

Fender Rumble 150 bass combo £363

A classic Fender bass amp returns to the lineup. So then, let's get ready to rumble! *by Roger Newell*

Fender's Rumble Series of bass combos has been around (on and off) for some time, but never has the range been so appealing as now. Robust, well proportioned and very stylish with black livery and an expanded metal grille, it features nickel-plated metal corners, heavy duty spring-loaded handles and removable castors: road worthy and easy to move around. The front baffle is ported for maximum sound dispersal and it's designed as a workaday gigging unit or for practice sessions.

The mains socket is at the rear, but all of the controls and connections are on the front panel. The single input socket is provided with a -6dB switch making it suitable for either passive or active basses, while the EQ section features high and low mid controls, plus the usual bass and treble bands, and a lone volume control. Extras include the shape feature, with two switches labelled punch and scoop, and an overdrive section with controls for gain and blend. Along with the on/off switch are extra sockets allowing input for CD/mp3, tape player or drum machine, a footswitch socket and a very handy headphone jack.

Sounds

Manufactured in the Far East to keep costs down, the most important question is can it produce the classic Fender bass amp sound that we love? Well, yes, it can. This is partly due to the relative simplicity of the tonal circuit and its no-frills approach. Using the four tone controls gives great variation, but the simple addition of the

shape filter offers further enhancement and quality sounds. Scoop (as the name suggests) takes out the mid-range frequencies while boosting the high- and low-end to give a tightly-focused funky sound. Punch produces a rockier sound with high impact and delivery. With both activated you get a boost in note definition, but for more classic Fender sounds leave them both out and stick to those basic controls – it's particularly good in a studio environment as it allows your bass to retain its individual sonic characteristics.

The dedicated overdrive section gives you far more control over your distorted sounds. Whether you want the subtleties associated with a valve preamp for added warmth and colour or the angular blast of an overdriven hornet's nest of metal mayhem, the Rumble obliges. It's not reliant on high volume levels, either, and can also be activated by a footswitch.

Rated at 150 watts you'd expect this combo to be limited in performance ability but the clearly efficient design produces significant headroom. With an active bass guitar, and the low-end of the Rumble wound to maximum, it certainly shifts air and the speaker handles the whole thing with confidence and clarity. It's hardly a sound that you would want to use often, but it demonstrates just how



capable this unit actually is. The switchable horn also performs exceptionally well and, although there's no level adjustment, it adds good projection to the top-end.

Verdict

Well proportioned, easy to transport and with plenty of muscle, this could be your ideal gigging partner, even if the front panel with all its controls and connections does suggest that it's more of a dedicated practice combo. But while we'd like to see some of those moved to the rear panel, it doesn't affect the performance in the least, this workaday combo is hard to fault. User friendly and with plenty of sound options it performs well on looks, practicality and power. **A**

The Bottom Line

We like: Practicality; EQ; portability; surprising power

We dislike: Not much at this price

Guitarist says: Equipped with a 15-inch speaker this performs well for any style. A compact, affordable, versatile combo for small gigs and practice

The Rivals

Ashdown's EB 15-180 EVO II (£349) offers great value for money with 180 watts of solid-state delivery and the Sub-Harmonic generator. **Peavey's TKO 400** (£399) offers a healthy 400 watts output, a seven-band EQ and a versatile tilt-back design. But if sophistication is more important than power, then consider the **Line 6 Lowdown LD175** (£445). With five amp models, five built-in effects, plus programmable memories, this has all you need and more for studio and gigs and is rated at 175 watts.

Fender Rumble 150 bass combo

PRICE: £363

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Solid State Bass Amp

OUTPUT: 160 watts RMS @ 4 ohms

DIMENSIONS: 584 (w) x 363 (d) x 596mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 29.5/65

CHANNELS: Single, with -6dB switch to suit both passive and active basses

CONTROLS: Volume, bass, low mid, high mid, shape filter switches, overdrive enable, overdrive gain and blend, horn activation switch

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Delta Comp adaptive compression circuitry, XLR line out jack with ground lift, effects loop, aux in, headphones, footswitch jack socket, fan-cooled

SPEAKERS: 15-inch Fender Special Design 200-watt Speaker and Piezo Horn

FINISH: Black textured vinyl, black metal grille, removable casters

Footswitch: Optional Overdrive on/off, standard or vintage (£40.99)

RANGE OPTIONS: The Rumble 350 costs £504 and the 150 head (£222), 350 head (£340) and three cabs:

2 x 8 (£328), 112 (£293) and 410 (£293) have just been announced

Fender GBI

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www.fender.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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