

Rockette:30 Combos - 1985 to 1987



This amp was very popular and production over four years was around 20,000 units. It was basically a simpler version of the Sessionette:75. Two of these were used by Eric Clapton on his August album, which were bought from Andertons Music in Guildford.

Most had a custom made 12" Celestion G12C 30 speaker. A 12" speaker in this class of amp was very unusual. Others had cheap inefficient 10" units which sounded like a bee in a biscuit tin!

You know, simply fitting a better speaker in a budget amp can improve its tone no end. Although many say it's not worth the cost, but I say you can always take it out and put the original back in before you sell or PX the amp later?

It was the first guitar amp in this category to be provided with channel switching. It also had a unique 'SimPlay' system where two guitarists could each plug into one of the two input sockets which allowed one to play overdrive, whilst the other could play clean, although the second guitarist could use the footswitch to play overdrive too - simultaneous playing - SimPlay.

It had an RRP of £175.00 and was replaced by the Duette:112 (60W with a 12" Celestion G12M 70) and the Duette:110 (30W with a Celestion G10C 30). The Duettes were one on the first amps to have post overdrive EQ. The Rockettes and Sessionettes were equipped with pre-overdrive EQ although both had post overdrive tone controls.

LIKE A ROCKETTE *Session Rockette 30*

Session sneaked onto the market a few years ago with an amp that found immediate favour among guitarists of all types – because it worked. Since then they have developed the range using their own experience, plus that all-important input from the musician. One of the latest in the line is the Rockette 30...

Although Axess Electronics say the Rockette 30 is aimed primarily at the student guitarist, I have used it in various gigging situations and it just about handles a small pub, but when used at larger venues – miked up through a PA – it really comes into its own.

One thing that Session seem to have got right, from the outset, is looks. The Rockette is a really handsome little beast with its almost grey 'flannel' covering, black Fender/Boogie style grille cloth and the neat Session logo.

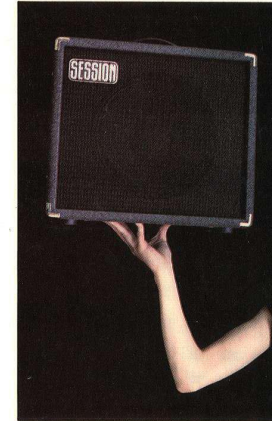
The cabinet is of closed back (apart from a small opening for stowing mains lead, etc) construction with metal protectors for every corner. Front panel position is a la Vox AC30 – ie on the top, at the back but facing forward so the user can operate it easily.

Controls

As with many modern guitar amplifiers the amount of flexibility made available is quite extraordinary. There are two inputs; input 1 being solely an overdrive lead channel and input 2 from which a channel-changing footswitch can be operated. One thing that the manufacturers stress very strongly is the facility for two guitarists to play through the amp simultaneously, without the annoying interaction that usually prohibits this. I tried it and it works – great for bedroom rehearsals.

In Use

There is a small rocker switch that selects which mode you want the amp to operate in – lead only, switchable or rhythm only. Switching to rhythm only and plugging into input 2 produces an instant clean sound which can be modified by the volume, bass and treble controls. The amount of clean headroom is pretty good and the 12" speaker seems to take everything well



in its stride. Maximum volume is quite loud, though not in the realms of the aforementioned Vox.

With the tiny size of the Rockette, I was expecting it to be somewhat directional but was staggered by just how directional it really is. Sitting more or less on top of the amp and playing clean, with all controls flat out, the volume didn't seem very great. Moving back and letting the speaker project the sound at you, though, gives a different story (as the complainants from down the corridor will testify).

Flipping the rocker across to the lead channel whacks you into distortion mode. Each channel has its own volume control so the relative sound levels can be preset and selected at will, using the optional (unfortunately) footswitch.

The treble and bass controls are now redundant and the 'tone' function is taken over by what Session call a 'variable harmonic filter'. This adjusts the overall tone of the distortion

channel and, whilst fairly limited in real terms, is very useful as far as the general operation of the amp is concerned. First of all, it's fairly pointless to provide too much tonal choice over distortion as it tends to become either 'nasal' or 'tizzy'. The other, and probably more important factor, is that you effectively have separate eq over each channel, which is something that is not always available – even on some very expensive systems.

With the rocker in the centre position both channels are mixed (when plugged into input 2) and all controls now operate over the sound.

Another very usable inclusion is that of an effects loop. Rather than having an effects device at the beginning of the audio chain (ie, between guitar and amp) pedals such as chorus or echo can be routed to bypass the preamp and come back in before the power stage. This gives a far more studio-like effect since the hiss – inherent in all such devices – is not amplified by the preamp.

Speaking of effects, the reverb – which operates over both channels on the Rockette – is great. It's usable from 1, right up to 10, with none of the boominess often associated with spring reverbs in guitar amps.

An extension speaker socket is provided and speakers of any impedance can be used without ill effect. Footswitch and headphone sockets speak for themselves, as do power switch and fuse holder.

Conclusion

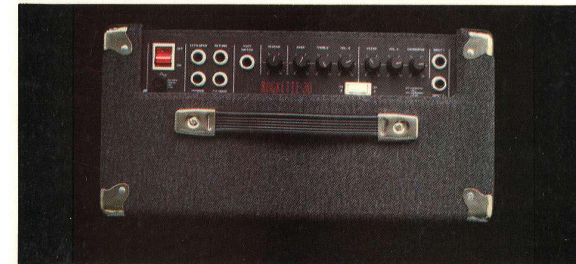
As you can see from the photo the Rockette 30 is certainly a portable combo. It's an immensely versatile package that will give the young guitarist the 'right' sound straight away (Oh, for one of these back in '64). Pro players might also benefit from a peek at the little Session since its sounds, and the way the amp's laid out, make it so usable.

I keep hearing phrases such as "The British Boogie". It's not a British Boogie – what it is is a great little British amp, that does its job admirably and is worth every penny. Full marks to Axess Electronics!

RRP; £175.00

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