

By Ward Meeker

Swell Pedal Company

LIKE MOST GUITAR PLAY-ers who appreciate good tone, Swell Pedal Company founder Mike Olienechak did his share of experimenting with different guitars through various amps, setups and rigs. And while eventually he discovered certain guitar and amp setups that worked for him, one element of his signal chain never offered complete satisfaction.

“By the mid ’90s, I had come to the realization that what I was looking for in effect pedals simply did not exist,” he said. “As a player, it was obvious to me what a great pedal should be. But for whatever reason, no one was getting it right.”

So it was that in 1997 he set about to build his own pedals out of basic *need*. And any fellow tone freak out there can relate!

So, when you decided to go ahead and build a better mouse trap, did you take it on as a way to make a living?

No, it was part-time initially. See, I’d made a living playing music. Then I managed a music store, then worked for Mesa Engineering. From there, I went to work for Fender, Gallien-Krueger, and then Gibson. Getting married, *and* the growing desire to leave the corporate world behind – ever seen the movie *Office Space*? (laughs) – were the last pieces of the puzzle. By ’97, I had more than 30

years of playing and music industry experience to use as the foundation for Swell.

So, was your immediate focus on a certain type of pedal?

Like a lot of players, I was constantly searching for the “ultimate” overdrive. I was fairly obsessed with overdriven tones, which led to my Guitar-Tube OverDrive, or G-TOD, to serve as the starting point for Swell.

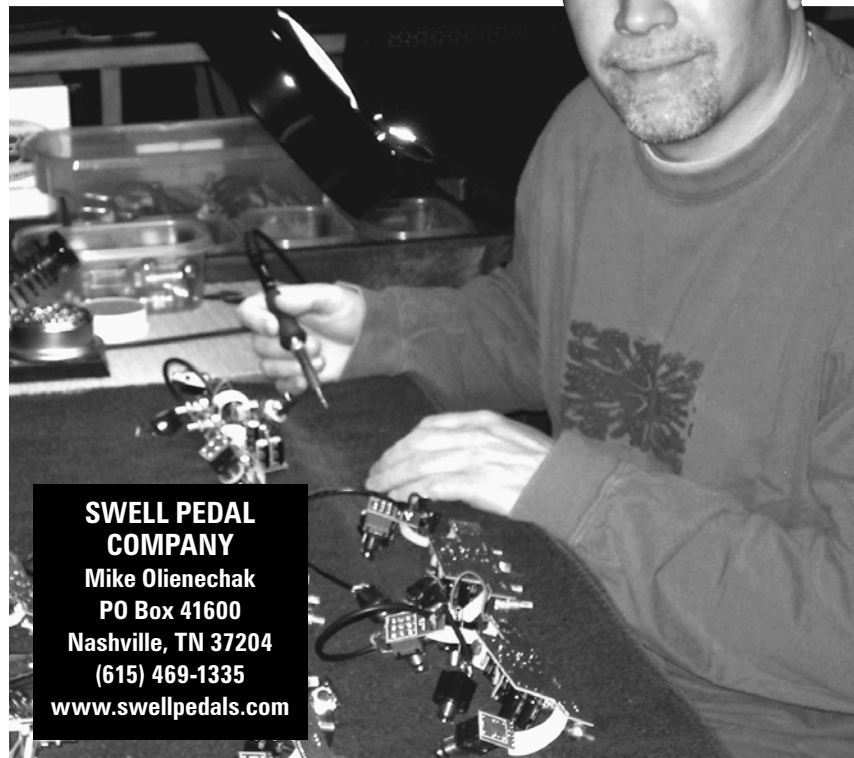
What came next?

I followed with the VM-TEQ, XL-Boost, XXL-Boost, B-TOD, Mu-Comp, and VS-Trem. And requests for a low-gain or push-drive spawned both the G-Drive and B-Drive.

Response to the G-TOD was immediate and has remained constant.

What is it that sets your product apart?

Well, the goal at Swell is to design and build the best pedal effects possible – audiophile-quality effects that you can stomp on. All Swell products are vacuum-tube based because like most players, I believe the best overdrive/distortion tone is tube-based. Same with compression and so on. And our circuit designs really put the tubes to work; more than 100 volts is generated and delivered to the tube in each pedal!



SWELL PEDAL COMPANY

Mike Olienechak
PO Box 41600
Nashville, TN 37204
(615) 469-1335
www.swellpedals.com

When I designed these pedals, I paid extreme attention to even the smallest details; *nothing* was overlooked which led to design and ultimately redefine the vacuum-tube effect pedal. They’re small, dead quiet, completely transparent, and each pedal offers dual functionality, which means that depending on which pedal you’re using, there’s a dedicated footswitch to select between Drive 1 or Drive 2, Boost 1 or Boost 2, or the sweepable Mid independently of Bass and Treble on the VM-TEQ. It’s like getting two pedals for the price of one.

The entire Swell product line is built on this Dual Functionality platform which translates into more value for the customers money.

Last but not least, by allowing substitution of one tube for another, Swell Pedals can be tweaked to fit a player’s specific needs in less time than it typically takes to tune a guitar.

What are your hopes for the future of the industry?

I hope to see more high-quality small builders enter the market, no matter what they make – amps, effects, pickups, guitars, or bass whatever. Having worked at both small and large MI companies, I know there’s a never-ending passion and dedication that drives small companies to exceed expectations and deliver superior products. And then, on the other side of the coin, I would like to see a thinning out of the “me too” companies that clutter the market; just because someone can go to China and have the name of their choosing put on something that already exists doesn’t mean they should!

What are your goals for Swell?

To wake up each and every day and do what we do best – continue to design and build products that inspire. Great tone inspires people to make great music. And that’s what it’s all about, isn’t it?