

SEYMOUR DUNCAN POWERSTAGE 700

REVIEW BY **JAMIE WOLFERT**

STREET PRICE **\$699.00**



A couple of months ago I had the pleasure of playing Seymour Duncan's PowerStage 170, a very compact and powerful power solid-state pedalboard amp that had great, neutral clean tones and ate pedals for lunch. I am equally pleased to now have the opportunity to spend some time with this fine little amp's much brawnier and more feature-laden sibling, the Seymour Duncan PowerStage 700.

Like the 170, the PowerStage 700 is designed as a clean, open sounding solid-state power platform for pedal effects and preamps. Instead of living

on a pedalboard, however, the 700 has clearly been designed for use atop a guitar cab, probably in tandem with a Line 6 POD HD Pro, Fractal Audio Axe FX II, or something similar. With a potential 700 watts of output at four ohms, it has more than enough grunt to amplify any electric instrument, including guitar, bass, and keyboards. It also features a stereo pair of quarter-inch instrument inputs, a pair of speaker outs, a pair of XLR outs (with switchable speaker cab simulation for going direct to the mixer or recorder), a lovely sounding three-band equalizer, and

a level control for setting overall output.

Seymour Duncan's aesthetic for the PowerStage series is spot-on. Both members of this family of amps are compact, minimally adorned, and super clean looking. They also feel incredibly sleek and well built, which certainly inspires confidence when plugging in. The brushed metal faceplate, satin black metal knobs, and recessed quarter-inch jacks of the PowerStage 700 all add up to one fine and deadly looking piece of gear.

Having already spent some time with the 170, I knew what to expect

when plugging in the 700. Its fundamental tone is pleasing, though very much in the clean and neutral territory. It's a bit dark sounding when all bands of the equalizer are set flat, and even with bright guitars I needed to bump up the treble knob to about 3:00, with a little mid-range push to enhance cut and clarity. This yields a nice, dynamic clean sound on which to base one's effects adventures, a job at which the PowerStage 700 truly excels.

The PowerStage 700 is capable of pushing a monstrous 700 watts into a 4-ohm cab, but with the 8 ohm cab I was plugged into (a typical impedance figure for guitar cabinets) it puts out around 350 watts, still plenty more than you will ever need. Obviously, this thing gets really loud. The benefit of all this extra wattage is an abundance of headroom, as well as the clarity and dynamic range that come with it. This allows the 700 to deal with all manner of guitar effects

without ever getting muddy, harsh, or indistinct, and in practice it really shines with high gain dirt generators, including distortion and fuzz boxes and high gain preamps, which it was undoubtedly designed to pair perfectly with. Its big, tight bottom end and smooth treble response was especially welcome in these kind of scenarios.

As previously mentioned, the PowerStage 700 has a number of input and output possibilities. It can plug into any cabinet of any impedance without a hiccup (though it should be noted that this will dictate the output wattage), and with its XLR outs and True Cab Circuitry (TCC) cabinet simulation, it's perfect for going direct to the board or recording straight into a DAW. The TCC does a great job at providing some realistic amp tone and response to warm up DI guitar or bass sounds. It's ideal for running a pedalboard straight into a computer recording interface, without having to

use any DSP hogging amp sim plugins.

WHAT WE LIKE

The Seymour Duncan PowerStage is a natural choice for players that need a big, burly, neutrally voiced platform for pedal effects and rack preamps. The fundamental clean tone is great, the three-band EQ is sweetly tuned and very musical sounding, and the input and output options provide tons of flexibility for live and recording work. It also looks like a million bucks and feels exceedingly well-built.

CONCERNS

As with the PowerStage 170, the Powerstage 700 is a little dark sounding at unity EQ settings, though this can be easily remedied with the treble control. Also, it is definitely intended as a foundation for preamps and pedals, and as such some players may find the clean sound a bit too neutral for their liking.