



Review  
AKUSTIK GITARRE  
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**AER** The Acoustic People<sup>®</sup>

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# Lily one

Our PickUp Queen  
*Unsere PickUp Königin*

## The German manufacturer AER, known for its acoustic amps, has revised the AK 15 Plus pickup system. The result is called Lily One, and even the packaging reveals what it is all about: a rechargeable dual-source pickup system.

It is rechargeable and powered by two sound sources. Sounds good already. The aim of the AER developers was to develop a system that was particularly easy to use - robustly built and without an elaborate housing, and also not to interfere too much with the instrument. We received a mid-range Steelstring Acoustic with the system built in, and the product again separately for a closer look.

### Construction

When the Lily One is installed, the guitar does not look like it at first glance. A closer look reveals a small control unit with two rotary knobs, which is attached to the inside of the sound hole with Velcro tape. The volume and microphone mix can be adjusted, and a small LED lights up as a warning when the battery voltage goes down. The system does not shut down immediately, but can be operated for a while without loss of sound, after which it should be recharged. Visible, of course, is also the jack socket - the output signal has to come out somewhere. Preamp and battery are attached to the jack socket, and a miniature microphone, which is the second sound source, is well hidden here. Preamp and control unit are connected with a small multi-core cable. The main sound source is a piezo pickup, which is placed in the bridge slot as usual. The choice of the pickup was made by comparative sound tests; The aim was to ensure that as few piezo artefacts as possible affect the sound. The shielded, covered cable of the pick-up ends in a mini jack plug, which is very easily plugged into the matching socket on the preamp. For optimal level adjustment, there is also a trim pot on the preamp for setting the microphone pre-amplification. The components make a serious impression, everything is designed for simplicity and robustness; the sound hole control (SHC) to be mounted on the top weighs only a few grams and will not dampen the vibration of the top even with high-quality instruments.

Mounting material for the control unit and cable routing is included. Only two interventions are necessary on the instrument: a hole in the bridge slot for the pickup cable (which then lies invisibly under the pickup and bridge insert) and a hole in the end block in the bottom side for the preamp/output socket (there is often already a hole here for an end pin).



### Rechargeable

A key feature of AER's Lily One is that it is powered by a LiPo accumulator, which means a rechargeable lithium battery instead of a 9-volt block. A charging cable is included: Standard USB to jack plug. So you can use any standard mobile phone charger with a USB output socket (or a power bank). The duration of battery operation is given in quite wide limits, here you should be provided for a pure playing time of seven to twelve hours; it takes about seven hours to charge from empty to completely full. The use of such a battery is no longer unusual in the year 2023: Countless electronic devices - above all smartphones - are powered by Li-ion batteries. In our industry, however, this is quite rare for guitar pickup systems; 9-volt block batteries are still widely used. So if you use the AER Lily One, you no longer need a battery compartment on your guitar, there are no more (sometimes time-consuming) battery changes, and you save on battery weight. Frequent players also save on battery costs.



AER uses a circuit that stabilises the operating voltage and raises it to 18V; ensuring clean transmission and playing dynamics over the battery's life. However, you must also be aware that an empty battery in the middle of a concert really is the end of it; there is nothing that can be replaced or recharged in a few minutes. For important occasions/gigs/concerts/rehearsals, the Lily One should be fully charged well in advance



### Tone

AER's declared goal was an „honest pickup“ without artificial sound embellishment. As usual, the Undersaddle Piezo provides the main signal, which can be made a little airier with parts of the microphone signal. The manufacturer is therefore looking for natural reproduction, even dynamics and transparent sound, including good transmission of possible body action of percussively oriented guitarists. I think the absence of a tone control (usually a treble control) is acceptable, because today every serious acoustic amp has a good tone control. I have used the Lily One for studio recordings as well as played through two different acoustic amps. And I am impressed. The system offers a loud, clear, punchy signal that is very direct and mercilessly reproduces even the smallest string action, but at the same time reacts dynamically, appropriately reproduces the guitarist's playing technique and gratifyingly remains largely free of typical piezo artefacts. This is definitely the upper sound category for Undersaddle systems, especially since the useful signal is free of noise. The acoustic amp shows that the frequency response is balanced and can be adjusted well with common tone controls. Especially the highs, which are often a bit corrosive with piezos, are well contained, the sound is sufficiently warm and still offers enough top end. I am able to achieve a considerable

volume without feedback (and that, mind you, without notch filter and phase switching). The added microphone does not change the basic sound significantly, it becomes a bit thicker in the bass and lower mids and altogether a bit airier - not in the sense of higher, but a quantum more acoustic and less direct. Interestingly, the exemplary feedback behaviour hardly changes when the microphone is turned up; the instrument does not become significantly more sensitive. With the microphone mixed to the maximum, the Lily One transmits very well various body actions such as hits on the top, bright snare hits on the rim and even wipes on the top. The latter, of course, quite quietly, because there is no contact PU under the soundboard; moreover, this sound depends on the texture and finish of the soundboard of the respective instrument. So it can also be used for percussive playing, even if there are perhaps better specialised systems. All in all, I like it very much - for my taste, the microphone could be a bit more prominent, but that's what the mic gain control is for (although you have to remove the output jack to adjust it afterwards).



### Résumé

AER's Lily One is a perfected two-way pickup system with rechargeable lithium battery. The whole thing is not only technically mature, but also sounds impressive: powerful sound, balanced frequency response, realistic dynamic reproduction, absence of ambient noise and, thanks to the microphone, even suitability for percussive body actions. A good product at a reasonable price, definitely for professional use.

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