

VS

Words: Henry Yates

VOX NIGHT TRAIN 50 VS EGNATER TWEAKER-40

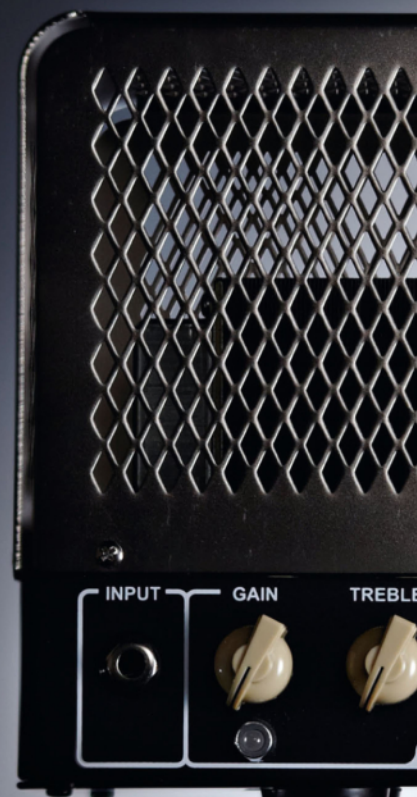
Two heads are better than one, and this month, TG rates two downsized stacks that prove valve amps needn't be minimalist or back-breaking

THESE are testing times for the Massive Amp Stack. From the pub slogger with his mic'd combo, to Misha Mansoor of Periphery, who this month reminds *TG* that his Fractal Axe-Fx lets him play Wembley Arena sans backline, it seems like the world is getting smaller, slimmer and more like the chihuahua in Paris Hilton's handbag. If this trend continues, thousands of obsolete roadies will have to be released into the community...

As such, with this Head To Head, we haven't gone king-sized with enormo-heads and 4x12 wardrobes, but instead lined up two tweakable and giggable heads twinned to 2x12 cabs that won't slip your disc, shred

your overdraft or spare your audience (don't be fooled by their feeble-sounding wattage: a 50-watt amp produces nearly as many decibels as a 100-watt one). And while most valve heads limit their dial-count to the bare bones, it's worth noting that both these rivals put an emphasis on tweakability.

First up, we're on the Night Train 50 (£659; £419 for V212NT cab): a beefed-up reboot of the original Vox mini-heads that throws more tone-shaping features into the mix. Less of a known quantity is the Egnater Tweaker-40 (£529; £429 for 212X cab), but if it's anything like the previous work of tone guru Bruce Egnater, it should take the British legends right to the wire...





>>>



£659

All aboard or end of the line for Vox's head?

SUMMARY	FEATURES				
	SOUND QUALITY				
	VALUE FOR MONEY				
	BUILD QUALITY				
	USABILITY				
	OVERALL RATING		★	★	★

WHILE the Vox flagship will always be the AC30, the Night Train has run it close in the modern era, and with the 50 we're travelling first-class. Obviously, that figure denotes the uprated grunt (quite a jump from the two/15 watts of its lunchbox brethren), while there's a spread of four 12AX7 and two EL34 valves glowing behind that steel grille.

Vox is keen to push the versatility of this head – “blues one night, country after that and full-on rock the next!” – and that’s backed up by a dashboard that offers far more to fiddle than before. Twin channels, with the overdrive comically known as ‘Girth’, are i tone-shapeable and th footswitchable if you’ the VFS2A, while ther

secret weapons that we'll get to in a moment. Have the old guard realised that people demand more than one killer tone?

Physically, it's mostly good news. The NT50 has slightly exposed knobs, but looks like the world's most rocking cat-carrier, is light enough for practical gigging and turns out to be intuitive, too, with LEDs denoting which channel you're on. As you'd hope from the British sparkle kings, the 'Bright' channel is suitably ethereal, with good headroom before things start to roughen round the edges, but the real thrill comes from activating the 'Thick' preamp mode and being boosted through the roof to a tight, woody, hard-driving crunch (the only frustration is that it stops the EQ

dials working). Like most valve amps, the Night Train lays sloppy playing a bit bare, but Vox has thoughtfully added an FX loop around the tradesman's entrance.

As for 'Girth', well, it's as fat as it sounds. Vox is still Vox, and classic rock-style gain is still the forte over truly seething metal tones, but if that's your vibe, you'll love the thick, roaring swagger that pumps through those 12-inch Celestions. It's a quality tone that doesn't require you to hunch over the dials, but the 'Tight' switch is a cool addition, too. Playing solo, we preferred to keep it disengaged

for a full-on sensory assault, but cutting the low-end boom in a band situation will doubtless have its uses, while the Tone Cut does the same sort of job for the highs.

The Night Train 50 is the kind of amp you'd have when playing a pub gig in heaven. It offers modern looks, killer tones, trimmings that make a difference... and did we mention that it's seriously loud? If there's a misconception that Vox is all about The Beatles shaking their heads and going 'woo!' back in the 60s, then this modern monster will bury them. It's hard to see how the Egnater will top it.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Valve head

OUTPUT: 50 watts

VALVES: 4x 12AX7 (preamp) and 2x EL34 (power amp)

CONTROLS: Standby, Power, Thick, Tight, Bright/Girth, Channel Select, Master Volume, Tone Cut, Gain and 3-band EQ for each channel

SOCKETS: Speaker jacks, FX Loop and Send/Return, Footswitch (VFS2A not supplied)

WEIGHT: 12.2kg

DIMENSIONS: [HxWxD] 235 x 458 x 175-mm

CONTACT: Korg UK 01908

857101 www.voxamps.co.uk



