

EMG JH SET £265

As Hetfield's new EMGs prove, you cannot kill the battery

THE most revered right hand in metal has consistently sat directly above an EMG combo since the early 80s. It makes sense, then, that EMG and James Hetfield have finally teamed up to build a set of pickups to his specifications. Apparently, pounding out aggression really does turn into obsession: Hetfield tried around 20 custom made EMG pickups before settling on the magic properties of 'number 19'.

The JH pickups fit to your guitar using EMG's solder-less connections. If you're upgrading from another EMG set, installation is as easy as undoing a few screws, and plugging them in with the onboard connector. If not, you'll need space in your guitar for a battery and EMG's connector buss, plus you'll need to swap your pots for the included set. Once they're

in, you'll get a fat low end from the neck position. Played clean with some chorus, it nails the sound from the intro to *One*; with a healthy slice of gain, it's great for down-tuned grinding rhythms. The bridge position sounds almost lacking in bass in comparison, particularly on clean sounds, but it's when you add gain that you start to appreciate it. Picking attack is enhanced, and it gives you a tight response in the mids.

It makes sense for diehard Metallica fans who want to move from passive to active to choose the JH Set. Compare them side-by-side with Hetfield's much loved 81/60 pairing, and the difference is visually and sonically noticeable. However, at £265, owners of an 81/60 set will find it more of a luxury than life-or-death.

Stuart Williams



AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Active humbuckers
POSITION: Neck/bridge
MAGNET: Ceramic, with ceramic poles (neck) ceramic with steel poles (bridge)
WIRING: EMG solderless system
CONTACT: Selectron UK 01795 419460
 emgpickups.com

SUMMARY	FEATURES	
	SOUND QUALITY	
	VALUE FOR MONEY	
	BUILD QUALITY	
	USEABILITY	
	OVERALL RATING	★★★★★

SONTRONICS HALO £129

Say Halo to this retro-looking microphone

LOOK at a guitar amp on a large-ish stage or in pretty much any studio, and the chances are it'll have a dynamic mic in front of it. They're rugged and usually have a less sensitive capsule than a condenser mic, so the high sound pressure levels of your amp are less likely to destroy it. This also means that the mic can be placed closer to the speaker, cutting down on your chances of bleed from other instruments. Shure's SM57 has ruled the dynamic roost for decades as a mic for all occasions, but now UK brand Sontronics has developed the Halo, a dynamic mic designed specifically for guitar amps.

The capsule is suspended in a frame by four springs. As well as looking cool (it's inspired by 40s radio mics, apparently), the mounting system also dampens any low end rumble when you're

using it onstage. The frequency response has been tweaked to complement the speakers in your guitar amp; Sontronics reckons this means there's no need for any further EQ, and we'd concur. Once you've set your amp's sound and found a good position, it's fairly transparent but still bright enough to close-mic an acoustic guitar with great results.

The shallow design of the mic compared to a 'standard' mic means that it won't stick out as far in front of your amp, which is great for working in tight spaces. It's very well made, but we'd question the frame and springs' longevity in the melee of post-gig packing up. With a full price that's equal to the industry standard, Sontronics' biggest challenge will be getting you to put down the 57, but the Halo is a worthy competitor.

Stuart Williams



AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Dynamic microphone
POLAR PATTERN: Cardioid
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 50Hz - 15kHz
CONNECTION: XLR
CONTACT: Time and Space
 01837 55200 sontronics.com

SUMMARY	FEATURES	
	SOUND QUALITY	
	VALUE FOR MONEY	
	BUILD QUALITY	
	USEABILITY	
	OVERALL RATING	★★★★★