

# PRONOTE 6 BY TECHRA

## *VALVE AMPLIFIER*



It was at the 2006 Frankfurt Fair that I came across the Techra 'golden egg', or the 'Swatch of valve amplifiers' (as I heard it described somewhere). It was being played by a first rate guitarist and my impression was that over and above its chromatic and design qualities (in some respects bold but gaining by its prominent position) it was on the right track when it came to sound quality.

► The Techra Pronote 6 and two of the guitars used for the test were a Ruokangas Mojo Grande and a Balde T-2 with active circuitry.

As seen at the 2006 Frankfurt Fair. Our expert demonstrator used a Steinberger Spirit and a Stratocaster. This was the first orange tinted version of the Pronote.

Persistence and a love of the ever more satisfying results, taking it into world class in valve technology, have driven Techra to keep perfecting its product through injections of experience in America and inspections by guitarists of the highest quality, from Pat Travers – one of the greats of rock, who, on playing it, said “It sounds like a million bucks!” - to Tommy Denander, one of those hard guys, working with Tina Turner and the Back Street Boys. That’s how they came up with the model in front of me, decidedly less frivolous-looking in its grey-blue styling, and still gazing at me with its large egg-shaped plastic eye which characterises its grille. Whilst waiting for the orange-coloured version, I thought it was going to be one of those Rockets style guitars to make a plausible match. And it’s rather the variegated colouring that makes it not a copy of E.T.any more, but a “reputable job”, also good for use (I’m only on about its purely aesthetic side at present) with some of the tasty hand-crafted works of the Finnish stringed instrument maker Ruokangas, which I’m fortunate to own, the Mojo Grande and the VSOP Custom. The only drawbacks and limitations are my poor undeveloped bluesman fingers, and great inner anguish – still of musical notes more of the bluesman. I’ll invite someone to this dance because I sense that the the Pronote 6 is

deserving of bursts of more or less evil energy coming from various latitudes.

## DESCRIPTION

The Pronote 6 is a valve-based combo of small to medium dimensions, of a “perceptible” weight (at 24.5 kilos we’re not ‘dancing the light fantastic’) well powered (for valve-driven equipment, 60 watts is quite a lot, if one thinks, for example, of that of a Vox AC30), two channels (Rhythm and Lead), sufficient controls with loop effects and spring-driven reverberator. The pre-amp section, meticulously hand-assembled, like all the other parts, uses two 12AX7s whilst the final section is equipped with two carefully chosen 6L6 plus one 12AX7.

The valves used are from J.J. Valve (Tesla) of California, whose products (assembled in their factory in Slovakia) speaking of the great majority, that is, and there are some manufacturers of amplifiers who put their own logo on them. What distinguishes these tubes is their good “heat”, the maintenance of that definition at high saturation levels as well, the soft return of medium tones without certain widespread “impudence” noticeable in other products. In particular, this manufacturer’s 6L6s produce low notes which do not spread, plus an amiable clarity resulting in



sounds which with fixed circuitry come very close to the vintage sound of famous American amplifiers. In the Pronote 6 the output transformer is large dimensioned in order possibly to accommodate an extra loudspeaker without influencing the volume. The loudspeaker generally used is certified as being a 100 watt 12” Jensen but the one in the amplifier on test bears a Techra (custom design) nameplate and is manufactured in Italy. The Pronote can be coupled with a freestanding 16 Ohm loudspeaker cabinet with a minimum power of 50 watts.



► The new version of the Pronote6 is coloured blue.

Since the initial project, much attention has been focused on succeeding in producing the same sound quality at low volume too and in being able to change the valves without affecting the bias. All parts of the cabinet are in solid pine (except for some prototypes in birch) and the chassis is in aluminium, which is light, dissipates the heat of the steel better, and being non-magnetic, can help to make for quiet circuitry. The control panel is very easy to read, being mounted high up at the rear. Going from left to right, the controls are: the sole instrument input, above which is the high/low selector, the line of control knobs for the Rhythm channel (Gain, above which is the Bright, Bass, Middle, Treble and Presence selector) the Rhythm/Lead channel selector, the line of knobs for the Lead channel (Gain, Tone and Level), above which are two selectors, Modern and Fat, the soft reverberation controls (Reverb and Level), the stand-by selector, the on/off power switch and the red LED indicating the access status of the amplifier. Well, certainly not much to be saved here! We'll see whether the ways not stated and alternative to selections labelled Modern and Fat will be a Vintage sound and a normal sound "thinner" than the Fat option. The construction of the parts and their assembly are absolutely faultless and in my opinion the

combination of traditional and modern elements is a great success. To appreciate the divide between the old fashioned and the new, one need only look at the two grilles: the front one protecting the speaker cone, and the rear one, protecting the valves, reminiscent of a Marshall grille. Let's put it like this: in front is the pull from the future and behind the push from a rosier past. And the external anti-scratch lacquering is as tough as the overall strengthening at the corners. Still it wouldn't be a bad idea if the Pronote 6 were sold complete with a lightweight wheeled flight case.

### TEST

I've selected four guitars: one Ruokangas Mojo Grande (on the debit side, a Tele with an empty body), the old Yamaha SG2000S complete with humbucker and passive circuitry, the Blade T2 (a Tele with solid body with active circuitry), a VSOP Ruokangas Custom (a Statocaster type solid body with a hand-wrapped single coil and false coverings for the lipstick type passive pickups). Then I will call up one of these greats, as already announced.

### Ruokangas Mojo Grande

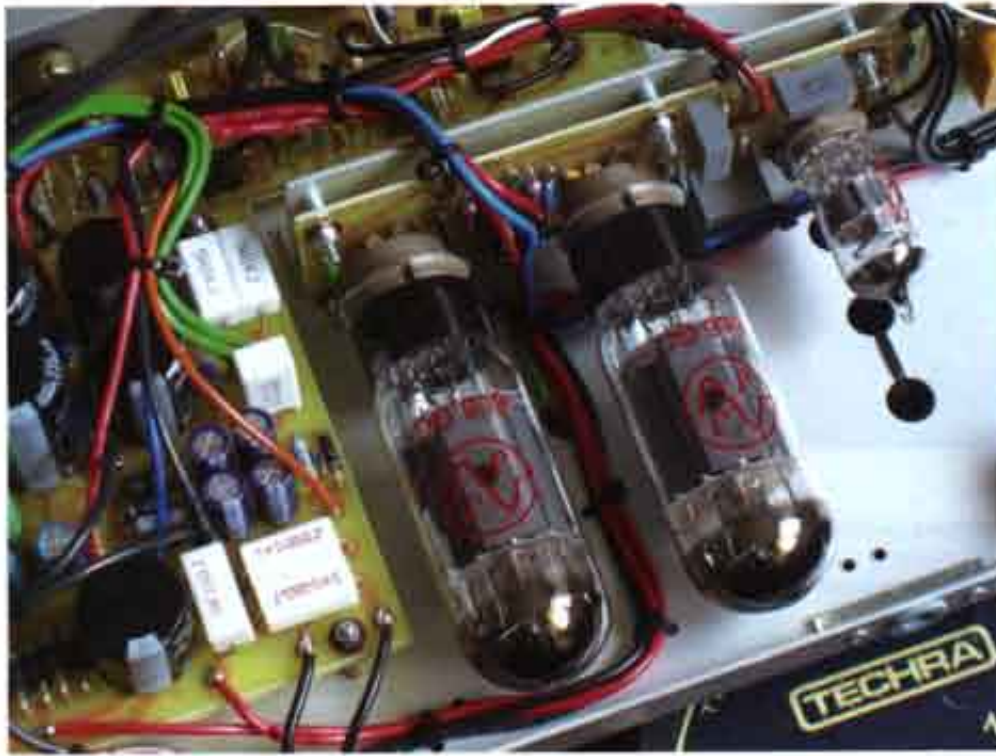
The Mojo Grande by Ruokangas is a guitar with a noticeably soft tone compared with the squack that typifies a Telecaster Fender.

## CARATTERISTICHE TECNICHE

OGGETTO	Amplificatore per chitarra elettrica
MARCHIO	Techna
MODELLO	Pronote 6
NAZIONE	Italia
COSTRUZIONE	Italia
N. DI SERIE	060901004 FB
RIFO	Combo
ASSEMBLAGGIO	Cablaggio e saldature fatte a mano
CIRCUITAZIONE	Valvolare
Preamp	12AX7 (2)
Finale	6L6 (2) + 12AX7 (1)
Classe	A/B
POTENZA USCITA	60 W
CANALI	2 (Rhythm e Lead)
INGRESSI	Strumento, Ritorno effetti
USCITE	Altoparlante esterno (16 Ω minimo), Mandata effetti
CONTROLLI	Bassi, Medi e Acuti, Livello riverbero, Livello Master
Canale Rhythm	Gain, interruttore Low-High
Canale Lead	Gain, Tone, Livello, selettori Modern e Fat
<b>RIVERBERO</b>	
Tipo	A molle
Marca	Belfon Engineering
Costruzione	Corea
INDICAZIONE STATUS	Accesso
FUSIBILE	1A
CONTROLLI A PEDALE	Riverbero On/Off, Selezione Vintage/Modern
COND	1 anonima custom (Jensen?)
Diametro	12"
Potenza	100 W
Impedenza	8 Ω
CABINET	In pino solido, retro aperto
<b>DIMENSIONI</b>	
Larghezza	55 cm
Altezza	48 cm
Profondità	27 cm
PESO	24,5 kg
PROTEZIONE ANGOLI	Presente
MANIGLIA	SI

► The section of the panel incorporating the Rhythm Channel controls.





- ▶ The two 6L6GC final valves of the JJ Valve.note the very neat internal electrical/ electronic layout.

the Pronote one can concoct delicacies to suit all palates, neither too salty nor overcooked. Its capacity for dynamic tracking is of the best, as is its respect for the character of the Mojo, I believe it to be the most refined of the guitars in use and thus the most difficult to restore in its entirety. As a Venetian I would say that planning this combo would be something of a carnival dance: it yields to your style, transforming itself into the intelligent servant of a thousand masters and of a full range of instruments. It has great class, no doubt about it.

#### **Ruokangas VSOP Custom**

I think I've found the whole package, more than I'd found with a Vox AC30 Top Boost. All things considered, we're here on the American side, not the English one (EL34) and that and that the Vox's certain aggressive growl is the only thing it's got. The lipstick coverings have a strange influence on the magnetic field of these pickups, making the sound rather less high pitched, but when the two siege engines form a marriage with the blessing of their full metal friend Piero Maschietto they combine to produce an ethereal kind of pleasure. The sound is one of unbelievable perfection, the notes form themselves in the air, pausing there giving rise to strong piercing emotions. There's nothing I can do to resist them. While the dragster makes a dazzling getaway on the keyboard and arpeggia at a speed unthinkable to me, I turn up the volume to full.

Nor are the sounds emanating from its pickups able to enthuse anyone who longs for the funky-turkey gobble kind of sound or of the delightful croakings of such a pronounced

character such as the early offerings of Leo Fender. However, the style and quality of the Ruokangas "sauce" is beyond dispute and with an amplifier of good timbre quality and flexibility like



Techra Pronote6 soft Reverberator of the Korean Belton fixed to the floor of the combo



the Metallic Maschietto, when comparing the Pronote with the Ruokangad VSOP Custom. Let me assure you: with due respect. I was on the point of making them pay for their experience with the Pronote!

Then Piero tears away, playing solo, punishing the strings and everything goes on, clearly defined even with the greatest of distortion. Great! The valves are pumping their musical fuel, breathing like huge lungs, never croaking, never in trouble. Our friend takes his B.C.Rich from a G&G case and as if setting out on a great adventure displays all the subtleties of expression he's capable of. I can see him smiling, blowing out like when something takes hold of you and completely fills you. A bomb, wow, a bomb! What I succeed in getting out of my Marshall 50 becomes an object of derision if we compare its power and the beauty of its sound. My reply is that having said all, there are many aspects in which I prefer this Techra to a Vox AC30 TB except for the aggressivity which in the latter is to be applauded. Taking my cue from this example, I would say that the Pronote is an American amplifier, yes, but not a Fenderiano, there are some Mesa parts with components which don't make comparison with high quality English amplification systems exaggerated or out of place. To sum up, the Techra is the Techra and has no cause to feel envious of any other as regards quality and adaptability. Besides which, with the other VSOP which I have available (equipped with a single coil type P-90 pickup) testing has produced impressive results.

**Yamaha SG2000S (vintage)**

An instrument I've always liked a lot, always up-to-date, a kind of "Latin" Les Paul with broader and more credible "smiles" to the extent that the legendary Gibson solid body knows how to do them. It is of a quality to be envied, and this, combined with an absence of distortion makes you play endless slow blues which it seems a sacrilege to turn off. I've also tried the "Europa" because I had an old base at my disposal and, strange to say, I liked it!

**Blade T-2**

Great, Great, Great! With this instrument, the same one that's 15 years old, the Pronote 6 displays clear tones in great detail with an almost non-existent background noise, delightful by means of feathered arpeggios with natural-sounding results, without undue signs of compression, and I would say so "well oiled" that they drift through the air like great bubbles of sound. If it is possible to speak of 'greater than great', then that's what this parallelepiped shows itself to be when the Lead channel is selected and one makes the desired adjustments. Here with the Blade, I range from the scarcely mentioned "crunch" to quite complete distortion politely stealing and showing great respect for the characteristic timbre of the

instrument. If I like, whilst I improvise an arthritic blues, I really can't imagine what one of those righteous people succeeds in doing. Its support helps me with my stuttering, gives importance and meaning to the notes held, while I pass from rude slaps to producing harmonies, a food forever sweet for my impenitent lyricism. And then I come to the fat sound, beautifully big and fat enough to make a dripping kebab envious! It lacks nothing and I wonder where the Techra people have found such a responsive cone and one with no signs of fatigue, when, in addition, I fire off all the available power for them. It's a custom design with number plate only referring to Italy, but it will surely be a cone with a brand name, even if assembled by some genius from the Vicentino.

**SUMMARY**

For a price which is more than honest, we are looking at a top-of-the-range, valve-operated amplifier. As with all serious valve-operated amplifiers of this power, the weight makes it audible but the butterflies which this musical cage succeeds in liberating repay it enormously. It's the stuff of fireworks and for some guitarists of average ability, also a way of rediscovering whether their own is the right instrument. As for the high class ones, they've probably already acquired one. I can tell you that for now, its endorsement in Italy comes from the BandaBardò and Egidio Marchitelli (jazz guitarist and arranger). Among the international endorsers we can find not only Pat Travers and Tommy Denander already seen, but also Michael Thompson and Chris Thompson. Individual customers and firms can contact directly the manufacturer, Techra, Romano d' Ezzelino (Vi) Italy, Via la Salle 10, Tel. +39 0424 512080. The list price is € 2290 (only for Italy) but the street price will include only a limited discount, considering that this is already a very keen price for a hand wired amplifier incorporating these features and of this quality.



This is the version exhibited at the 1996 Frankfurt Music Fair. On the outside there are no differences to be seen. The changes and improvements have all been mad internally.