



PHOTOGRAPH BY NELL GODWIN

# SWR Headlite, Amplite & Golight **£716, £563 & £1,021**

SWR goes modular and digital for its new bass range that takes size to a minimum *by Roger Newell*

**A**s the bass amplification market continues to focus on getting a bigger punch from smaller units, SWR has been one of the few to resist the trend – until now. Yet in a way SWR started the downsizing trend with the famous Redhead combo, so why the delay in going all the way? Quite simply SWR has taken the time to make sure that its Class D would offer sounds and quality equal to its current conventionally sized ranges, and that's a process that couldn't be rushed.

To achieve this, SWR has produced a system that uses separate preamp, power amp and speaker units. Everything is ultra compact and lightweight, yet the

performance quality is truly excellent. Either the preamp or the power amp can be connected to the speaker, or you can go through one and into the other before the speaker. Both amplifier units are fan-cooled and can be rack-mounted using the optional conversion kit if required.

### Headlite

For the ultimate in portability, using just this and the cabinet is the way to go. Well endowed, the controls include aural enhancement and compression

with each tone rotary offered in dual-concentric configuration of frequency and volume. This is a most versatile form of tonal blending with centre detent nailing the flat response. A fourth dual pot services compression and effects blending. A handy indicator light flashes orange when compression is engaged and shows red when the input signal is being clipped. This Headlite package includes a padded gig bag that can also house the Amplite, optional footswitch and cables.

### Amplite

Neatly offered in the same size as the Headlite, there's little to see here, just a single volume control and four LEDs that constitute a level meter. It's used to boost the sound when using more than one cabinet and the linking facilities are all at the rear. However, if you're perfectly happy with the natural sound of your bass guitar then using just this connected to the speaker will work fine. We tried it with a trusty Fender Precision and it sounded superb.

### Golight 1 x 15

This particular Golight full-range cabinet offers a single 15-inch driver plus a horn/tweeter for some additional note clarity and projection, so is suitable for any style of playing. Front-ported and incredibly light, it comes covered in black felt with plastic corner protectors all round and a square mesh metal front grille.

If you're happy with the natural sound of your bass, using just the Amplite connected to the speaker works fine. We tried it with a Fender Precision and it sounded superb

### The Rivals

The **Markbass Little Mark Rocker 500 head** (£803.70) and **Club Series 151 cabinet** (£692.08) took our breath away last issue, while the **TC Electronic RH 450 bass head** (£899) is another versatile head, but there's no 15-inch cabinet in the range. The **RS212** (£549) is a worthy alternative though. If you want small, try the **Mesa/Boogie Walkabout Scout 115** (£1,699 approx). Not super easy to find but it's the ultimate in portability with the head slotting into the cabinet.

It has side-located 'door knocker'-type handles and proves to be a comfortable one-man lift. The rear panel offers a horn level control, plus input and output sockets for daisy chaining speakers in both speakon and standard jack socket options.

### Sounds

Adding the Amplite into the equation merely provides more power, so we're concentrating on the Headlite into the Golight cabinet here. The Headlite may have only three areas for tonal alteration, but the ability to shift frequency and intensity gives enormous variation. The



low end is huge, while the top end provides definition and punch in that particular SWR fashion. In addition the aural enhancer quickly presents the player with a variety of EQ sound imprints, or simply push the control to revert to flat response that will favour electro-acoustic instruments. Effects blending is good and the compressor provides an even sound across the strings but is subtle, so don't expect to use it as a sound feature.

### Verdict

Being so compact and relatively well endowed with sound options, operating the preamp

is a bit fiddly, but this is a small price to pay when the results are this good. Also, to get full power from either or both of the amplifying units you'll need two cabinets to achieve full impedance matching. However, using the Headlite alone or with the Amplite you can be assured that the classic SWR sound imprint stays intact. Using the Amplite alone will favour your bass's pure natural sound, or whatever preamp you may choose to link it to. Staying SWR all the way, however, is likely to offer optimum performance. It's been a while coming, but it's worth the wait. **G**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Size and weight; sounds; great tonal variation

**We dislike:** Crowded control panel; indicator dots very hard to see

**Guitarist says:** For players on the move this is another fantastic portable and powerful option. The Amplite as an optional extra is certainly an attractive proposition if a little pricey



The modular approach maximises versatility



### SWR Headlite Bass Preamp

**PRICE:** £716

**ORIGIN:** Mexico

**TYPE:** Class D power amp with tube preamp

**OUTPUT:** 400 watts RMS @ 4 ohms

**DIMENSIONS:** 216 (w) x 248 (d) x 46mm (h)

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 1.7/3.75

**CONTROLS:** Volume only

**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:** Effects loop, DI output, balanced XLR with pre/post option and ground lift

**OPTIONS:** Two-button footswitch (£82)

### SWR Amplite Power Amp

**PRICE:** £563

**ORIGIN:** Mexico

**TYPE:** Class D Power Amp

**OUTPUT:** 400 watts RMS @ 4 ohms

**DIMENSIONS:** 216 (w) x 248 (d) x 46mm (h)

**WEIGHT (kg/lbs):** 1.36/3.0

**CONTROLS:** Volume only

**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:** Two Speakon output jacks, 'pass-through' jack for daisy-chaining multiple Amplites, 6.4mm input on front panel

**RANGE OPTIONS:** Headlight 400W Class D Power amp with valve preamp (£699.99)

### SWR Golight 1 x 15 Bass Cabinet

**PRICE:** £1,021

**ORIGIN:** Mexico

**OUTPUT:** 350 watts RMS @ 8 ohms

**DIMENSIONS:** 591 (w) x 469 (d) x 514mm (h)

**WEIGHT (kg/lbs):** 20.4/45

**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:** Horn level control, speakon or jack connection

**SPEAKERS:** Custom Designed SWR 15-inch driver plus Custom Designed horn/tweeter

**RANGE OPTIONS:** Marcus Miller

Golight 4 x 10 (4 ohm) costs £1,021;

Golight 4 x 10 (4 ohm or 8 ohm) costs

£1,021; the Golight Jr is £715

**Fender GBI**

**01342 331700**

[www.swramps.com](http://www.swramps.com)



### Test results

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

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★