

# Magnatone Twilighter Stereo

## *Amplifier Vibrato Revival*

**M**agnatone's Twilighter Stereo guitar amplifier is an example of how to resurrect the best of the old while raising the bar for quality, innovation and performance. The Magnatone name dates back to 1937, and its evolution was fraught with changes of ownership and focus. However, the company did produce some great tube amps in the late '50s and early '60s. One of Magnatone's defining features was pitch-shifting vibrato, which the company invented in 1956. It used a non-moving part to create rapid shifts in pitch, in contrast to alterations in volume as utilized by competitors' tremolos.

Following its demise in 1969, the Magnatone brand lay dormant until Ted Kornblum, whose family founded St. Louis Music (an early distributor of Magnatone), discovered the trademark had been abandoned and purchased the rights to it. Kornblum assembled a dream team of engineers to develop a line of professional guitar amps that represent the pinnacle of modern design and engineering while maintaining the original Magnatone vibe, and in 2013, the new Magnatone was launched. Critical to the endeavor was the vibrato circuit, which was painstakingly re-created by engineer Obeid Khan. The company's first offering, the Single V, is the crown jewel of the Traditional Collection models. Magnatone now features several lines of amps, all U.S.-made (except tubes).

The 22-watt-per-channel Twilighter Stereo is Magnatone's first stereo amp. With two 12-inch speakers, it's also the first model to offer true stereo vibrato. Its retro vibe and layout are based on the Custom 280 model of the late 1950s, which got its stylish look from the skilled furniture designers employed during Magnatone's Etsy Organ period. The cabinet covering is cotton-backed book-binding material, and the handle is Amish-made leather.

Switching the Twilighter Stereo on, I was struck by its clean, in-your-face presence. Every note sparkles, and the tube-driven long pan spring reverb fills out the tone beautifully. This amp excels with electric guitar, both solidbody and semi-hollow. It's clean, with tons of headroom, but will overdrive nicely when



pushed to higher gain levels. The pitch-shifting vibrato generates sounds that recapture the vintage guitar tone we all love. Along with speed and intensity controls, you can select stereo mode or mono mode, or apply the vibrato to each speaker individually. It offers a choice of "FM" or "AM" to toggle between true pitch shifting and standard tremolo. An included footswitch turns reverb and vibrato on and off; an optional expression pedal allows control of vibrato speed.

The new Magnatone has done an amazing job of striking a balance between reviving the glory of the past while maintaining a focus on the future. At \$3,199, the Twilighter Stereo amplifier is a modern-age classic. —Keith Baumann

Ordering info: [magnatoneusa.com](http://magnatoneusa.com)