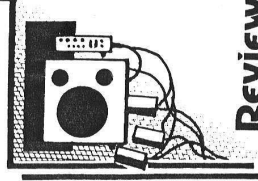
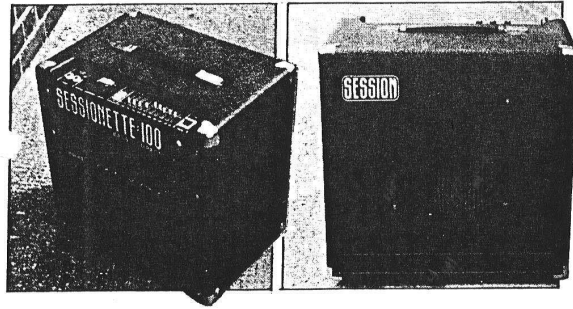


Session 100W Bass Compact Combo



REVIEW

Following their success with the popular Sessionette 75W Combo, the boffins from Basingstoke expanded their product range to include bass amplification. This month Paul White takes a look at the Session Bass combo to see if it lives up to our expectations.



In order to reproduce the sound of bass instruments efficiently, it is necessary to move lots of air which generally means large speaker enclosures, and so any bass combo must be a compromise between size and low frequency efficiency.

The manufacturers produce two versions of this amplifier, a one by twelve inch version and a four by ten inch version. Both are small enough to be easily portable, but the version incorporating the four ten inch speakers is larger and produces more bottom end punch, albeit at a cost increase of more than one hundred pounds over the basic model.

Construction

The review model was the version with the single twelve inch speaker, and this was kindly supplied by Rod Argent's Music Store in Worcester.

Chipboard and ply form a ported enclosure measuring 18½" X 18½" X 12½" (47cm X 47cm X 31.75cm) and into this is incorporated the amplifier section, built on a mild steel chassis which doubles as a control panel and rear panel.

A heavy duty Celestion speaker handles the total power output of the amplifier and the port at the bottom of the cabinet helps to improve the bass response at low frequencies.

The speaker grille is of the see-through mesh type, and the whole cabinet is finished in black vinyl with steel corners giving it a neat but rather ordinary appearance.

Both the power amplifiers and the preamplifier are mounted on the chassis

which constitutes the rear panel, the preamplifier being based around relatively common J FET operational amplifiers which combine low cost with good performance and reliability.

The power stage utilises ordinary bipolar output transistors, but apparently, a new model is about to emerge which will use MOSFET output devices so that an extension speaker may be driven in addition to the internal one. With the present design, plugging in an external speaker disconnects the internal one.

Internal construction is well engineered if unremarkable, and the ICs are mounted in sockets for ease of servicing.

Controls

The layout follows the same philosophy as the Trace Elliot bass amps in that the EQ is handled by means of a graphic equaliser rather than by conventional tone controls.

This is a 9 band design working at octave steps from 40Hz to 10 kHz, utilising inductorless gyrator circuitry to reduce cost and complexity.

In addition to the graphic EQ, there is a contour switch which, when engaged, modifies the basic sound to produce a modern, bright tone.

A choice of Hi and Lo sensitivity inputs are processed by a pre amp gain and a master gain so that the pre amp may be driven hard for a less clinical sound if so desired.

A compressor with preset attack and decay characteristics may be switched in if required, and a compression control adjusts the depth of this effect so that a punchy "produced" sound may be set up.

Facilities

The rear panel contains the usual extension speaker socket and the effects send and return socket. There is also a headphone socket which cuts out the main speaker when in use and a variable monitor output which may be fed to a slave amp. The DI output may be used to feed the output from the pre amp straight into a mixer and an auxiliary input is fitted so that the power amp and speaker may be fed from any line level source.

In use

The graphic EQ and compressor allow the creation of just about any bass guitar sound imaginable, and the twelve inch speaker is able to handle a surprising amount of power considering the very small size of this combo. On the slightly negative side, the very low bass end is a little lacking which is only to be expected with such a small cabinet; the four by ten version fares somewhat better in this respect.

Tonally, the sound is clean with plenty of top, which is essential for the modern slap bass technique, and there is a warmth about the sound that really flatters this style.

The compressor also suits this style of playing, where it retains the punch and evens up the levels of the slaps and pull-offs, giving the familiar Mark King effect.

Conclusions

These amplifiers are not cheap, but they do perform exceedingly well, given the limitations imposed by their physical size. The four by ten version produces the best results in the punch department but it is five inches taller and wider as well as being over £100 more expensive. In terms of value for money, it would be difficult to better these Sessions if you need an easily portable combo, and the tonal quality is first rate.

It is unfortunate that the power amp can't drive an extra speaker without turning the internal one off but the new MOSFET version should overcome that problem. In all other respects, it will look and sound the same.

(N.B. All Session amps are now fitted with MOSFET power amps, and will drive extension speakers without turning off the internal).

Paul White
GUITARIST SEPTEMBER 1984

Session supports charities

Here's a clip from Guitarist Magazine November 1987.

Because of the unique way of covering our cabinets, we could use virtually any kind material. So, we liked to show off a little now and then.

The Sessionette amp in the middle of the stack on the right is covered with denim cut out of an old pair of ladies 'FU's' jeans. We carefully cut the pockets from the jean's 'bottom' area and glued the whole section to the back panel. It looked really cool.

We only made the one and it's possible someone still has it. I think it would be worth quite a lot. So if you're the owner get in touch with us, we'd like to see it again.

THE GREAT GUITARIST SHOW RAFFLE



Axess Electronics Ltd and Guitarist Magazine have got together to give you the chance to own one of these amazing Sessionette 75 amps worth over £350!

The amps feature dual footswitchable overdrive and clean channels, FET pre amp design, Accutronics triple spring reverb, three band, valve type EQ circuit, effect send and return jacks, stereo headphone jack, plus a whole lot more. But what makes these amps so special is that each one has a totally unique covering.

The top amp in the picture is called the Miami Vice, the middle one is known as Hill Street Blues, and the bottom Hawaii-five O!

All you have to do to be the proud owner is attend the Guitarist Show on either Saturday 17th or Sunday 18th October! Visit the Axess Electronics Stand and buy a raffle ticket, or two (the price of each ticket is £1). The final draw for the three amps will be held on the Axess stand at 3pm on Sunday 18th. So have a go. Not only could you win a great amp, but you will also be helping both Childline and Help The Aged as Axess will be giving all proceeds from the raffle to them.

64