

LIFT-OFF . . .

Session RG15-110 Rockette

The baby in the family of Session guitar combos is the Rockette. While this neat little amp measures only 12" x 12" x 7.5" and is rated at just 15 watts, it can still boast such features as two inputs, reverb, pre-amp output, headphone output, dual footswitch for the reverb and a level boost . . .

Technically known as the RG15-110 the Rockette's control panel is situated on the top of the amp with the lettering facing the player, so you won't have to learn to read upside down and right to left to adjust anything. From the left, the controls start with the illuminated mains switch and the fuse holder. Then comes the Pre-amp Out for connecting to either a power amp or tape machine. Below this is the headphones socket, suitable for cans with an impedance of between 8 and 600ohms.

Reverb depth is varied by the Reverb master control which is next in line, followed by the main Volume master. Next to that is the EQ section which operates post overdrive, so subtle use of these controls has a dramatic effect on the overdriven sound. The Bass control is first and has an operating range over 50 to 200Hz. Second comes the Middle control and this looks after the 200 to 1,000Hz range. Finally the Treble control working from 1,000 to 10,000Hz adds more

than enough bite to even the flattest sounding guitar.

An Overdrive control allows the sound to be set clean, or through varying amounts of distortion to a really hairy lead sound. The overdrive deepens as the control is adjusted up to ten. Finally come the two inputs. The top input is marked Bright and is basically a high impedance socket with top boost to add some extra sparkle to your pickups. The Normal input is also high impedance and matches most types of electric guitar.

A ten inch Celestion speaker is fitted to the Rockette and the grille cloth has been brought through the back of the combo and attached to the back board to protect the cone from footswitch and mains plug when stored in the back of the amp. The combo itself is finished in a nice grey tweed and because of the high standard of finish this amp would be at home anywhere. One thing that seems out of scale, although not out of place, is the carrying handle - it's the same size as those used on full-sized combos, but because of the lightness of the unit this does make it very easy to carry.

There is no transit cover made for this amp which is a pity because it seems to me that this is the type of combo that is going to get ferried around a fair bit, especially as it only weighs 12.8lbs.

In Use

I thought I'd check out the clean sound first, because a lot of small practice type amps don't really have one... Not so this baby. Using the Normal channel I was able to turn the amp full up, and with the tones set to about half, the Rockette stayed clean, with a good warm sound and plenty of headroom without dirtying up the sound. The Boost control, which I'm told quadruples the input gain, added a real punch to the sound making it fatter as well as louder - great for

banging out solos and then switching back to a comfortable rhythm level. Plugging into the High input did brighten the sound but also turned it edgy and harsh making the overall effect more aggressive. Of the two input options I much preferred the Normal, as the feel was more natural.

Cranking up, the Overdrive control opened up a whole new range of sounds. On a low setting, again using the Normal input and with careful setting of the tone controls, the Rockette produced a great blues sound. Adding more overdrive gave the kind of sustain that seems more rich and natural than dirty. That is until the control passes somewhere around the three quarter mark and then you enter a world of almost infinite sustain and bite - great setting this for the metal player. Into the Bright input and again all the sounds are possible but with that extra edge that really cuts.

My one real disappointment was with the reverb. This is a two spring Accutronics unit and I know from past experience that these are usually very good. Unfortunately the unit on the Rockette, while providing reverb, didn't have a smooth quality - it sounded more like a special spring effect than top quality reverberation. One definite plus is the Footswitch. Good robust construction, clearly marked and with LED status indicators, and included in the price. Why doesn't everybody follow Session's example?

Conclusion

To the would-be purchaser of a practice amp the world can be a very confusing place. Apart from the fact that there are so many on the market at the moment, the main problem is that they all tend to sound pretty much the same. While the Session won't win any competitions on price it should score heavily on sound, facilities and looks. Plus it is as portable as any on the market. I found the RG15-110 to be a good, small practice amp and if that's what you want then you should give it serious attention - and if you don't like it then you can give me a Rockette . . . er . . . rocket!

RRP; £132.00 (inc. VAT)

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photo by Liz Ellis

Rockette (RG15-110) Combos - 1987 to 1988

There is a nice story about how the Rockette 110 on the left was created. One of our suppliers sent speakers packed in un-printed individual cartons by their own transport. The result was that the cartons were clean and in good condition... and we had to pay to have them taken away. Ridiculous? I should say so. So I had an idea that it may be possible to make a 10" loaded practice combo that would fit into those useless cartons. So I set about planning it and found that we could just squeeze an amp into the carton.

Those cartons, to have made at that time, would have cost us around sixty pence each. We couldn't lose really, so we went ahead and put the Rockette 110 into production. It was not a huge seller because it was not cheap like many others available. But it has a great sound and quite a lot of bass output, thanks to it's special speaker and some nifty cabinet design. I still have one in my Session amp collection.

We thought of it as an 'executive's practice amp'.



Rockette Lead, Bass & Linear (Keyboard +) 15W Combos