

TONE CUT

VOX's tone cut control works backwards, rolling off treble as it's turned up. It's on the output stage and works with the preamp EQ for the best overall sound

JACKS

A pair of high- and low-sensitivity input jacks cater for the widest range of guitars. High-output pickups often work better in the low-sensitivity input



ATTENUATOR

THE Reactive Attenuator control offers three output levels: full power, 1.5 and 0.26 watts, so you can get the full-on Vox sound at sensible volume levels

AT A GLANCE

- TYPE:** All-valve head
- OUTPUT:** 15w, switchable to 1.5w and 0.16w
- SPEAKER:** A matching 2x12 cabinet is available for £442
- VALVES:** 4x 12AX7, 2x EL84
- CONTROLS:** Normal volume, Top Boost volume, bass and treble, reverb level, tremolo speed and depth, master volume, master tone cut
- SOCKETS:** High and low sensitivity inputs, 2x speaker out, footswitch jack (VFS2 footswitch optional, £26.40)
- WEIGHT:** 15kg
- DIMENSIONS:** (HxWxD) 284 x 610 x 266mm
- CONTACT:** Vox Amplification 01908 304600 www.voxamps.com

VOX AC15CH £586

Heads you win – and more tone and control, too

SINCE it came under Korg's ownership back in 1992, Vox has flourished and become the iconic brand it always deserved to be, with a strong catalogue that includes guitars and effects as well as amplifiers, including the original AC15. While the original AC amps were combos, Vox has occasionally dabbled with heads, and recently added a pair to its Custom range, together with a matching 2x12 cab. So how does the new AC15 head stack up?

Control-wise, the AC15CH is almost identical to the combo with one exception, namely Vox's new Reactive Attenuator feature. This is controlled by a chickenhead knob on the rear of the head cabinet, and provides three output power levels, rated at 15, 1.5 and 0.16 watts. There's a pair of input jacks, a volume control for the AC15's normal channel, volume, treble and bass for the Top Boost channel, tremolo speed and depth,

reverb level, and a master volume and tone cut control. This last one is a classic Vox feature, which works on the power stage and rolls off treble as it's turned up – the reverse of what you might expect.

Plugged into its matching 2x12 cabinet, the head sounds like a regular AC15, but with more punch and presence. Used clean,

Clean, there's a distinctive sparkle to the upper mids

there's a distinctive sparkle to the upper mids and treble on the Top Boost channel, which blends into a toothsome midrange grind as the volume is turned up. In between, there are all the classic Vox drive sounds, from The Beatles and Tom Petty to Bryan Adams and the Edge. This combination is significantly louder than its combo counterpart, with plenty of punch

and more than enough level for small to medium gigs.

The clever bit is that the increased power can now be effectively tamed with the Reactive Attenuator control. While this only has three output level choices, they're well chosen. The middle 1.5-watt setting is ideal for recording and for quieter practice

sessions, while the 0.16-watt setting allows the AC15 to be driven flat out at conversation levels – perfect if you want to experience the legendary Vox Class A grind at home without alienating your neighbours. There's a particular spot with the master up to around three quarters where the output stage and preamp gain work together really well, and

being able to keep the volume under control makes the AC15CH very rewarding to use.

There are benefits to using heads and speakers rather than combos; separate heads and cabs are easier to carry, and a small stack is often louder and tends to have more clarity as the valves aren't subject to so much vibration. The only downer is the cost: if you buy the matching 2x12 Vox cab, this delectable outfit will separate you from around £400 more than the regular combo. However, it's a lot more amp, with more power and tone – if that sounds worth it to you, it's worth heading in the AC15CH's direction.

Nick Guppy

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