

## Bench Tests

# Electro-Acoustic Coolness

## Ashdown Acoustic Radiator 1

By Art Thompson

Compared to classic electric-guitar amplifiers, acoustic amps tend to be tragically short on style. Fender's Acoustasonic series notwithstanding, most modern acoustic amps look downright nerdy compared to the fine flat-tops

that are often plugged into them.

England's Ashdown Engineering has upped the vibe factor immensely with its Acoustic Radiator 1 (\$999 as tested), which is styled to resemble a late-'50s portable record player. The Radiator 1 features lovely burgundy leatherette

### Snapshot

The Ashdown Acoustic Radiator 1

(\$699; \$1,399 with polished metal covering), a 60-watt acoustic amplifier, sports a classic, old-radio look and delivers impressive sound for its size. The Radiator 1 gets an Editors' Pick Award.



#### REAR PANEL

- Power switch
- Balanced XLR out
- 1/4" line-out
- 8" speaker with dual-tweeter array
- Effects loop
- Line out/link jack
- Clip LED

Swing-out grille



Output, reverb, EQ, input controls

Phase and shape buttons

PHOTO: PAUL HAGGARD

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covering with gray piping, a cream-colored front panel, and a hinged front grille that opens to reveal a front-loaded driver/dual-tweeter array. The covering work is a little rough in a few areas, and the opening for the speaker could have been cut neater, but the Radiator 1 still gets my vote as the planet's cutest acoustic amp.

Instead of a handle, the Radiator 1 comes with a short leather strap that attaches to guitar-style buttons on either side. Snapping on a standard guitar strap lets you easily sling the 20 lb amp on your shoulder.

Considering its small size and moderate power, the Radiator 1 sounds astonishingly big and rich. Getting a gorgeous tone from a Collings CJ equipped with a Sunrise soundhole pickup was a no-brainer, but I also found it easy to get happening sounds from piezo-equipped Seagull and Takamine guitars. The Radiator 1 seems to have just the right controls for the job. A button near the input-level knob tailors the preamp for passive or active pickups, the phase button helps control feedback, and the shape button delivers a preset EQ curve

### Contact Info

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(boosted lows/attenuated mids). The active treble and bass controls are nicely voiced, and a bypassable notch filter (sweepable from 70Hz to 350Hz), can be employed to nuke feedback or ameliorate the honkiness of piezo pickups. A front-panel LED blinks when your guitar signal starts clipping the preamp stage, but there is no power indicator.

The Radiator's digital reverb is elegant in its simplicity. You get hall and plate presets with short

or long decays. The Alesis-made reverb provides just the right amount of "air" to enhance your sound, but at high mix levels, the decays are so extreme that it sounds as if you're being accompanied by a synthesizer. Definitely an effect in itself.

With the output level pegged, the Radiator 1 pumps out enough volume to handle a small coffee-house gig. And even when played extremely hard, the amp doesn't

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#### The Ratings Game

	Tone	Workmanship	Features	Vibe	Value
Acoustic Radiator 1	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ♥♥♥♥♥