

Markbass Little Mark Rocker 500 £803.70

A pro bass stack that that will fit into the back of most cars isn't a cheap proposition... *by Roger Newell*

Ever keen to keep ahead in the bass market, Markbass has tweaked its highly successful Little Mark head in order to make it more cater specifically to the needs of rock bass players. Enter the Little Mark Rocker 500, equipped with custom valve circuitry in the preamp section for fat and edgier sounds, plus the ability to overdrive to perfection. Beautifully designed and very compact, it falls well within the 'small and powerful' trend.

The whole unit employs a logical design and has a single input socket with associated gain control so you can optimise the signal from your bass. Use the clip LED to get this just right then add Tube Drive for a little valve colouration, rather than overdriving the gain, for the best results. There's a four-band EQ here to suit your tonal needs and a couple of surprises too.

All the necessary sockets and linking facilities essential for today's bass player are positioned at the back. There's nothing superfluous, it's all very compact, comprehensive and efficient: welcome to the Markbass world.

Sounds

To get the full benefit from this head we've selected the new 2 x 10 and 1 x 15 cabinets from the Markbass Club Range. Sturdily built and fitted with horn attenuators, the enclosures are of the same dimensions as the head, so make a very tasty looking stack. You could get away with either one of these, and there are other options of course, but this is a

set-up that we particularly like and is ideal for rock playing.

The designers are well aware that extra edge and note definition are required to combat the wall of sound produced by heavily overdriven guitarists, so have designed this head to cut through all of that. The front-end circuitry, with its inclusive valve, immediately gives any bass added warmth and depth whether used clean or with a touch of distortion. This is kept well within the capabilities of the design, so that even when the Tube Drive control is wound right up, the overdriven sound refuses to become muddy or distorted.

The tonal section has four rotary controls to handle the entire spectrum of sounds on offer. Having two separate controls to alter the mid frequencies is always welcome, but perhaps the most surprising sound aspects come to light when using the Vintage Loudspeaker Emulator (VLE) and the Variable Pre-shape Filter (VPF).

The VLE effectively takes you back in time as you turn the control, shifting from modern, tighter sounds to the more open and virtually speaker-flapping characteristics of the early days of bass amplification. You'll naturally prefer one or the other feel, but do experiment to see what works in your music. The VPF, however, is more like

a shelving filter that offers added depth to the sound, without enveloping tonal twists or introducing special acoustics. This 'roomy' effect is similar to reverb, but far more subtle. Neither of these features are 'essential' as such, but they nevertheless offer a pair of extra routes to tailoring your sound in addition to the usual EQ options.

Verdict

Mark Bass has an excellent reputation, and the Little Mark Rocker fully lives up to high expectations in both looks, ability and indeed portability. The kick-back cabinet design means they can stack in the conventional manner or be angled up in a monitor-like fashion so the full impact can be focused at you.

It's hard to get a bad sound out of this Markbass rig; tighter, modern tones, through to full-blooded, more classic-voiced bass sounds that will please the vast majority of rock-leaning bassists. **A**

The Bottom Line

Markbass Little Mark Rocker 500

We like: Compact design; powerful output; unusual tonal options

We dislike: No roadworthy enclosure – it's an extra

Guitarist says: Easy to use, the Little Mark Rocker is aptly named, but the sound is still pure Markbass

Guitarist CHOICE



The Rivals

The **Genz Benz Shuttle 6.0** (£629) offers 375 watts with a 12AX7 preamp valve and solid-state power amp. Cabs cost around £700. The pricier **TC Electronic RH 450** (£899) lacks a preamp valve but has the emulated Tube Tone control, and the cabs are a little cheaper too.

Markbass Little Mark Rocker 500

PRICE: £803.70

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Valve preamp, solid-state power section

OUTPUT: 500 watts RMS @ 4 ohms

DIMENSIONS: 276 (w) x 256 (d) x 80mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.97/6.55

CONTROLS: Gain, tube drive, low, mid low, mid high, high, VLE (Vintage Loudspeaker Emulator), VPF (Variable Pre-shape Filter), line out level and master volume

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Effects loop, pre/post EQ DI, tuner socket, mute

Proel International Ltd

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Markbass Club Series 102/151 cabs

PRICE: £744.95/£692.08

ORIGIN: Italy

OUTPUT: 400 watts

DIMENSIONS: 446 (w) x 422 (d) x 589mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lbs): 13.6/29.98 (102) 15.1/33.29 (151)

ADDITIONAL FEATURES:

Attenuator (102)

SPEAKERS: 2 x 10-inch drivers, tweeter and horn (102); 1 x 15-inch driver, tweeter and horn (151)

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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