

**YAMAHA APX1200II & CPX1200II** £1,198 EACH  
ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON LEE



# Yamaha APX1200II & CPX1200II **£1,198 each**

Yamaha's flagship electros receive a couple of upgrades and updates... *by Steve Harvey*

**D**ue in no small part to their playability, versatility and general onstage competence, Yamaha's APX and CPX electro ranges are a popular choice for gigging and recording players. Launched in the mid-eighties and late-nineties respectively, APX and CPX guitars have had their electronics periodically updated and upgraded keeping them in step with Yamaha's developing preamp and pickup technology. There have also been numerous cosmetic updates to keep the guitars looking contemporary.

APX and CPX models have many similarities, but they do have distinctly different target consumers. With their slimmer bodies and resulting less bassy (and consequently less feedback prone) tone, APX models are aimed squarely at the player who primarily seeks plugged-in performance. CPX models, however, have a bigger body giving a more rounded acoustic tone, appealing to players with a foot in both unplugged and plugged-in camps.

2011 saw the launch of the APX500II and CPX500II along with the APX700II and CPX700II. These Mark II models featured new pickup systems. It's no real surprise

then to see the release of the APX1200II and the CPX1200II. Originally launched in 2010, the 1200 series features Yamaha's proprietary SRT mic-modelling pickup system; an onboard preamp that centres on digitally processed, pro studio acoustic recordings of 'real' guitars using three different, hi-fidelity mics (a Neumann KM56 small-diaphragm condenser, Royer

R-122 ribbon and Neumann U87 large-diaphragm condenser). Each microphone has two recorded versions/positions; 'close' and 'distant' as controlled by the focus button on the control panel.

Yamaha has kept the needs of the gigging musician very much in mind too. Feedback prevention is rightly high on the list and the SRT features AFR (Auto Feedback Reduction).

The APX aims for plugged-in playing; the CPX is for those with a foot in both unplugged and plugged-in camps



A new, separate undersaddle pickup system aims to provide greater clarity

When engaged, the system tracks and nullifies the errant frequency. The onboard chromatic tuner is also stage-friendly, muting when activated – the previous system didn't. The battery compartment (two AA size) is conveniently located on the upper bout for minimal-fuss battery changing.

In addition to the impressive SRT preamps, these Mark II versions feature upgraded ART (Acoustic Resonance Transducer) undersaddle pickups. "The original model had the pickup (one piezo element per string) embedded into the saddle," explains Yamaha's Julian Ward, "but the new model uses a proprietary undersaddle pickup that's separate from the saddle, but still has one element per string. The original reason for a new pickup design was that the SRT

## The Rivals

**Martin's Performing Artist 3 GPCPA3 and OMCPA3** (both £2,100) are fitted with Fishman's F1 Aura technology offering no less than nine mic-modelling options. **Baden's A-Style Rosewood Ellipse Aura** (£1,549) also offers blendable Fishman images along with anti-feedback, phase and bass boost. If the focus is on stageworthiness rather than mic-modelling capabilities, perennial favourites of the electro-acoustic sector, **Takamine**, offers the **TAN46C** (£1,129); a stylish powerhouse fitted with the company's CTP-1 Cool Tube Preamp.



needs a very clear, powerful signal to work well and no existing pickup was giving us what we needed. But the original embedded pickup made adjusting the saddle height extremely hard, so we redeveloped it to get the same performance from a separate undersaddle. And, as a by-product to the SRT-driving capability, the new pickup's output is higher, clearer and much more dynamic."

The control panel for both guitars is identical and features three centre-indented rotaries for low, mid and high, and larger rotaries for volume and blend, which offers a good degree of control over the pickup and mic-recorded images. A three-way switch allows for selection of one of three mic-recorded images each with the push-button option of close- or far-mic'ing, giving a total of six digitally processed options. In truth the subtle tonal differences of the mic-modelling are unlikely to be discernible in an onstage band setting, more so for the solo performer. However, for home and studio recording scenarios, mic modelling is a clever and welcome function.

Both our review models feature solid Sitka spruce tops and solid rosewood back and sides. They also come with high-quality semi-hard cases, which we were particularly impressed with.

Bringing them in line with recent updates to the 500 and 700 guitars, the APX and CPX 1200 models feature new lightweight, double-action truss rods; replacing the single-action, aluminium channel rods found on older models.

Access to the new truss rod is now via the soundhole as opposed to behind the nut – as a result the headstock doesn't need a truss-rod cover giving it an altogether cleaner look. This is further augmented by the addition of a stylish translucent black tint.

Other cosmetic upgrades to the APX include a shaped, wave-style fretboard end that overhangs the oval-shaped soundhole; the extra length home to a couple of extra frets (one half-width) though it's a nimble fingered player that can make use of them.

And, at last, we see the back of those cheap-looking plastic soundhole edgings – something we felt always let the cosmetics of APX guitars down – replaced here with an aesthetically pleasing wood and abalone soundhole rosette.

### APX1200II

First impressions of the APX are great, across the board. It feels lightweight and comfortable with an excellent out-of-the-box set-up; electric players will adapt easily.

The solid Sitka spruce soundboard is a fine selection featuring a straight, consistent grain, though it doesn't appear to be bookmatched. The solid rosewood back and sides are bound with mahogany and, in the case of the soundboard, finished with three-ply black and white coachlining. Mahogany has also been used alongside abalone for the soundhole rosette and very well-finished it is too.

Like the CPX, this APX feels well constructed and finished, and although comparatively thin, the guitar's high-gloss finish is well executed.

The APX handles dynamics and variations in right-hand techniques with far more precision plugged in



Die-cast enclosed ebony tuners and a tasteful motif adorn the CPX's headstock

### Sounds

Yamaha's stated purpose for the APX1200II is for plugged-in performance, be it onstage or in the studio. With that in mind, we'd be forgiven for focusing on its electro capabilities, but that would be missing a trick: this is still a good acoustic guitar. While the APX's lack of body mass does have an effect on its ability to offer a thick, rounded bass, it does project a strong mid-range and the high end is sparklingly clear and bright. Volume and sustain levels are comparatively good bearing in mind the guitar's size – the APX offers an instantly likable and usable acoustic tone.

Plugged in, it leaps into life with a punchy, bright 'snap'. Rolling off the signal from the pickup in favour of the mic models took the slightly metallic-sounding edge off the tone, and further rolling the mids off we were able to warm things up considerably. The guitar definitely handles dynamics and variations in right-hand techniques with far more precision when plugged in than it does in acoustic mode. Despite our best efforts at encouragement and plenty of opportunity, the APX resisted feedback – even at full volume – making the supplied rubber feedback-busting soundhole insert redundant. Overall, an impressive performance.

### CPX1200II

Boasting a full 15mm extra width, the CPX has much more of a traditional acoustic guitar body size than its stablemate. With the same wood choice as the APX, the thin gloss finish is particularly noticeable in this translucent black colour with



Both 1200s have the ART pickup and SRT preamp system with three-band EQ

Due to its larger body, the CPX offers more sustain, and a more articulate dynamic response than the APX

the soundboard's grain being discernible to the eye and touch. High-gloss black may not be everyone's idea of an acoustic but the mahogany trimmings give the guitar a very stylish look, augmented by the diamond-shaped mahogany fretboard inlays and those large ebony tuner buttons. Again, close inspection reveals high standards of fretwork, build quality, finish and presentation.

### Sounds

Unplugged, the CPX is the full-fat version of the APX. The overall timbre has more 'meat' to it and the lower registers have a fullness that the APX isn't able to match. Again, no doubt due to its larger body, the CPX offers more sustain and responds to dynamics more articulately than the APX and, as a consequence, doesn't need to be 'driven' quite as much as the APX. The CPX offers a well-rounded, versatile sound.

Plugged in, the CPX produces an altogether warmer tone than the APX. The bright 'snap' and 'zing' are still very present but softer, mellower tones are easy to dial in. It gives the CPX a wider amplified tonal range – it seems the more capable and versatile of the two.

### Verdict

Yamaha's flagship electros continue to impress. The APX is

a punchy, forceful electro that marries excellent build quality with good looks and functionality well suited to onstage duties.

However, the CPX stole the show and would appear to have it all – good looks, high standards of craftsmanship and a versatile, capable amplified and acoustic output. Because of this, we'd suggest the CPX is a better 'package' than the APX and, with the guitars priced the same, could well be the better buy. 

### The Bottom Line

#### Yamaha APX1200II

**We like:** Overall finish; onboard electrics  
**We dislike:** Is it a tad overpriced when A/B'd with the CPX?

#### Guitarist says:

A comfortable, powerful electro equally at home on stage or in the studio

#### Yamaha CPX1200II

**We like:** Classy looks; build quality; both acoustic and amplified tone  
**We dislike:** Nothing  
**Guitarist says:** Great looks, great tone, well-priced – what's not to like?



### Yamaha APX1200II

**PRICE:** £1,189 (inc case)  
**ORIGIN:** China  
**TYPE:** APX Cutaway  
**TOP:** Solid Sitka spruce  
**BACK/SIDES:** Solid rosewood  
**MAX RIM DEPTH:** 90.5mm  
**MAX BODY WIDTH:** 382mm  
**NECK:** Mahogany  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 650mm (25.6 inches)  
**TUNERS:** Die-cast enclosed  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Bone/43mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Ebony  
**FRETS:** 23 (14 to body)  
**BRIDGE/SPACING:** Ebony/55.5mm  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2/4.41  
**ELECTRICS:** ART undersaddle pickup, System 62 SRT mic-modelling preamp with three-band EQ, three SRT mic presets, focus/wide select, pickup/mic blend rotary, AFR (Anti Feedback Reduction), chromatic tuner  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** Aside from the CPX1200II reviewed here other Yamahas with SRT include the APX1000 (£789), the CPX1000 (£838), the LJX16CPII (£1,498), the LJX26CP (£3,595) and the A Series from £748  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**FINISH:** Natural gloss (as reviewed), translucent black finish  
**Yamaha Guitars**  
**0844 811 1116**  
**[www.uk.yamaha.com](http://www.uk.yamaha.com)**

### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Yamaha CPX1200II

**PRICE:** £1,189 (inc case)  
**ORIGIN:** China  
**TYPE:** Mini jumbo cutaway  
**TOP:** Solid Sitka spruce  
**BACK/SIDES:** Solid rosewood  
**MAX RIM DEPTH:** 115mm  
**MAX BODY WIDTH:** 397mm  
**NECK:** Mahogany  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 650mm (25.6 inches)  
**TUNERS:** Die-cast enclosed  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Bone/43mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Ebony  
**FRETS:** 20 (14 to body)  
**BRIDGE/SPACING:** Ebony/55.5mm  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.1/4.6  
**ELECTRICS:** ART undersaddle pickup, System 62 SRT mic-modelling preamp with three-band EQ, three SRT mic presets, focus/wide select, pickup/mic blend rotary, AFR (Anti-Feedback Reduction), chromatic tuner  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** See APX1200II  
**FINISH:** Translucent black (as reviewed), vintage sunburst finish



### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★