

6V6GT Test Reports 1998

INTRODUCTION:

OBJECT OF THE TEST

The 6V6GT is one of my favourite valves. So many modern amps that use this valve do not have the tone of those classic tweed deluxes. We set out to find out why.

EQUIPMENT USED

The amplifier used was a Fender princeton reverb 2 Paul Rivera model.

This was chosen as it is a good amp to evaluate 6V6 and it also can supply some very crunchy modern sounds as well as vintage. Guitars used where a 1973 Fender stratocaster, 1980 Yamaha SA 2000S semi acoustic and a 1980 Gibson Les Paul Standard.



HOW WE TESTED:

R.C.A 6V6GT/A

These were used as the reference and seem at home with single coils or humbuckers. They produced a fat controlled bass with a strong mid character. The valve has great balance and notes can be easily distinguished even under heavy distortion. Every slight variation of tone was accurately reproduced. When pushed hard the mid range character distorted beautifully with clarity and refinement. The current stock of valves we have are from the 50's and 60 's which are the most sought after. This was going to be a hard valve to beat.

MAZDA 6V6GT

These are 1950's French Military Valve

that we decided to test at 500 vdc and 500 Screen on our test rig. 5 hours later this Valve is rock solid where others had died. This is a serious item we thought. In the Princeton it rocked, the sound stage was big, the distortion fat and punchy. The bass response was not as deep as the R.C.A and it sounded slightly edgy. When over driven the valve had a raw organic sound which I fell in love with. This I liked as it is better suited to the grungy side rock. With The Les Paul The sustain was Full and rich with no harsh edges. Sound staging was big G.E style, it was if the wall of sound was behind me, not a little princeton. These babies are great little blues valves and worked well with the semi acoustic Yamaha in both single and Humbucking mode. The valve did not lose punch or go muddy even when effects where introduced.

We loved them!

SOVTEK 6V6GT

Sovtek have some good valves in it's line up but this in not one of them. If you try and use in old Fender deluxes it will blow up as it cannot handle plate voltage of much above 345 Vdc. Indeed many died at 325Vdc so be warned. The valve is very harsh sounding with little bass response. When overdriven it was very muddy. Always a good measure is does your ears hurt after prolonged use and boy with this valve I was hurting.

STANDARD 6V6GT U.S.A

Brown base with semi smoked glass looked identical to and possibly made by R.C.A The top end of this valve really did sing , the more you threw at it the more it wanted. Killer Kossoff like sustain was achieved with amp really pushed with no harshness. Bass was bigger than the Mazda with full definition even on fast runs. Balance was superb clear and precise. The valve had nice balance as was at home with country or jazz .

We can thoroughly recommend this valve.

PHILIPS 6V6GT

This is identical to the valves used by Fender in the 70's and would have been the standard valve fitted to the Princeton when new.

The valve was a lot brighter than the Mazda or Standard and worked very well with the Fender Strat. The amp sounded thinner due to the sound staging being not as large. The sustain was not as fat or as long lasting as the Mazda or Standard. The bass was not as well defined but was rich and warm. A great rock and roll valve that would improve any current Boogie amp.

G.E 6V6GT Large and nude base

We have two types of G.E one with the pins straight out the bottom like the Sovtek 5881 and one with a full base. Both valves have the large grey box plate and sound quality I found to be Identical there both are placed together. The characteristic G.E sound staging big, fat and proud were present which I happen to really like. The top end response was noticeably less than the Philips with mid range twang more pronounced than any other. Balance was forward in your face type with great punch. Ideally suited to country or steel guitar.

WESTINGHOUSE 6V6GTA

The valves are marked U.S.A and come in the original box. These are for the Neil Young fans. Fantastic bass response which is possibly due to the bass forwardness of the valve.

When distorted the bottom notes on the guitar are in full focus. Great for riffing or heavy Zep style music. The top end is not as detailed but sustain is good and clear. The mid range seemed a little recessed but the Strat twang could still be produced. This is defiantly for the hard

rockers.

SYLVANIA 6V6GT/A

This is a very warm sounding valve a little bass light when compared to the Standard or Mazda. The mid range response of this valve is its real voice. The clarity and Fender twang shone through. The sustain was warm and rich, again not as forward as the Mazda. When pushed hard bass seem to become less defined but the valve still retained a very musical sound.

BRIMAR 6V6GT/CV511

We have seen recently a lot of dealers trying to make a market in these by saying that these are a super Hi-Fi valve and great Guitar valve with high prices to match.

If you want a Hi-Fi valve the Mazda Stamps all over this valve. In guitar amps the Brimar is a traditionally British sounding. The bass response is lighter than the R.C.A, Mazda and Westinghouse. It has a very smooth laid back sound with no harshness. It does not have the get up and go of most of the other valves listened to which for my taste is a shame. This may be ideally suited to the Jazzer. It has a clear midrange which never gets flustered even on heavy rock. Rock solid stability and a good all round Valve.

VISSEAUX 6V6GT FRANCE

Another French Military valve with a lot of the same characteristics of the Mazda. The valve had rich sustain with good bass. Not as deep as the R.C.A, Standard or Westinghouse but the same as the Mazda. The Mids were very smooth like the Brimar but did not have the raw edge of the Mazda but had that Brimar control and smoothness. The top end response seemed recessed compared to the Philips or Mazda. However plenty of traditional Fender Twang. Sustain was as you might expect superb rich and clear. The valve was very well balanced and is a good choice

for all applications.

CONCLUSION:

The first rule when fitting 6V6GT is not to the Russian 6p3s valve which an American designer valve company rebrands as their own 6V6HD. This valve is awful and is very hard to bias. This valve is also sold by many U.K dealers under the guise of 6L6GC, 6L6GT and 6L6GB. We do not recommend fitting this as either. These valves were also more gassy than any other and do not like the guitar amp plate voltages.

The Sovtek valve is very poor in the sound quality department so until a new valve is made and that will only be if its commercially viable then we can only look to new old stock items.

The R.C.A is still the valve to beat in this market but two valves I feel come very close.

If I had to choose two favourite valves it would be the Mazda 6V6GT & the Standard 6V6GTY.

The Mazda really rocked from Zep riffs to Muddy waters. It had a raw wild feel, up and in your face which I loved. It makes you want to play the guitar and feel good. It was also very easy to get a great sound quickly. Some of the Pistols Steve Jones Guitar parts sounded stack like with plenty of authority.

The Standard 6V6GTY did everything that the Mazda but with more control. The harder you pushed the valve it would simply shout back give me more. Huge bottom end response was clear as a bell. These are 1958 production and are identical to the R.C.A that we used as a reference. Under heavy distortion the valve just seemed to get bigger. Sustain was simply remarkable. Bass at this level was bigger and more defined than the Mazda.

Both of these are exceptional valves The Mazda raw and on the edge The Standard always in control. Try both sets before they are all gone.