

The finish and build quality should be referred to as artwork, casting Mark squarely in the amp wiring hall of fame along with Harry Joyce. Pulling the chassis for a closer look revealed the dedication to a flawless and maniacally clean layout, and a man at the top of his craft. These amps will outlast us by a long shot, but in the meantime, we will play the heck out of it and continue to experiment with his versatile creations. There is a new 1x12 design that we hope to have our hands on soon. With a consummate tinkerer and tweaker of tones like Mark, it would serve you well to spend a little time with a Bartel. Quest forth...TQ—
Scott Ulrichs

bartelamps.com

BRITISH GOODNESS OF A DIFFERENT KIND

Fane Ascension Series Designer Fouad Abidi

TQR: We have been aware of Fane speakers for some time as discussed previously in the pages of ToneQuest. However, after Mark Bartel professed finding the perfect match for his amps and cabinets with the A60, we figured our readers would enjoy learning more. What were the design motivations for the Ascension Series speakers and specifically the A60 and what voice were you going for?



Fouad Abidi



The design motivation for the Ascension Series speakers was to create a musical, dynamic, and well-balanced range of speakers, whilst staying true to the classic heritage of Fane speakers and bringing the

Fane tone to a new audience of players. For the A60 specifically we wanted to create a speaker that was extremely detailed, dynamic, and open, revealing all the subtle nuances of finely crafted tube amplifiers.

TQR: And how would you describe the classic Fane tone and application?

Classic Fane tone is full and detailed with a present mid-range that was woven into the fabric of classic rock and blues styles. Fane tone has historically been well-balanced and open. For reference, our speakers can be heard on recordings from artists like Dave Gilmour, Rory Gallagher, Mark Knopfler, and Jeff Beck to name but a few. Of course, they all added their own flavors using different amp and cab combinations with a mix of effects pedals and playing styles. We have worked with manufacturers such as Hiwatt, Sound City, WEM, Vox, Orange, Laney, Matamp, Carlsbro and other legacy UK amp manufacturers in the seventies and eighties across a broad range of application requirements.



TQR: Did you have a particular type of amplifier circuit in mind that would shine with the A60?

Not necessarily, we wanted to create a speaker that paired well with a broad range of amplifiers. Each amplifier has its own sonic characteristics, so we went about creating a speaker that would complement the amplifier's own sonic signature.

TQR: Are there certain cabinets from a dimension and material perspective that you prefer with the Ascension Series speakers?



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The A60 is typically going to be used in 1x12 and 2x12 cabinet variants. We don't know what cabinet type users will be loading the drivers into, so as part of our development we conducted our testing and fine tuning with a mix of applications.



TQR: Does the A60 stand out when played clean, slightly pushed and if so, where's that sweet spot?

We feel that it works well across a broad range of playing styles. It just has this rich, smooth shimmering Alnico tonal quality when played clean, yet in turn when pushed or driven hard it holds together well, never sonically sounding detached which often results in an undesirable fizzy top end.

TQR: What do you hear when playing a clean and pushed/driven a Fane Alnico versus a Fane Ceramic like your Ascension F70? How much of the magnet type influences the performance of the speaker versus other components, understanding that they all play a role?



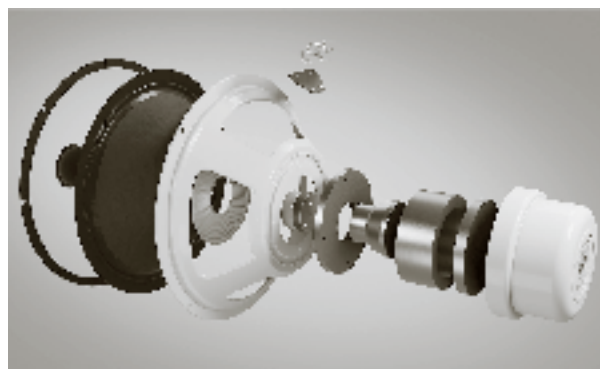
With both magnet types you obviously have different tonal characteristics. There are also, variant grades of magnet to consider both for Alnico and ceramic types, as well as the magnetic strength, all of

which are influential to tone. Alnico alloys consist of aluminum, nickel, cobalt, copper, and iron. Some grades have titanium, and some manufactures also add silicon, columbium zirconium or other elements to enhance the magnetic properties. Alnico magnets are perceived to be smooth and warm. This is due to compression effects, whilst being detailed with a nice chiming ring to the tone we all know. The Alnico motor structure compression stops it from being too aggressive. That's not to say you can't have an Alnico speaker that is bright or sharp, every component plays its part. Ceramic magnets have a more forward tone with plenty of bite and attack. It

adds a sharper edge to the tone. They don't introduce as much compression as Alnico does, which typically translates to a cleaner, more crisp sound.

TQR: How influential to the tones and performance of a speaker are the voice coil and former materials?

The voice coil is one of many components that influence the tonality and performance of a speaker. The typical materials used are paper, fiberglass or Kapton, which is a polymer material. Each has its pros and cons that need to be considered in the design. Things such as weight, stiffness and resonant characteristic contribute to a voice coil's behavior. Depending on which former material is chosen and how you implement that topology, it can affect the tonal characteristics of the speaker quite a bit. For the A60 we opted for a paper coil former, and that design choice worked best with our sound goals and performance targets. The voice coil wire and winding length are also factors that need to be considered when designing a speaker.



TQR: What do you like about the way paper sounds versus other the other materials mentioned?

I like the natural quality of paper which has a slightly brighter sound. It also has a nice upper midrange voice that can help cut through mixes without being harsh. Something you may not have considered is the paint application specifically with pressed steel frames. If you go too heavy on the paint, you can undo everything else because now you over dampened the chassis ring. The consistency of your paint application is critical for repeatability.

TQR: Can you explain flux density and how that plays a role in speaker performance?

The flux density is a measurement of the motor's magnetic field strength concentration within the voice coil gap. The voice coil is immersed in the magnetic field and the strength of the magnetic field controls the voice coil's movement back and forth. The strength of this magnetic field affects the coil's start-stop reaction time, this plays a key role in touch responsiveness.

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TQR: Describe the reaction time of the A60 and how does that play a role in forgiveness? Are metal players typically looking for a very fast start-stop versus say someone playing Allman Brothers songs?

The reaction time isn't related to a playing style or genre. A fast reaction time is the responsiveness of the speaker or touch sensitivity and how quickly that translates what is played from the strings through the speaker. For example, when striking a note or strumming a chord you want the speaker to instantaneously react to what is played. With a slow reaction time the sound can get muddled and sloppy, and it can impact what and how we play. The A60 has a very fast response time, and we think because of that you can hear more of the subtleties of your pickups and attack.

TQR: It's mentioned on your website that each loudspeaker driver is individually handcrafted in the UK by a team of highly skilled craftspeople. Tell us a bit about what part of the manufacturing is done by hand and why that is important?



Fane Acoustics Production Staff

Yes, this is something that we are very proud of. At Fane we are a tight knit family. We have a highly skilled team with a wealth of knowledge. Some members of our team were there in Fane's early days and now their children are coming on board. The skills, knowledge and know-how continue to be passed down through the generations. Quality, consistency, and repeatability are critical to us, so that every speaker that goes through the production process is as precise as the next one visually and sonically. Every part of a Fane speaker is built by hand from winding the voice coils, assembling the software components, putting together the metal parts through to applying the edge treatment in a precise and exact measured amount.



Fane Acoustics Staff

TQR: Are there any hot new designs in the works and what's ahead for Fane?



There have been three new low wattage additions introduced to the Fane Ascension range the A30, F30 and F25. These are low power options for those low power amp applications. We feel we have created three great sounding additions to the Ascension lineup that give players more choice when seeking their desired tone. **TQ**—Scott Ulrichs

www.fane-acoustics.com

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FOREIGNER AXEMAN

Luis Maldonado Weighs In On Fane

We asked our friend Dave Noss at Avatar Speakers which players were using the Fane Ascension Series and he pointed us to Luis Maldonado a tasteful ripper and tone hound, who has spent 30-plus years writing, recording and performing on stages with the likes of John Waite, Glenn Hughes, Train



Luis Maldonado - photo by Kamal Asar

and as a current member of Foreigner, just wrapping up the 2023 tour at the time of this conversation. We went deep on the rigors of the road and its toll on gear, going straight in and cranking an early '70s stock Marshall Super Bass and what speakers can handle that 100 plus wattage pummeling for north of one hundred dates a year. How he went about dialing in Mick Jones' tones which led to nothing more than that Super Lead, a Marshall SE-1 attenuator and a Pelham Blue Murphy Lab '64 SG that rivals his buddy's real one. We spent a little time on life in general, which revealed a deep thinker and warm soul, but here's a short take on Luis' dance with Fane speakers.

TQR: Welcome to TQ and thanks for making the time. I pulled up your tour schedule, looks pretty intense...

Well, this is our last week for the year, but we started last February and have been going pretty full on, with a week break here and there. It's been a blast.

TQR: You've been a player of Fane speakers for a while now. Take us through that evolution.

Sure. I've been a fan ever since I got my first '70s Hiwatt cabinet back in the nineties and I've got many of their speakers, both the old and current versions. For years I had been trying to get my hands on some of the newer offerings but distribution in the states was somewhat nonexistent. When I ran into my friends Neal Ostberg and Steve Fryette at NAMM back in 2011 who together resurrected the Sound City Amplification brand, they pointed me to the Fane booth that was right next door as they had been working together on developing some new speakers. I got to talking with



Fouad and Neil of Fane and they were surprised at how well I knew of the company's legacy and their speakers from the '70s. That three-way conversation led to Steve offering to have me check out what they had collectively been working on.

I brought my old Hiwatt cabs and an old, disassembled speaker in a box without a cone over to Sound City, so that he could use them as further references to the old tones. Steve and Neal had to get it right as the original amps had stock Fanes and they wanted to stay true to the tradition. We went back and forth with many of the old ones and geeked out hard as we listened. They kept a couple of my old cabs to study for weeks, while I was out on tour. As things progressed, my relationship with Fane grew and they sent me a couple speakers to try out. I ended up using the F70 quite a bit out on the road and the A60 is my go-to in the studio.



TQR: What is it specifically that you hear with the A60?

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For me the A60 speaker is sonically refined. It sounds like it's been EQ'd, compressed, processed and mastered, like a finished record. It sounds detailed and warm when played clean, and when pushed it maintains that same character just at a bigger scale. I'm a Jensen and Celestion fan as well. All great. However, to my ears when I listen to a Celestion Vintage 30 or H30, there seems to be something with the way they're EQ'd that leads me to having to spend a good amount of time dialing them in, and they often do better when different speakers are paired. You find these combos that work really well.



With the Fane, I never hear frequency bumps. The lows don't flub out, there's musical clarity to the high end, and it's round, not piercing. I don't know how they did it, but they sound broken in right away. As far as the F70 ceramics, that's a great all-around speaker that handles everything you give it. I play the old '70s Marshall 100-watt Super Bass, no mods, just completely stock and wide open, and I use an attenuator to knock it down a bit. With both the F60 and A60, I've found that they go hand and hand with the British circuit. My A60s currently live in an open back Rivera 2x12. It's a well-tuned and robust cabinet. The closest to the A60s to my ears are the Celestion Gold Alnicos, a great speaker, but the Fane has this detail, which doesn't mean you have to finesse it. It's more along the lines of "how are all the right sounds coming out of it," (laughs), if that makes any sense. Quest forth...**TQ**—*Scott Ulrichs*

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avatarspeakers.com*

INTERVIEW

Pete A. Flynn



"There are some things in life that we end up doing, despite everything else."—Pete A. Flynn

TQR: Hey now Pete. The path you've been on has had you making music for decades, playing drums and guitars with quite a few famous players, and you end up opening a guitar store which allows you to get your hands on heaps of incredible vintage gear. But what you didn't know is that all of this has led you to chase the tones from modern pickups you have heard from the late 1950s guitars. I bet it frustrated you as much as it has us, as well as thrilled you to go for it.

(Laughs.) Yes, it was so frustrating. The reason I got into this, is that I bought every conceivable humbucker out there since 1985, and I was even a Duncan dealer. Larry DiMarzio made the pickups for our Flynn Guitars. I love all that stuff, but I never found anything that sounded like a real PAF. Once you've played a few bursts and dot necks with those pickups, it's both an eye and ear opener. I owned a '50s Broadcaster and again, have never heard a pickup that comes close. I had gotten, yet another pair of expensive pickups that I paid a lot of hard earned money for, and waited 6 weeks with anticipation only to be disappointed. That was the fifth set in the guitar. I decided I had nothing to lose by building my own. Within a few sets, I felt I had nailed the Broadcaster tone and sent them to some important people who absolutely loved them. So, here we go. Everyone wants the ultimate PAF clone, and I feel like I cracked the code on that. I sent them to people who have the finest vintage collections, like the Frankie Sullivans of the world, major players, and

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