

Product Profile

Steward SG-75 Amp



Vital Statistics
Type of amp: Solid-state combo
Features: Channel switching, preset EQ for distortion channel, filter for distortion, stereo headphone output, effects loop
Speaker: Heavy-duty 12"
Power rating: 70 watts RMS into 8 ohms, 90 watts into 4 ohms (using an 8-ohm extension cabinet)
Dimensions: 17.20" x 14.80" x 9.80"
Weight: 35 lbs
Retail price: \$629.00 (includes footswitch, cover, and power cord)
Front panel (L-R): Illuminated power switch, fuseholder, reverb, bass, midrange, treble, gain, channel selector switch, filter, gain 2, EQ set/EQ in switch, gain 1, input jack
Rear panel (L-R): Fuseholder, extension speaker jack, headphone jack, footswitch DIN plug, effects send and return jacks, monitor output jack, monitor output level, AC power cord

The Steward SG-75 is designed so that either or both channels can be selected via panel control or footswitch.

STEWART AMPLIFIERS AREN'T WELL-known in the U.S.—yet. Formerly sold primarily in England under the Session name, these sturdy, louder-than-they-look, hard-working bulldogs are distributed in the U.S. by C-T Audio Marketing, Inc. Our profile covers the SG-75, a compact guitar amp with channel-switching, plus a mode for running both channels at once. Even though it is solid-state, its sound rivals practically any tube amp its size, right down to singing feedback and ripsaw distortion when fully overdriven.

Small guitar amps often suffer from imbalanced tone—namely a weak bottom end and a tendency to distort at supposedly clear-tone settings, even at moderate levels. However, the SG-75 delivers a smooth response over its entire frequency range, and therefore it's hard to believe that this amp is only driving a single 12" speaker.

Because the control system is a bit more complex than one might ordinarily expect from a small amp, the owner's manual really comes in handy. Let's examine some of the departures from the standard control fare. The knob labeled Channel A Gain 1 sets the amount of overdrive, while Channel A Gain 2 sets the overall volume of Channel A. Simple enough. Channel B, with a single gain control, is designed primarily for rhythm, judging from its clear sound.

A knob labeled "filter" shapes the overall tone of the overdrive. Setting it at 5 achieves a more or less flat response, while turning toward 0 cuts the treble and turning toward 10 brightens it up. Its range is broad, and with full distortion it can make the tone cut like a razor or sound as if it were buried under pillows—and anything in between. This is a very versatile function. The EQ mode selector switch is for choosing either the three rotary controls or a preset tone response with a "hump" at 400 Hz for emphasizing midrange. The preset tone is suggested for beefing up thin Strat sounds, and it works well. However, it only works when Channel A is active. This might

seem like a limitation, but the preset tone is actually at its best when Channel A's distortion is set relatively high. Particularly with guitars equipped with single-coils, this preset tone adds a ballsy, room-filling fatness. By using this switch for the distortion channel, it's possible to dedicate the EQ controls to shaping only Channel B's timbre.

The tone controls have a fair—although not exceptional—effect, with the treble operating in the band from 1kHz to 10kHz, the midrange from 200 Hz to 1kHz, and the bass from 50 Hz to 200 Hz. The spring reverb sounds good without being *sproingy*, and it can be set to a dramatic extreme: It's easy to turn it up to the point where it almost completely overtakes the straight sound (great for atmospheric textures).

The rear panel has jacks for effects send and return, the channel/reverb selection footswitch, a monitor output, and an extension speaker. The headphone output drives any headphones with an impedance ranging from 8 ohms to 600 ohms, and the effects loop is designed for line-level effects (primarily rack-mounted), although it works fine with many pedals. The monitor output lets you send a post-effects loop output to another

amp, a power amp, or P.A. Its level control allows for matching the signal's intensity to other gear.

The cabinet is solidly constructed and completely covered with a thick gray tweed cloth. Each corner is capped with a metal cover, and a single rubber strap handle is located on top. A toroidal power transformer is located in the bottom of the cabinet. Designed for low noise, this transformer is isolated to further reduce possible interference.

For a small amp, the SG-75 is extremely loud and punchy. Although the bottom end isn't as deep as one would expect from, say, an open-back 2 x 12 design, it is more than sufficiently bottomy for most applications, including clear-tone rhythm. The FET pre-amp's smooth distortion can be varied from slightly edged to fully buzzsawed by changing the relative levels of Gain 1 and Gain 2. The preset EQ switch lends a hefty fatness to the distortion, even with a Strat in its lead setting. Channel B yields robust clarity, and with its midrange slightly turned down and bass and treble cranked fully up, it puts an excellent polish on rhythm guitar—with single-coils or humbuckers. With both channels punched in, you can get a smooth blend of distortion and clear-tone guitar, something that makes rhythm guitar or single-note lines cut through just about anything.

In all, the SG-75 is a very good unit for practice and gigs in small venues. It can drive external power amps, if you like a modular approach to filling larger rooms. Its crunchy distortion and crisp clear channel combine to create a versatile little powerhouse.

Manufacturer's Response

Andre Walton of C-T Audio Marketing, Inc., says, "A great deal of thought and design went into the footswitch used for channel switching, channel mixing, and reverb on/off selection. Rather than placing the channel indicators on the amp, the footswitch incorporates LED indicators so that they are easily visible. Also, the whole assembly can't readily be kicked over."



Recessed on the top rear panel are controls, including a channel selector and an EQ switch.



Above: A very favourable American 'Guitar Player' review from confirmed 'toob heads'.
 Right: Our stand at the 1986 Frankfurt Music Messe exhibition.