

**TC ELECTRONIC BG500 210 & 115** \$609 & \$569  
BASS AMPS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE CAUDERY

# TC Electronic

## BG500 210 & 115 £609 & £569

Guitarist  
**CHOICE**

TC Electronic continues to push bass amplification to the limit with designs for all occasions *by Roger Newell*

It seems that mainland Europe has retained an interest in the art of bass playing that was more widely enjoyed in the eighties and the early nineties – so it comes as no surprise to us that some of the best new designs in bass amplification have come from that region lately.

Having recently reviewed and been mightily impressed by the TC Electronic AH450 micro bass head and selected speaker cabinets (issue 324), we were keen to get our hands on the latest additions – the BG500 bass combo in both the 210 and 115-inch speaker formats.

With elongated proportions and a heavily curved front panel this is yet another striking design from the Danish company and it's packed with useful features, all of which are presented in a clear and user-friendly way. The amp section is fan-cooled but ultra quiet in terms of background noise, even at high volumes.

The single input is equipped with the necessary gain control and a peak indicator LED to ensure optimum connection to your bass. There's an excellent tuner that's easy to read and set for up to five-string basses – twin flashing lights show whether tuning is sharp or flat, and when they glow together you're in tune as shown on the appropriate string LED. TC likes multi-function, and here the string indicators also serve as a compression indicator.

Enhancing the regular bass, low and high middle and treble controls are added switches offering two distinct contour settings plus three user-set tonal memories. When you wish to craft a sound, simply alter any of the controls and green light flashes to tell you that a new setting has been recognised. When you've got your sound, you can store it

simply by pressing and holding down one of the three buttons in the standard storing method.

Tube Tone emulates all aspects of a full valve circuit including the traditional tonal warmth, front-end distortion and power stage fullness. It's very effective and intelligent and that's also the word for TC's Spectracomp compression – while the compressor is reigning in the peak levels produced by individual strings, it does so independently. This means that the extra mass of the lower strings won't dominate the compression of the bass as a whole, so you can effectively compress the E string and leave the G untouched and a nominally compressed G will not over-compress the E. Neat.

The four main tone controls include two in the mid-range for the lower and upper regions. This area is where the real tonal characteristics of your bass can be enhanced. If you're initially undecided as to what sounds you require, then engaging the contour button will offer the choice of two predetermined EQ curve variations and that will certainly get you off to a great start – but there's even more to get to grips with...

We particularly like having the tweeter tone control included on the front panel – this is a brilliant idea as it lets you adjust the intensity of the tweeter in the same way that you adjust tone rather than fiddling around the back of the cabinet trying to adjust the more traditional attenuator. It's much smoother and sweeter to operate and allows you to make far better use of those highest sonic frequencies.

The front panel also includes sockets for aux input (CD etc), headphone and balanced DI but, although essential, from a visual point of view we feel they

would be better situated at the rear of the unit.

### Sounds

Much of what has been perfected in the AH450 head has been incorporated here and, as both versions of the BG500 have the same amplifier section and general cabinet dimensions, their individual qualities are purely down to speaker complement. The differences then are pretty much as you would expect. For a tighter, punchier delivery the 210 configuration is the unit of choice, but for general, rounder tones and superior warmth then it has to be the 115.

However, the amp section does

have the ability to close this accepted gap rather well.

In fact, with so many sound shaping opportunities present you'd have to be somewhat inept not to come up with some truly fantastic sounds. The overall tonal range is significant but remains well within the capabilities of the unit as a whole, so no excesses at either end. The tweeter tone offers

### The Rivals

Ashdown's EVO III combos offer both C210T and C115 configurations (£759) and each delivers 575 watts with ample tonal manipulation.

Line 6's LowDown LD400

Pro (£704) offers amp modelling and 400 watts from a 2 x 10 box. The LD300

Pro (£469) has a 15-inch driver and four memories but 'only' delivers 300 watts. The

Mark Bass CMD102P

(£1,217) and the CMD151P

(£1,139) also have the same speaker arrangements and 400 watts of power.



The elongated cab design gives the BG500s a distinctive look



The front panel is a little crowded for our tastes

Valve simulation is often viewed with suspicion, but for bass players the tube characteristics are less sensitive

that final crispness to your sound for a little more definition and punch, very nice indeed. And having the ability to save three preferred sounds for instant recall on stage is a real bonus. All adjustments are included into the memory with the exception of master volume.

Valve simulation is often viewed with suspicion, and with good reason for guitarists, but for bass players the overall tubey characteristics are considerably less sensitive. Here it provides added warmth and expansion plus a decent amount of front-end distortion, and it's achieved with quality.

The low-end response is exceptional and will get your internal body organs throbbing to the beat, but thanks to all the adjustments available individual notes are never lost from the mix. So no matter how you like to craft your sounds you can deliver the results with gusto and prominence – both units are very loud!

### Verdict

With better bottom-end response than you'd imagine from the 210 configuration and more edge from the 115,

choosing between these two excellent presentations is harder than you think. Both combos are going to create a lot of interest in the bass market.

High power and quality of delivery usually results in very heavy units but not in this case as both are delightfully transportable. Curiously, curved cabinet design has never been overly popular in the UK, but there's no logical reason why this should be, so don't let that factor put you off trying one or both of these. We highly recommend a test drive at the earliest opportunity. **G**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Raw power; great tone; valve emulation; ease of use; stable tuner

**We dislike:** Having all the connection options on the front panel

**Guitarist says:** TC Electronic is clearly serious about bass amplification as these two combos prove. Having to make a choice between them is a very nice place to be!



### TC Electronic BG500 210 Combo

**PRICE:** £609  
**ORIGIN:** China  
**TYPE:** Solid-state bass combo  
**OUTPUT:** 500 watts RMS @ 4 ohms  
**DIMENSIONS:** 475 (w) x 410 (d) x 735mm (h)  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 32/70.5  
**CHANNELS:** Single, with gain control to suit passive and active basses  
**CONTROLS:** Gain, spectracomp, bass, low mid, high mid, treble, tweeter tone, tube tone and master volume. Buttons for tuner/mute, contour and three user memories  
**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:** Chromatic tuner, headphone socket, balance DI, auxiliary input for CD/mp3 player, inbuilt protection circuits  
**SPEAKERS:** Two Eminence Custom 10-inch and Eminence Neo Tweeter  
**CABINET:** Carpet-covered wood enclosure, expanded metal front grille, corner protectors, 'door knocker' handles  
**TC Electronic UK**  
**0800 917 8926**  
**www.tcelectronic.com**



### Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### TC Electronic BG500 115 Combo

**PRICE:** £569  
**ORIGIN:** China  
**TYPE:** Solid-state bass combo  
**OUTPUT:** 500 watts RMS @ 4 ohms  
**DIMENSIONS:** 475 (w) x 410 (d) x 735mm (h)  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 32/70.5  
**CHANNELS:** Single, with gain control to suit passive and active basses  
**CONTROLS:** Gain, spectracomp, bass, low mid, high mid, treble, tweeter tone, tube tone and master volume. Buttons for tuner/mute, contour and three user memories  
**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:** Chromatic tuner, headphone socket, balance DI, Auxiliary input for CD/mp3 player, inbuilt protection circuits  
**SPEAKERS:** Eminence Custom 15-inch and Eminence Neo Tweeter  
**CABINET:** Carpet-covered wood enclosure, expanded metal front grille, corner protectors, 'door knocker' handles



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