

CONTROLS

IT'S simply gain, bass, treble and master volume – but do you really need anything more? Not when an amp sounds this sweet

LOOKS

THE blue vinyl covering lovingly wrapped around the AC4C1-BL gives it an air of sophistication and undeniable, utterly irresistible retro panache



HANDLE

IT'S handy that there's a handle, because this is such a pretty amp that you'll likely want to carry it with you wherever you go

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Valve amplifier
OUTPUT: 4 watts
SPEAKER: 1x10" Celestion V10
VALVES: 2x 12AX7, 1x EL84
CONTROLS: Gain, treble, bass, volume
SOCKETS: Input, external speaker output
WEIGHT: 9kg
DIMENSIONS: (HxWxD) 350 x 350 x 210mm
CONTACT: Vox 01908 304600
www.voxamps.com

VOX AC4C1-BL £299

After great looks and classic tone? The biggest sounds can come from the smallest amps...

IS there any brand more evocative to the beat-era tone acolyte than Vox? When gods walked among us, dispensing the purest of pop, it was Vox that supplied the backline. In fact, the AC30 remains the standard for authentic British tonal nirvana, its distinctive bite and charming chime powering many of the greatest records ever made.

But we aren't all wearing shirts woven from £50 notes, which is what it requires to purchase one of the fabled black and brown boxes. Thankfully, the good people at Vox know that timeless tone should be available to all, hence the compact and affordable AC4C1-BL.

This is a thing of very real beauty. In fact, when archaeologists of the future dig up this amplifier, they will presume that we worshipped it as a tiny square deity. Dark blue vinyl, Tygon fret cloth, cream chickenhead knobs and Bakelite handle and golden Vox logo – you'd have to be suffering a serious

taste malfunction not to appreciate what's going on here.

But prettiness is for naught if there's nothing under the hood. Good thing, then, that the innards of the AC4C1-BL appear to have been as painstakingly assembled as its wallet-loosening exterior. A trio of valves – two 12AX7s for the preamp and an EL84 in the power

immediately clear that this is an awful lot of amp in an extremely compact package.

If you're playing an electric fitted with humbuckers, then you'll find the AC4C1-BL the perfect partner for crackling chord bashing and growly leads. Admittedly, there's not a great deal of über-distortion awaiting you here, rather a rich,

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amp – and a 10-inch Celestion VX10 speaker sit at the heart of this wonderfully straightforward little amp, eagerly awaiting your input.

Control-wise, things couldn't be simpler: gain, bass, treble and volume, plus a single input and a single external speaker output. You won't miss having extra knobs to twiddle, though, because as soon as you plug in, it becomes

textured crunch. Single coils open up a whole world of sharp, stinging attack, especially after a little experimentation with the treble and gain settings.

There's no denying that this is an amp full of character, its valve-driven tones reminiscent of all kinds of classic guitar sounds. The Beatles, The Kinks, The Stones – they all used Vox, and after some

time tinkering with the AC4C1-BL, it's easy to understand why.

There are some limitations, which is to be expected from an amp with such a straightforward design ethic. It's devoid of effects (no reverb, no tremolo, nada), so you'll need to consider beefing up your pedalboard if that's what you're after.

So while the AC4C1-BL might not be bursting with bells and whistles where plenty of other amps in this price range are, what these competitors don't have is the style and classic Vox tone that's bursting out of this little blue cube. Sometimes, the best things really do come in small packages.

Rob Power

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