



Bogner Shiva head £1,399

A future classic that's here today: Bogner's Shiva promises plenty of tone with minimum hassle. One of the world's most talked about amps makes its *Guitarist* debut by Nick Guppy

Reinhold Bogner's entry to the upper echelons of amp wizardry was pretty much assured when Eddie Van Halen called on him to revamp his legendary Marshall head; ever since Bogner has been busy carving itself an enviable niche at the top end of the market with a small but perfectly formed product range that's seen in the hippest of company.

Alongside the ultra-gained Uberschall and the multi-function Ecstasy, one of Bogner's most popular models is the Shiva – a two-channel design that promises heavenly tone with a minimum of hassle – and it's the head version of this highly sought-after super amp that we're taking a look at here.

All Bogner amps are exceptionally

well put together, and the Shiva is no exception. This example is covered in a tough heavy-duty vinyl that's been expertly cut and fitted, with details like the gold piping and rich gold anodised front panel combining to give a really classy appearance.

The electronics are housed in a heavy-duty steel chassis that's powder coated in green enamel and neatly screen-printed. All Bogners use printed circuit board construction and the Shiva features a typically high quality PCB that supports most of the amp's components, including the valve bases. Overall, it's a very high standard of construction – as you'd expect for an amp in this price bracket.

The Shiva is a proper two-channel

design with a few interesting twists. Channel one is primarily intended for clean to mildly crunchy rhythm sounds and features volume, bass and treble controls, while channel two is for lead work and includes gain, volume and a three-band EQ. There's a global master volume and presence control, while both channels get separate bright switches and a boost function which is footswitchable – the amount of boost is preset on channel one, while channel two incorporates a separate boost level control, allowing you to fine-tune the amp's response to your own taste.

On the rear panel, you'll find a pair of speaker outlets and an impedance changer, a trio of sockets for the Shiva's series effects loop and a channel



We were impressed with the way the Shiva retained its cranked-up feel even at bedroom levels, making this a great amp for recording as well as live use

selector switch for use when the footswitch isn't needed. Why three sockets in the effects loop? Well, Bogner used to provide just two, with a strong output signal that was primarily intended for pro standard line level rack effects units. It proved too much for some devices, especially stompboxes, hence a special cable with built-in resistors was often needed to tame the Shiva's send levels. Recently though, the amp received an update and now features separate high and low level send outputs so the resistor cable is no longer necessary. One slight annoyance is the footswitch, which features separate buttons for channel selection, boost and reverb. On this non-reverb head the reverb button is,

of course, useless, as is the separate jack plug at the other end of the lead that would plug into a reverb switch socket if there were one. We think a proper two-button switch and single plug cable would look better and make the non-reverb Shivas appear more complete.

SOUNDS: Tone is, of course, the Shiva's raison d'être and plugged into a suitable extension cabinet the amp powers up with minimal hum and hiss levels, demonstrating even before a single note is played that this is one very well-sorted circuit.

The Shiva's clean channel is complex and detailed, with a crisp treble and a tight, snappy low end that responds



Bizarrely, the reverb switch is redundant as this amp doesn't have it

BOGNER SHIVA HEAD	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ WE LIKED The fabulous tone and response of the Shiva's lead channel ■ WE DISLIKED The effects loop is not particularly flexible 	

well to humbuckers, though single-coil players in need of a warmer, rounder tonality might do well to consider the 6L6-equipped version. The bright switches on both channels add a nice twang to guitars that lack treble, without producing the kind of high frequencies that threaten to loosen fillings in your teeth. Engaging the boost adds a rich chiming overdrive that's very touch sensitive. Because the degree of drive you'll get depends on how powerful your pickups are, although the results will be excellent whatever guitar you use.

The lead channel packs a powerful punch, warm and woody with plenty of sustain and harmonic content when wound up, although it's not as gained-out as some of Bogner's other models. For metal and really aggressive modern rock the Uberschall or Ecstasy are probably better choices, but for classic rock and blues the Shiva is spot-on perfect, with a character that screams vintage Bletchley at you. Used with a good humbucking guitar you can vary the boost to pull off instant Cream-era Clapton, Kossoff or Page licks with consummate ease. Volume won't be a problem whatever the venue – this EL34 version delivers 80 watts and that's more than enough. We were also impressed with the way the Shiva retained its cranked-up feel even at bedroom levels, making this a great amp for recording as well as live use.

The quality of signal through the

BOGNER SHIVA HEAD £1,399
GUITAR AMPS CD TRACKS 8 & 9

BOGNER SHIVA HEAD

PRICE: £1,399

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: All valve, two channel head with solid-state rectification

OUTPUT: 80W RMS

VALVES: Six ECC83/

12AX7 preamp, two

EL34 power amp

DIMENSIONS: 270 (h)

x 620 (w) x 260mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 20/44

CABINET: Hardwood ply

CHANNELS: Two

CONTROLS: Channel 1:

volume, bass & treble.

Channel 2: gain, volume,

bass, mid, treble, boost,

volume. Global master

volume and presence

FOOTSWITCH: Three-

button footswitch

(included) toggles boost

on both channels,

channel select, reverb

(if fitted)

ADDITIONAL

FEATURES: Bright

switches on both

channels, series effects

loop with two send level

options, manual channel

changer switch on rear

panel

OPTIONS: Also available

with 6L6 output valves.

The Shiva is also available

as a 1 x 12 ported combo

at £1,649 or a 2 x 10

open back combo

(£POA). Reverb is an

optional extra at £150

RANGE OPTIONS:

2 x 12 cabs cost £569;

4 x 12 cabs are £799

Guitarguitar

0191 261 1568

www.bogner

amplification.com

BOGNER SHIVA HEAD £1,399

GUITAR AMPS  CD TRACKS 8 & 9



The rivals

Rivera Fandango 55 head	£1,299
Marshall Vintage Modern 2466H head	£757
THD Flexi 50 head	£1,399

Rivera's beautifully finished Fandango combines the Knucklehead's channel two with one of the best rhythm channels in the world for a head that won't leave you wanting for more. This is the amp used by Prince and his guitarist Mike Scott. Marshall's new Vintage Modern packs KT66s for the classic Bluesbreaker tone and it does a lot more too. This clever and inspiring new design is affordable and cool, putting Marshall back on to the hot product list. THD's Flexi 50 offers superlative vintage Marshall-inspired tones combined with ultra-hip styling. It's an amp that will get you noticed for all the right reasons.

→ effects loop is good, although the lack of send or return level controls means you can't fine-tune things. However, this is very much a purist design and best suited to the simplest of set-ups – a good guitar and lead are really all you need when you've got an amp like this to plug into.

What the Shiva lacks in versatility compared to Bogner's more feature-laden models, it more than makes up for in the tone and response stakes. Those players used to the old-school method of driving an amp from the guitar's volume control, as well as varying their picking, will undoubtedly

be able to pull almost anything they want from it.

Verdict

Aimed unashamedly at the top end of the market, the Shiva will give you back your money's worth and then some – although at this level there's still some worthy competition on the market.

Some players might wish for a little more in the way of features, perhaps, but that's really undermining what the Shiva is all about. It's not stripped down to make it affordable – albeit that it is by Bogner standards – it's made that way to provide a pure signal path from input jack to speaker outlet, delivering maximum tone when that's all that counts. We've often said that the simplest of valve amps are usually the best when it comes to delivering that elusive excitement which made us all want to pick up an electric guitar in the first place. If you discount the ever-present desire to make a fast buck in the vintage amp market, there's more than a little truth in the "they don't make them like they used to" axiom.

Here's a thought for you: having a good circuit is one thing, but most of the magic in those early amps comes from more obscure variables like components and layout, and as time moves on, much of the arcane knowledge used to design and build products now considered to be vintage treasures is sadly becoming diluted and/or lost for ever. Consequently, modern amps that still have 'it' are becoming less common and worth paying a premium for.

The Shiva is one amp that does have 'it', in exceedingly large supply. And, if you get it, don't delay in plugging in. Just say Guitarist sent you. 

Bogner Shiva Head

Guitarist RATING 



The rear panel features a pair of speaker outlets and an impedance changer



The channels' bright switches can add twang to guitars that are lacking it