



# Trinity Tramp Review

Trinity Amps of Brighton Ontario (<http://trinityamps.com/>) offers several models of hand-built, point to point wired, guitar amplifiers and has a reputation for selling very high quality products and caring about every customer. The majority of their amplifiers are based on the classics by Marshall, Ampeg, Fender, Vox, Matchless and Hiwatt. The Tramp, however, is a beast of its own. While it is inspired by low wattage practice amps like the Fender Champ and Epiphone Valve Jr., there is much more to it.

While tone is the main focus when reviewing an amp, there are other things to consider. Is it best suited to home practice, or is it able to handle rehearsals and gigs? If you will be dragging it around to rehearsals and gigs, how portable is it? No one wants to drag a Marshall stack to the local bar. Even a 50 pound combo gets tiresome after a while. How versatile is it in terms of tone? If you play in a band that does cover tunes, this is even more important, but if you don't it's still really nice to be able to dial in a convincing American or British tone when you need it.

## Specs

Before getting into the tones you can dial in with the Tramp, let's talk a little about the Tramp itself and what makes it so versatile.

The Tramp is a 2 tube, low wattage amplifier. It supports 6V6, 6L6, KT66, EL34, 6CA7 and KT88 power tubes, and produces 6 watts with 6V6 and 12 watts with the bigger tubes. This allows you to choose the power level for your needs. The preamp section uses the familiar 12AX7 valve.

The Tramp comes in 3 flavours; a head version, a combo version in a custom tolex or tweed cabinet with a Jensen® Jet Blackbird Alnico or 10" Tone Tubby Ceramic (Green) speaker, or a kit with all the components needed to assemble the amp (no cabinet or speakers) and detailed instructions for building your own amp! A quick internet search yields glowing reviews on the quality of the documentation that comes with the kit. If you are able to wield a soldering iron and want to save some cash, this is a great option. I should note that Trinity offers kits for several of its amps, so check out the website for details.

Where the Champ and Valve Jr provide only a single volume control, the Tramp boasts a complete and thoughtful array of controls. Instead of a traditional power switch, the Tramp has a Power Level pot, that acts like an attenuator, allowing you to control the power level of the amp, so you can crank the Volume and Master volume to get great tube tone at lower volumes. There is a traditional Master Volume that works as expected, and a Volume that when pulled puts you in 'Tude mode. 'Tude mode adds volume and a little more hair to the tone, reminiscent of a Marshall. With the volume pot pushed in you are in Tweed mode, where you get clean tones that are very Fendery. The tone stack consists of a treble and bass pot. The bass pot pulls to give you a Fat bass tone, which also boosts the volume. The tone controls, on their own, are fairly subtle, but yield very useful tones throughout their range. Combined with using the Fat mode, you can easily get great tonal control from deep and thumpy to clear and chimey.

In the back, there are two extension speaker jacks and a switch to select the extension speaker impedance (4, 8, and 16 ohms). There is also bias switch with low and high values (use low for the 6V6 power tube and high for the bigger tubes) and a transformer setting for when you are using an EL34 power tube which is designed to better emulate a Marshall.

Okay, now let's talk tone!

## Tweed Mode

The majority of my testing was in Tweed mode (with the Volume pot pushed in). I started off without Fat bass, and was able to get super clean chimey Fender-like tones with the Treble pinned to 11 and the Bass between 7 and 11. My cleanest tones came with the Master Volume pinned to 11, the Power Level also maxed out, and the Volume used to adjust the level. I should note that the Power Level, besides acting as an attenuator, also works like a kind of Presence. So, with the Power Level maxed I get a really good clean bright tone with which to build on with my pedal board.

Using the aforementioned settings, I played a 3 hour gig at a local bar. Normally, I would use my 40 watt Fender Hot Rod Deluxe, but the 12 watts of the Tramp with the 6L6 power tube were more than enough to do the job. I play in a pretty loud 4 piece rock band, and I had the Volume on the Tramp at around 7 or 8 out of 11. With the Fender I would be at 3 out of 12 and have to attenuate with a volume box I plug into the effects loop. If I ever did need more out of the Tramp I could get an added volume boost with either the Fat bass or 'Tude mode settings.

On top of being able to easily handle the night at the bar, the tone from the Tramp is much tighter than the tone from my Fender. Also, the head version of the Tramp and my 112 cabinet are much more portable than the Fender, which weighs in at near 50 lbs.

If you want a bit thicker tone than you get with the settings I used at the bar, all you need to do is pull the Bass pot to engage the Fat bass feature. It also gives you a boost of a few decibels. When I used the Fat bass feature, I found a good tone with the Bass at around 4 and the Treble at 11. I didn't use this setting for the bar gig, but could have easily and I would have been just as happy. I would have also had a little more headroom with this setting.

## 'Tude Mode

As I mentioned earlier, pulling the Volume pot engages what Trinity calls 'Tude mode. It completely changes the tone as well as adding more gain. In this mode I favoured a few different settings.

For a clean tone that was a little dirty I had the Power Level and the Treble maxed, the bass at around 7 or 8, and the Volume at around 6 or 7. To adjust the volume I used the Master volume. This setting gives a decidedly more British feel. I got a really nice saturated tone with this setting by stepping on either my distortion or overdrive pedals with the gain set fairly low. Without the pedals I am able to get some breakup by just playing harder. Very cool.

With similar settings as above, I got a more Neil Young feel by taking the Volume to 11 and turning down the Master (or not). For the real deal Neil Young dirt I engaged Fat mode and played with the bass level until it felt right...for me this was about 3 or 4.

A variation on the dirty Neil tone is a British chimey tone...kind of Pete Townsend-like. To get this, I disengaged the Fat bass and kept the Treble pinned. Then I hit the hell out of some first-position chords. It's amazing how different the tone can be with just a few changes to the settings!

I look forward to trying out some 'Tude mode settings at my next bar gig!

## The Verdict

Trinity designed the Tramp with versatility in mind. Their goal was to build a low wattage amp that delivered great tones and could shine in a variety of different situations.

In terms of power it is uniquely versatile the Tramp gives you the ability to use different power tubes to go from 6 to 12 watts. Together with the Power Level, you can easily find a power setting that sounds good even at home practice volume. When you do take it out of your home, you won't need roadies to carry it for you, and there's more than enough power, with the bigger tube options, for rehearsals and bar gigs.

In terms of tone it's unbelievably versatile as well. Unlike other amps that boast different voicings but you have to close your eyes and focus to hear the difference, the difference between Tweed and 'Tude modes is pronounced and obvious. The thoughtful control array lets you to dial in many different tones in either mode. Every tone I dialed in was tight, impressive, and very usable.

Trinity really came through with the Tramp. If you need a versatile amp that's easy to carry from rehearsals to gigs, and delivers really great tone, you really need to try a Trinity Tramp.