

FENDER HOT ROD DEVILLE III 212 AND 410 £970 & £1,066  
GUITAR AMPS

PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP SOWELS



## Fender Hot Rod Deville III 212 & 410 £970 & £1,066

We've played the version III Hot Rod Deluxe; now its bigger brothers arrive, tweaked and ready to rock *by Mick Taylor*

In issue 334, we looked in detail at the version three update of Fender's successful Hot Rod Deluxe: the 1 x 12 valve combo on semi-pro stages everywhere. Now it's the DeVille models' turn, upping power to 60 watts and with a choice of either 2 x 12 or 4 x 10 formats. You can get the full story on the updates in issue 334; here we'll précis them before asking the important question: what separates them in terms of tone?

The main sonic update to the Hot Rod IIIs is a retweaked overdrive channel for a thicker, tighter tone. You also get new tapers on the volume and treble pots for smoother transitions and, in the 2 x 12, new Celestion speakers instead of Eminence.

Practical updates include the black control panel with white lettering, which is a Hot Rod legibility revolution: much better! Finally, Fender has provided a more robust, better-designed footswitch that sits more comfortably on your pedalboard.

These are essentially three-mode amps: separate channels for clean and overdrive sounds, plus a footswitchable 'more drive' function. Build-wise, it's the now-classic black Tolex

over sturdy ply cabs, silver grille cloth, a tidy PCB-based circuit and the op amp-driven long-tank reverb (not valve driven). Top it out with a simple series effects loop – go for pedals with their own level control – attach the restyled front badge and you're done. The 212 is only marginally shorter than the 410 – its twin speakers are mounted on an angle rather than horizontally.

Those 12-inchers are now made by Celestion – 80-watts

The 410's harder mid-range pushes overdriven tones with more aggression, the 212 is moderately more polite, but is still anything but tame

handling capacity, and 98dB sensitivity – while the 10-inchers in the 410 are custom designed by Eminence, rated at 30 watts and 96dB.

### Sounds

Compared with the 40-watt Deluxe, the 212 and 410 Hot Rods offer a considerably bigger presentation. The Deluxe is no slouch in the low

### The Rivals

#### 212

The **Peavey Classic 50** (£1,039) runs on four EL84s. We like the **Engl Classic 50** (£1,513) that uses a pair of 5881 power valves, and also the 6L6-driven **Mesa Boogie Express 5:50** (£1,749).

#### 410

The **Laney L20T Lionheart** (£828) uses four EL84s and is 20 watts. **Peavey** has a 410 version of the **Classic 50** (£1,143). The **Egnater Renegade 410** (£1,299) has two EL34s and two 6L6s.



end, but here there's even more clarity and a palpable sense of depth, particularly with cleaner tones: the bigger, open-backed cabinets throw out more in every direction for a room filling experience.

The clean channel recalls more than a hint of classic, mid-sixties blackface, albeit with a slightly harder edge and delivery. The 410 has more upper mid-range bite and presence than the 212 (with all controls set identically), which better suits the stinging, reverb-drenched attack of blues playing in the vein of Alberts King and Collins when you really whack it up. It's particularly good with Strats and Tube Screamer-type overdrives for that post-SRV, mid-rich tone, too. The 212 does a similar job, but has a softer mid-range feel that sounds slightly more classic rock-focused to our ears. If you want this non-master volume channel to overdrive, get some ear plugs – it's loud, loud, loud, and a brilliant base on which to layer pedals.

The refocused drive channel is a big improvement over Hot Rods past, and you should learn to love your guitar's tone controls to get the best from it. The mid-range kick and

smoothness in the distortion walks the fine line between maintaining edge, clarity and presence, while avoiding 'fizziness'. You can span just-breaking-up blues tones through to heavier saturation that'll do heavy rock with no problem: no metal though – the mid-rich EQ curve, open-backed cab and blooming bottom-end response is too unruly for chuggers.

The 410's harder mid-range pushes overdriven tones with more aggression, while the 212 is moderately more polite, but still anything but tame – the more you dig in, the more you get back. For all-round rock and blues, these amps make a whole lot of sense.

### Verdict

These characterful valve amps remain highly popular for good reasons: a wide range of easily accessible classic American-flavoured tones, enough volume for any normal playing environment and realistic, albeit professional, prices.

Tireless tweekers might want more independent control between modes, but the pay-off is minimal confusion for players who see their amp as something to be played, rather than simply plugged in to.



Which one would we have? Misty eyes filled with Bassmans and Supers past, and indeed its slightly more articulate voice, seal the 410 deal for us bluesers, but all-round rockers may prefer the 212 for its subtly more forgiving mid-range. Either way, there's no wrong choice here – the Hot Rod's dominance looks set to continue a while yet. **G**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Excellent range of sounds; loud as hell

**We dislike:** You might want more control between modes; reverb could be more refined

**Guitarist says:** Market leading amps, updated. Simple to use, loud, and rewarding for players with a good sense of touch

### Fender Hot Rod DeVille 212 & 410

**PRICE:** £970.80 (212), £1,066.80 (410)

**ORIGIN:** Mexico

**TYPE:** Valve-powered, two-channel, three-mode combos with solid-state rectification

**POWER:** 60 watts

**VALVES:** 3 x 12AX7, 2 x 6L6 (all Groove Tubes)

**CONTROLS:** Volume, drive, treble, bass, middle, master, reverb, presence pots; 'more drive' and 'normal/bright' switches

**FOOTSWITCH:** Two-button switch included: channel change and 'more drive' function

**SPEAKER:** 2 x 12-inch Celestion G12P-80 (212); 4 x 10-inch Special Design by Eminence 30 watt (410)

**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:** Two inputs, series effects loop, long-tank spring reverb, 2 x 8-ohm speaker outs (internal & external). Slip cover included

**WEIGHT (kg/lb)** 20.4/45

**DIMENSIONS:** 212: 615(w) x 533(h) x 273mm (d); 410: 597(w) x 597(h) x 273mm (d)

**OPTIONS:** None

**RANGE OPTIONS:** Hot Rod Deluxe (£862.80); Blues Jr III (£574.80) and Pro Jr III (£526.80)

**Fender GBI**

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**www.fender.com**



### Test results

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

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



Better than the DeVilles you know – the version III amps have more legible controls and a smoother overdrive channel