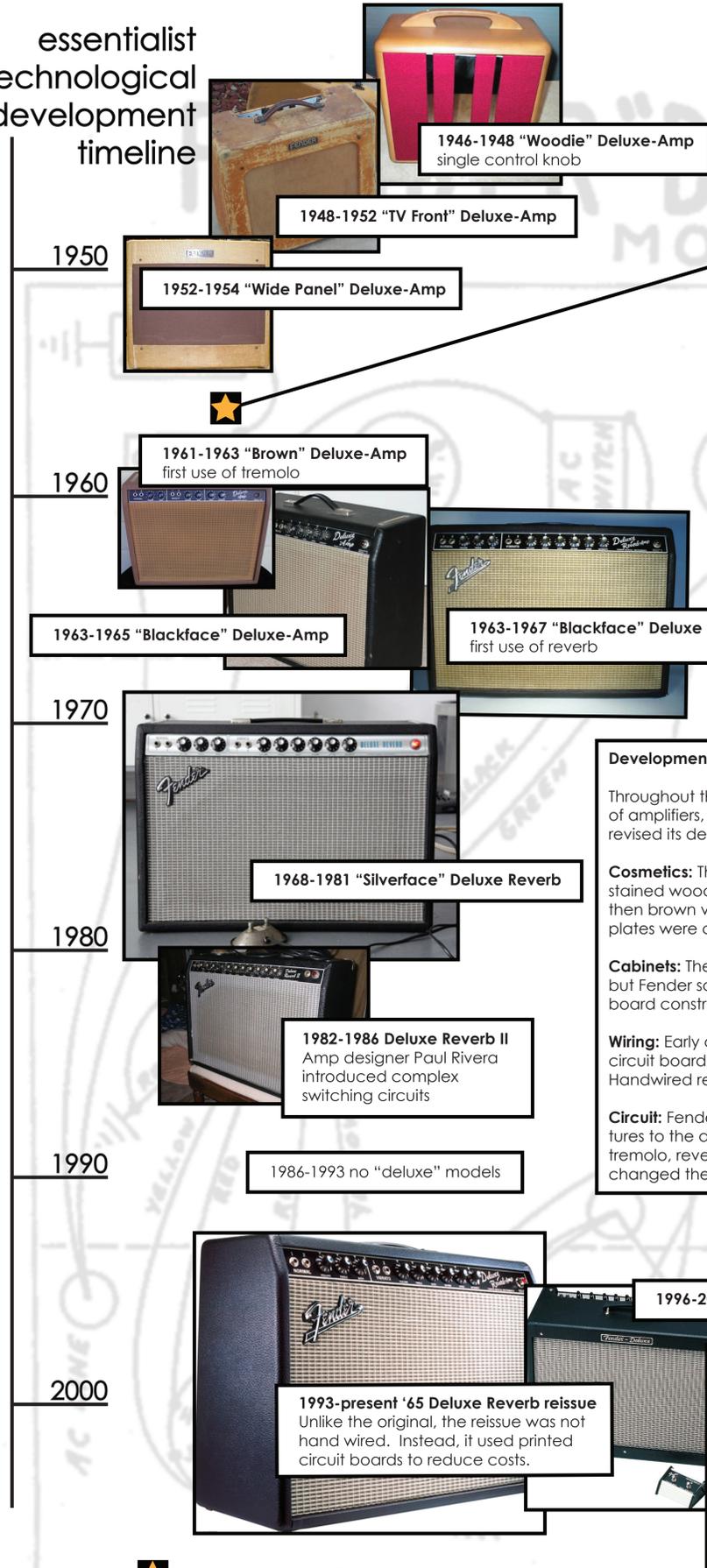


Mapping User Intervention in the Development Process: Virtual Communities that Resist Essentialist Technological Development

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essentialist technological development timeline



1954-1960 "Narrow Panel" Deluxe-Amp, Model 5E3

While general purpose tube amplification has long since given way to transistors for electronic appliances like televisions, the guitarist community has continually preferred vacuum tubes as a means of amplification. In particular, guitarists look to a circuit produced in 1954-1960 as one of the quintessential guitar amplifier tones.

As the deluxe series of amps began travel along an essentialist technological path (employing new materials, manufacturing methods, and additional features), guitarists continued to seek out the simplicity of the original design. Primarily, they collected used examples of Fender amps, but as the prices in the vintage amplifier market rose, communities of guitarists began to develop cheaper alternatives to the original. Individuals and companies began building reproductions (Kendrick Amplification's 2212, Clark Amplification's Beaufort, Mission Amplification's Tweedy Deluxe, Victoria Amplification's 20112, to name a few). And many companies began offering "kits" with all of the parts required to build new reproductions, including schematics and instructions.

This resistance began before the internet became a powerful communication tool, but this virtual community adopted the internet's capability through email, the usenet alt.guitar.amps newsgroup, and (today) online user communities and forums.

The Fender company continued to develop the deluxe series of amplifiers in many incarnations, but only recently began to realize the call for a return to the basic original circuit.

user-driven resistance to technological development

User-created diagrams and schematics

Development of the "deluxe" series of amplifiers

Throughout the history of the the "deluxe" series of amplifiers, the Fender company continually revised its design.

Cosmetics: The deluxe series began with a stained wood cabinet, then laquered tweed, then brown vinyl and finally black vinyl. Faceplates were chrome, brown, black, and silver.

Cabinets: The original cabinets were solid pine, but Fender soon changed to plywood and fiber-board construction.

Wiring: Early amps were hand wired, but printed circuit boards began being used in the 1980s. Handwired reissues did not appear until 2007.

Circuit: Fender continually added more features to the deluxe series of amps. Equalization, tremolo, reverb, and overdrive fundamentally changed the way the circuit performed.



"we did everything via phone"
Before the internet, vintage guitar amp enthusiasts relied on the telephone and advertisements in the back of magazines like *Vintage Guitar* for information about parts, kits, and reproductions.

"I worked on the early clone reproductions, I also had the Fender referral business for old amp parts. This was from 1988-1993, Fender parts department referred all calls to me concerning out of production items."

Individuals tapped into a market that Fender couldn't serve. Fender's institutional knowledge and memory had long since transferred to the public sphere through specialized communities of users.

Messages from the usenet group alt.guitar.amps, 1995 and 1996

- "I recently bought a '52 Deluxe."
- "I've heard that a lot of the early ZZ Top stuff was done with a Tweed Deluxe."
- "I've heard that the tweed Deluxe is Neil Young's favorite amp. I have a '57 and it's really something!"
- "It is the 'desert island' amp in my opinion."
- "I think that if you are looking for tweed deluxe sound and are not looking to gig with the amp (at high volume levels) the Victoria deluxe is a good bet. The Victoria sounds great out of the box and obviously will offer a degree of dependability that can be questionable with a 40 year old amp."



2007-present '57 Deluxe reissue
hand-wired 5E3 circuit
tweed-covered pine cabinet
alnico magnet speaker

