

INTERVIEW WITH
SIMON JARRETT of

KINGSLEY PEDALS

Words by
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Photos by
KINGSLEY EFFECTS



Harlot
Kingsley

Jubbler
Kingsley

Page
Kingsley

Kingsley

Squire
Kingsley

Volume Tone Reverb Master On On
Voice Output Standby Power
Keep 30R

Bard
Kingsley

SKI 30
Kingsley

Kingsley

IF YOU ASK SIMON JARRETT ABOUT HIS BUSINESS STRATEGY, he'll tell you that he only builds gear he's passionate about.

“I have to be excited about the project as a guitar player.

I don't look at the market and go, 'I think this product may sell' and therefore make that product. Of course, that is the way a lot of businesses work—and that's fine—but if you restrict your products to ideas that you are truly passionate about and feel you can do very well and in a unique way, then you can have a successful and rewarding business.”

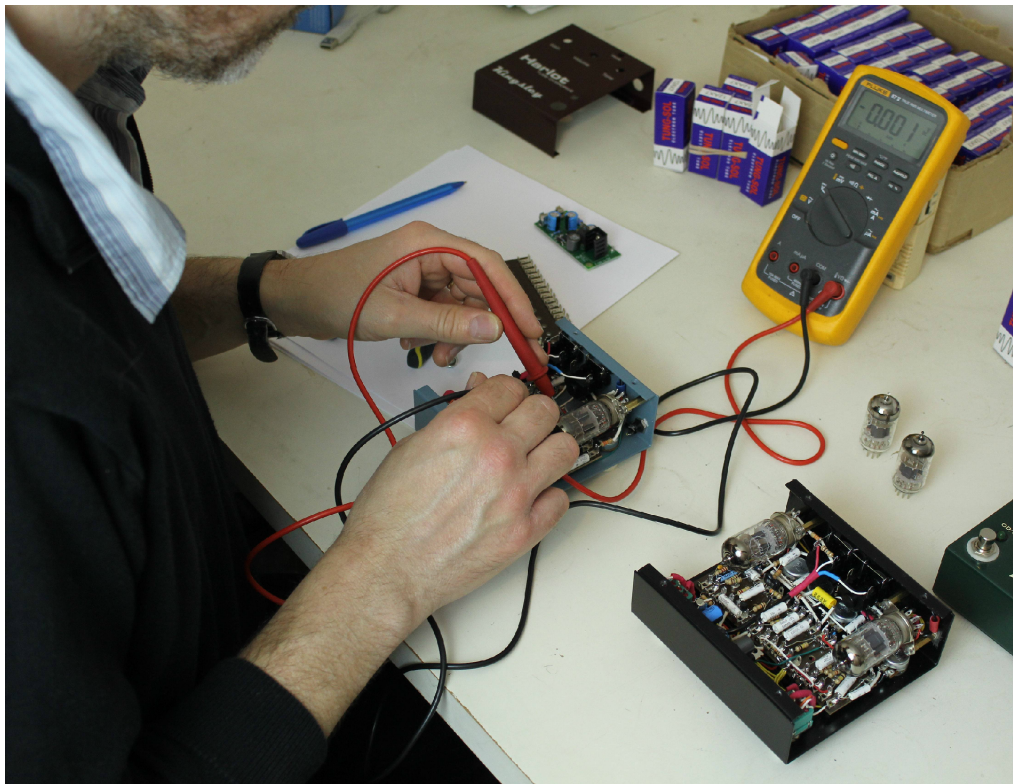
And Jarrett certainly sounds like a man who's been rewarded.

“I got into this because I love to play guitar. Making a decent living as a guitar player is no easy feat, so I feel lucky to have found a way to combine my passions for playing guitar and designing/building gear, while simultaneously raising a family and enjoying life.”

The journey started in 1986 when Jarrett opted out of pursuing a degree in acoustic engineering to follow his passion for music to the Musicians Institute in Hollywood, CA. After completing the coursework, he moved to Vancouver, Canada to work as a professional guitarist.

“On trips back to Europe to see family we would buy old Vox, Marshall and Hiwatt amps to fix up and sell in North America. This sort of became an education in classic amplifier design and tone.”

Using that hands-on knowledge, he spent the next decade concentrating on amp designs of his own while modding and repairing amps for others. The hard work paid off in 2001 when he received



an Editors' Pick Award from Guitar Player Magazine for his Deluxe 30 Amplifier.

Fast-forward six years and that's where the pedals come in.

"In 2007, after making the first Jester Overdrive pedal as a custom order for a local customer, we started to sell them through our website."

The Jester is a 2-channel overdrive that's based on the Kingsley ToneBaron amplifier, an original design featuring a unique mode where the overdrive channel is routed into the clean channel in series. What's most interesting about the Jester though, is the fact that like all Kingsley pedals, it features 12AX7 tubes (running at high voltage) inside the pedal.

“Unlike other pedals featuring tubes, our designs are built like small hand-wired tube amplifiers with the high-grade components and audio circuitry all on a tag board.”

And while tube-based pedals aren't as prevalent as solid-state designs, Jarrett is quick to point out that most guitar players already use a combination of technology types with solid-state circuits running into tube amplifiers.

“The tubes in a guitar amplifier (specifically the preamp) are used to color, equalize, overdrive and otherwise amplify the signal. Nobody disputes that tubes do these things exceptionally well—so why not give guitarists more tube-based tools, outside of the amplifier, for more of a good thing?”

Solid-state designs are obviously far more popular than tube-based designs with distinct advantages in parts cost, power consumption and size—but when it comes to sound quality, Jarrett believes that tubes offer an obvious advantage, especially when it comes to touch sensitivity and natural overdrive characteristics.

“A good tube circuit reacts to picking nuances, translates subtleties and feels good when you play. It's like when you unplug all your effects and go straight into a great sounding amp again—it's hard to compete with the feel, dynamics and response of a great guitar plugged into a great amp. I am looking for the same experience when adding pedals in line.”

Let's dive in and learn more about the British Columbia-based company:

Tone Report: Where did the name Kingsley come from?

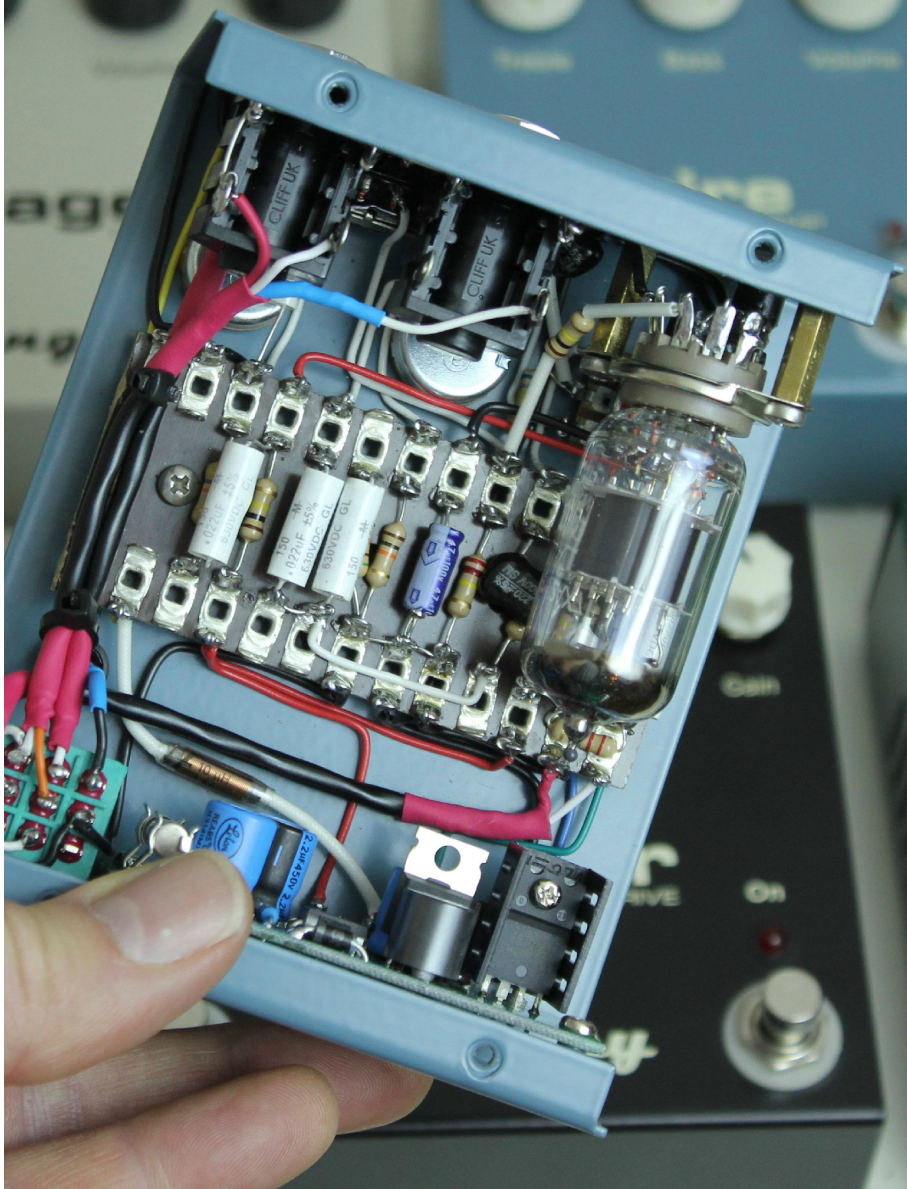
Simon Jarrett: Kingsley is my middle name and I needed a name for my amps and pedals, so it seemed appropriate!

TR: Who is Kingsley, how was the team assembled and what's the creative dynamic like?

SJ: We are a small family business. Kingsley Amplifiers consists of my wife and myself, with occasional help from my son. Most of the ideas for new products come from myself and input from customers, but each of us have our own skills and strengths and contribute accordingly.

TR: Your pedals have really interesting names, what's behind them?

SJ: It started with the amps. While we initially came up with typical names like Deluxe 30, Classic 30, etc., we soon decided that we wanted to make the names a bit more interesting. So we decided to use names associated with monarchy and titles from medieval times, as well as ancient professions/roles, castle parts and the like. “Kingsley” fit in nicely and thus, all the pedal names follow this general theme.



TR: Give me a quick rundown on your pedals.

SJ: The current Kingsley pedal lineup includes eight tube-driven designs.

The Jester, Juggler and Jouster: Dual 12AX7 2-channel overdrives/preamps that mix British and American tones with Dumble influences here and there.

The Minstrel: Dual 12AX7 single-channel overdrive based on the Jester.

The Page, Squire and Harlot: Smaller, single 12AX7 designs inspired by my favorite American, Top Boost, British and Dumble tones ranging from clean boost and mild overdrive to medium gain and saturated rock.

The Bard: Bias modulating tube tremolo similar to vintage Fender amps like the Vibrochamp and Princeton.

TR: Any new designs lurking on the horizon?

SJ: I am always working on new designs and updating old ones. Currently I am working on some new tube pedal preamps. Like the Squire and Juggler, these are being designed for running directly into a power amp, into the effects return of another guitar amp or for studio and direct recording (with the addition of cabinet simulation). The next one will be a Plexi preamp. It will be the complete preamp, with all the requisite controls and using two 12ax7s, just like the original. It will also feature a defeatable master volume, enabling the preamp to also be used in front of other pedals and amplifiers. After that will be a D-style ODS preamp.

TR: Watching a few of your demo videos, you've obviously got some serious chops. Tell me about your style and outlets as a musician.

SJ: I play a variety of styles and gig regularly in the Vancouver area with a variety of local artists. Most of my gigs are rock, blues, R'n'B, country and pop, but I also have a passion for jazz and fusion styles. Influences include



the Beatles, Eric Clapton, Larry Carlton, Weather Report, John Coltrane, Pink Floyd, George Benson, Allan Holdsworth, John Scofield and Jeff Beck, amongst others.

I also write and perform my own material. Currently I am part of the original project Rocket Science. (www.rocketscienceband.ca)

TR: Namedrop a little—which pros are out there using your pedals?

SJ: Being a small company we don't have a marketing department—we rely entirely on word of mouth and our website. Some guitarists who have purchased our products include David Gilmour, John Fogerty, Shayne Hill (Lee Ann Rimes, Sawyer Brown), Adam Hogan (Hey Rosetta), Mitch Farber, Bill Coon and James Rogers, amongst others.

To find out more about Kingsley, go to kingsleyamplifiers.com.