Greetings from Northern California!

Welcome to this exciting new magazine. We are thrilled to be a part of this amazing boutique amplifier movement. So many things have happened so quickly in the last 5 or so years, it makes me wonder what the next 5 years have in store for us. One thing is certain—this is the absolutely the best time to be an electric guitar player in history. Never before have there been so many choices in amplification. My intent here is to give folks a brief history of our company, our background, and an overview of our past and current models. Many of you know me from the various forums, where misinformation abounds. So here’s the real story.

Bill Krinard and I first met sometime in the late 80’s. He was a local tube amp tech in Cotati, CA, next door to Zone Music, where I lived several days each week. (Sound familiar?) At the time, Bill did all the repairs for the store, and also sold high end hi fi gear. I was repairing TVs and VCRs at the time, and we would always bump into each other at the musicians flea markets. Bill has an incredible knack for buying the absolutely coolest stuff for practically nothing, and I’d often find myself in awe of his ability to buy something like a homemade plywood closed back 2-12 cab for $15 that had 2 original Vox Bulldogs in it. No Kidding. We would talk on the phone occasionally, mostly me asking questions. I was playing in a couple of bands at the time, buying every new Mesa that hit the store, never being completely satisfied. We were talking about Robben Ford’s amp tone one day, and Bill mentioned that he’d been working with Steve Kimock trying to develop an amp that responded like his. I was living in Pt. Reyes at the time, and knew what that amp was thanks to Terry Haggerty, who lived about 15 minutes from me. In fact, I was offered one of his for $3000, and passed. That amp currently belongs to Steve Kimock, and it’s a great amp. I was crudely modding my own stuff at the time, but it quickly became apparent that Bill was a dozen or so light-years ahead of me. He had a couple of modded Bassmans that were really cool-way cooler than the modded bandmaster reverb I had. We started fooling around with some circuits, parts, etc. and really started to have fun. We were surrounded by a bunch of really great guitar players, so there was no lack of taste testers during the early development stages. I began to let my satellite and repair business slide, leaving it to my employees to run the show so I could spend the better part of each day at the store, experimenting. This went on for several months, and Bill and I sat down at the San Rafael Guitar show in January of 1999 and began to formulate a plan. We decided to build a few amps. We ordered 10 chassis. We decided to use our initials in the company name. Ground breaking, to be sure.

Our initial design was a 2 channel, cascading gain, 50 watt amp with reverb and an effects loop. This remains today our basic platform. Since we were just starting, gathering parts was a challenge. We managed to complete our first K&M amp on Easter Sunday, 1999. Then we spent hours messing with it. We let a few guys check it out, and the response was positive. Emboldened, and several grand in the hole from parts accumulation, we had no choice but to try and sell one. We built 3 more over the next several weeks. A good friend just happened to be associated with Carlos Santana, and somehow managed to set up a meeting. I remember sitting in my shop in Point Reyes, thinking that this amp I was working on might someday be seen, heard, and maybe even played by one of my earliest guitar heroes. Heck, I still have the blonde L6-S I bought in 1976 after seeing Carlos with one in Guitar Player. Yeah, it needs a refret and I never play it. But still...It was an inspiring thought, and highly motivating at the time.

Then it happened. Bill brought the amp to Carlos’ rehearsal studio in San Rafael, CA. He loved it. He bought it. He said incredibly nice things about it. Then he had it installed in his rig and played it throughout the Supernatural Tour.
Supernatural, indeed. It sure felt that way at the time. A good friend of mine, Matt Gallagher, put our first website together. This essentially launched our company. By midsummer, famous gearhounds like Steve Snider and Sean Curtin owned K&M amps. My repair/satellite business was dying (thanks to my lack of attention), I was ready to move on, and in September I sold the business and committed to building amps full time. It was a huge gamble. I had a good life, a nice house, a decent business, and lived in a beautiful small community near the rugged northern California coast. What was I thinking?

By October, I had found a small house to rent in Sebastopol, less than 10 minutes from Cotati where Bill and I met daily and even closer to where we eventually set up shop at Studio E. Late that summer, we began building amps in the shop on Bill's property, which borders on the little town of Two Rock. We had sold about 8 of the first 10 chassis we bought, and decided we needed a cooler name than K&M Analog Designs for our amps. So the Two-Rock name was born. We outgrew Bills shop in about 3 weeks, and found a 400 square foot building where we could make noise. The shack in an apple orchard that became our first factory was inexpensive, drafty, and perfect. We had propane space heaters and a wood stove. We all got sick that winter. But we built Emerald 50, Sapphire 100, and Amethyst Special Indoor Storm models there, with 2 employees and a lot of faith. In fact, we really had no idea what would happen once we rented this space. The first week we were there, we received a call from Doug Abrams at Indoor Storm. He had heard about our amps and wanted to be a dealer. Could he wire us a bunch of money and could we please send him some amps? Um, let me think.... OK! Off we went. By March, we had a crew of 4, were selling 2 amps a week, and had 5 dealers. We relocated to Cotati that spring, and were rolling right along at this point. Since we were still experimenting, designing, and improving our product and production almost daily, the first 50 Emerald 50s varied considerably. Not having a clue about what the ramifications might be, we offered mods, upgrades, etc. constantly, usually for a fee. We quickly learned thanks to customer feedback that this approach was less than ideal for the consumer, and us. We decided a new amp was in order- something that would have component, feature, and tonal consistency. The Emerald Pro was introduced, with some added features and a new look.

I'll talk about the details of these models and others in future issues. I'll leave you with a brief chronological history of our amps, and approximate production numbers. I say approximate because any chassis that was damaged was still built as some Frankenstein prototype by Bill, and there are many of them out there.

The first amplifier we offered said simply "K&M" on the front right side of the faceplate. 11 total were produced, starting with #1, born on Easter Sunday, 1999. # 10 was completed sometime in September of that year, while 11 was built nearly 16 months later for a guitarist playing in a Santana tribute band who wanted to duplicate Santana's rig. Emerald 50 production began the last week of October 1999, and continued until early2001. Approximately 125 were produced. The Amethyst Special Indoor Storm model was produced from November of 1999 through April 2000. Only 6 combos were produced, along with 3 heads. All were 50 watts, with an additional 5 watt class A section. The Amethyst head was a variation of the Emerald 50, using a different preamp circuit. Approximately 15 were produced. The 100 watt version of the Emerald 50 was designated the Sapphire 100, of which only 17 were produced. Emeralds, Sapphires, and Amethysts were available in both head and 1-12 combo configurations. Early models were shipped with Tone Tubby Alnico (pre-hemp cone) speakers or various Celestions, usually an 80. There are 2 2-12 combos out there, one of which is a Sapphire.

The Emerald 50 morphed into the Emerald Pro in September of 2000. A redesigned enclosure, proprietary components and the addition of dual EQ and tone bypass were the main features. Approximately 70 Pros were produced, not including 5 100 watt versions and 3 "Pro +" models which were prototypes of what would become the Opal. During this time period, 32 custom amplifiers with preamp, power amp, and tonal contour-switching option variations were also produced. Many retained the faceplate and moniker of the chassis on which they were built, while others received different badging or labeling. In addition, 5 "Sapphire Pros", a variation of the Em Pro in 100 watts, were built.

The Topaz was offered to replace the Emerald Pro July of 2001, after we were no longer able to supply NOS US made tubes. 47 were produced.

All of the aforementioned are no longer in production.
The Opal was introduced in May of 2001. It was the first short chassis model, and also utilized a unique build architecture not found on other models. To date, 65 have been produced. The K&M Custom was introduced as a production model in March of 2002, after nearly 20 were produced as a special order (built on an Opal Chassis) beginning in mid-September 2001. Approximately 120 have been built to date. In February of 2003, The Custom Reverb was introduced. Over 130 have been made to date. The Onyx debuted as the Garnet at NAMM in January 2003, but was renamed Onyx and production began in February 2003. Only one Two-Rock Garnet exists. 41 Onyx amps have been built to date. Several variations of the above models exist, customized to varying degrees. Approximately 44 Custom amps of various types, power, etc. have also been produced on the above named chassis, some retaining the original name and faceplate, some not.

The Ruby debuted in April of 2002. Only 50 will be made, and to date, 31 have been built. Several configurations are available, including 12/18 and 25/35 watt versions. A few were customized.

The Jade began production January of 2004, and to date, 35 have been produced. Available standard in 50 or 100 watts, 5 have been special ordered with 2 6V6’s for 22 watts.

A handful(6) 4 x EL84 amps were also built as custom amplifiers. Like the Ruby, these are all single channel amps, no master volume or effects loop were added. The K&M LTD originated as my personal Class A 6V6 amp. Only 25 will be produced, and as of this writing, only 8 are available. Later versions (after the first 6) are class A or A/B switchable and have a dual power 3 position standby switch. That’s what we’ve done to date. Sorry if the production numbers appear vague, but they are a reasonable estimate of our actual numbers and do not include a few we lost to shipping, etc. Also, since Bill built so many prototypes on current model chassis that eventually found a home somewhere, the actual exact number can only be guessed at. That’s not including special one-offs built on other chassis we had, nor I am counting the dozens of Bassman mods, etc., some of which were more than changing a few parts.

In future articles, I will go into more detail on each model, and discuss the differences between them. If there is anything you’d like to see me cover in a future article, please drop me a note at Joe@Two-Rock.com.

Til next time, Joe Mloganoski

K&M Analog Designs
