



## Crate FlexWave FW120

**FEATURING THE COMPANY'S EVOLUTION 5 PREAMP** with patented Sequential Cascading Gain technology, the FW120 (\$599 retail/\$379 street) is a 120-watt, 2x12 combo with three foot-switchable channels, reverb, and DSP effects. You also get a built-in tuner, external speaker and insert jacks, and a front-panel mini jack for a CD/mp3 player. The FW120 sports independent Low, Mid, and High controls for its Clean and Overdrive channels (the latter also has Gain and Level knobs), while the High Gain channel has Gain, Shape, and Level controls. The reverb and DSP effects are global (they work on all channels) and you get a knob for the modulation selections (chorus, flange, phaser) and another knob for the delays (slap, medium, long) effects. Turning either control accesses multiple settings for each effect type, providing three different chorus, flange, and phaser settings, and ditto for the delay selections, which offer up to four repeats on the medium and long settings. The chorusing is decent (you get three

speeds to choose from) but the flange and phaser are both unconvincing. An effects loop is provided courtesy of the Insert jack, which allows you to connect external effects using a TRS-style "Y" cord.

The FW120 covers the bases for most styles by offering a good range of clean and distortion textures. The Clean channel is the warmest sounding and it partners well with the spring-flavored (but not spring generated) reverb. The Overdrive channel offers a good range of reasonably dynamic grind and is cool for blues/rock leads and heavier rhythm grooves. The High Gain channel is optimized for soloing with tons of sustain, and can be dialed in for everything from hard rock to fusion to viciously scooped metal via the powerful Shape knob. The High Gain mode is reminiscent of kicking in a metal-style stompbox, but, thankfully, these sizzling tones are not infused with lots annoying sub-bass content, as is the case with so many solid-state amps. —Art Thompson

### CRATE FLEXWAVE FW120

**KUDOS** Independent channels. Happening high-gain tones. Affordable.

**CONCERNS** Forgettable flange and phase effects.

**CONTACT** Crate Amplifiers, (800) 258-6883; crateamps.com