review of the new AMP+ Series Super 57 and M59 as seen on GUITAR GEEK website



The affordability of recording gear over the past decade has given rise to a whole host of interesting amp-like gadgets in the form of stand-alone digital modelers and in-the-box amp plugins. These incredible tools have allowed guitarists unparalleled access to a nearly unlimited stash of pedals and amplifiers – albeit virtual ones. While advances in technology have been nothing short of sonically astounding, most of these digital simulations almost always require a combination of real guitar tracks, DI signals, outboard compressors, or tons of EQ tweaks to make them sound believable.

What always seems to be lacking in digitally-modeled guitar tracks is dynamics, presence and punch – plain and simple. No matter how hard you try to achieve that in-your-face-right-at-the-edge-of-the-speaker sound, the end result usually falls fairly short on tape. Bottom line? Finding a perfect place in a mix for modeled tracks can be challenging.

Roger Mayer has addressed these recording issues and inherent shortcomings with his new AMP+ pedals. Rather than wandering down the digital rabbit hole like most companies, the AMP+ lineup builds upon Roger's 40+ year experience with analog tones. Staying true to his roots, the Super 57 and M59 are 100% solid state with all analog signal paths. The obvious advantage of both pedals is the lack of latency – something that you'll always find (and certainly experience) in digital modelers and plugins. For some players this lack of lag translates into more feeling hitting the tape and a purer playing experience.

The majority of guitarists fall into either the Fender or Marshall camps and – as subtly implied in the model names – the Super 57 and M59 certainly live up to those legendary sounds in spirit. One can never expect a carbon copy of a classic amp's sound from a pedal – even one that is actually an amplifier in the true sense of the word – and the same is true with the AMP+. That said, the vibe is spot on with both models. They aren't exactly the same, but are so refreshingly familiar that they feel, well... right on.

The Super 57 conveys that broad expansive spectrum of sound you'd expect from a Bassman, Bandmaster or Showman amp. The bottom end is warmly defined while the top end retains that smooth sparkle that makes notes sing. Clean sounds have that tight snappy Fender spank while cranked tones bring out killer tube-like dynamics and all kinds of richly compressed overtones that overdrive fanatics die for.

Plugging in the M59 gave us immediate access to that extra tough and instantly recognizable Marshall Plexi glassiness. The Marshall's on-the-edge breakup is captured in fine detail with picking dynamics calling all the shots. The clean sounds are up-front and edgy, but can be round and woolly depending on how much you want to dig in. So much so, that notes can be reservedly held back or brought to a completely crunchy bloom.

Unlike the unpredictable results you'll get from sticking pedals in front of a digital modeler, the AMP+ boxes gladly accept anything you plug in line in front of it – and responds admirably.

Control-wise, each pedal has a large single volume, a bass and treble knob and the all important presence parameter. The volume knob is huge and allows for easy access via your foot thanks to its clever placement – it extends a bit over the edge of the upper left side of the enclosure. Very handy. The wide range of tones afforded by these four settings is vast, varied and above all, useable. You won't find any dead spots or drastic jumps in tone – everything transitions perfectly. The presence knob is the real secret weapon here and we found ourselves putting it to good use while discovering that sweet spot within mixes.

Getting solid sounds to tape seems to be Roger Mayers main goal here and he has, without a doubt, succeeded. For contrast, we tracked four separate guitar signals in our DAW: one via direct box, one plugged into a popular amp modeler device (set to either a Fender or Marshall sims), another direct signal which was also routed through a popular amp plugin with their respective Fender or Marshall simulations dialed in, and the last through either one of the AMP+ models. Sound-wise, the AMP+ tracks were the liveliest of the bunch. The AMP+ tracks were so realistic that they actually sounded like close-mic'd combo amps. The clarity, presence and detail were incredible; so much so that the final tracks in the overall mix required little more than a touch of reverb to make them gel in the mix. Effortless.

To be fair, the competing digitally modeled tracks didn't sound bad. In fact, they sounded really nice. They just didn't have the wide open sound of a mic'd amp pushing air in a room. When stacked up against the AMP+ tracks, the modeled tracks seemed to suffer from that muffled-blanket sound.

The next comparison was with a Fender-type amp mic'd with an industry standard Shure SM-57. This is where things really boiled down to what ultimately worked for the track. In our particular song, we ended up panning the AMP+ track hard right and the regular amplifier hard left. We could have gone with either by themselves, but that's what worked for the song. The end result was a something that sounded absolutely massive – enough said.

What can you expect beyond the comforts of the studio walls? Well, after hearing that many guitarists are using their AMP+ pedals onstage in favor of their traditional backline, we decided to test both AMP+ models through a full-range, heavy-wattage keyboard amp which effectively mimicked a decent PA. The tones we previously tracked to tape translated perfectly to a live setting – spot-on, but even better. Another test through a Tech 21 Power Engine (flat power amp with 1x12 speaker) achieved the same results.

Eliminating excess tour gear has become the norm the past few years for many artists as profit margins have shrunk and airline fees have risen. Adding an AMP+ at the tail end of your pedal board and ditching your amp altogether is something I can see happening more and more. Without the wild variable of mic'ing an amp onstage, you can definitely achieve a more consistent sound from night to night. Consistent sound equals better performances in my book. Plus, the thought of not lugging an amp around might be something I could get used to when devices like the AMP+ sound so fantastic.

Even if you can't stomach the thought of playing without an amplifier onstage, the AMP+ Super 57 and M59 will, without question, find a permanent place in the studio. For tracking direct guitar sounds, there isn't anything out there that even comes close to capturing these kind of direct amp sounds on tape.

**AMP+ BASS is also available.**



Based on the success of the Super 57 and M59 we have added the BASS model which produces a wide variety of Bass tones that have roots in the SVT Series of amplifiers.

[www.roger-mayer.co.uk](http://www.roger-mayer.co.uk)