





AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Valve preamp and power amp, with digital reverb
OUTPUT: 30W
SPEAKER: 1x Celestion VX12 custom

VALVES: 2x 12AX7, 4x EL84
CONTROLS: Gain, volume, bass, treble, reverb
SOCKETS: Guitar in, effects send/return, extension speaker

WEIGHT: 24.5kg
DIMENSIONS: [HxWxD] 550 x 658 x 265mm
CONTACT: Vox
 01908 304600
www.voxamps.com

1 CONTROLS

Straightforward controls make the AC30S1 easy to use. All of the great classic and modern Vox sounds are right here – just a few twists is all it takes

2 SPEAKER

Behind the diamond grill cloth is a custom Celestion VX12 loudspeaker. Lots of volume and bass makes the AC30S1 sound bigger than many 2x12s

3 DIGITAL SPRING

The AC30S1's reverb is a superb digital spring that's up there with many studio effects for quality and versatility, from subtle ambience to full-on cavern

VOX AC30S1

£735

Bad to the bone: Vox strips the AC30 down to its essentials

The word 'icon' is frequently over-used in the guitar industry, but few would disagree that Vox's AC30 is the quintessential British guitar amp, used by a diverse list of equally iconic musicians including Hank Marvin, Rory Gallagher, Brian May and, of course, The Beatles. This year is Vox's 60th anniversary, and to mark the occasion, it's pulled out all the stops to tempt us with a cornucopia of new products, including this amp, the AC30S1.

The original AC30 was developed from Hank Marvin's request for a more powerful version of the AC15, so he could be heard over hordes of young girls screaming for Cliff Richard – although another of the amp's main selling points proved to be the six inputs on later versions, which meant a whole band could

plug into one. In contrast, the new AC30S1 is an amp for those who like to keep the best to themselves. To quote Vox, it has one channel, one loudspeaker and one purpose... that is, to our minds, to put some of the best Vox tones ever into the simplest of packages around.

ONE CHANNEL, ONE LOUDSPEAKER, ONE PURPOSE

Take a quick glance at the AC30S1 and you probably wouldn't notice the slightly narrower cabinet and centrally-mounted single 12" loudspeaker lurking behind the brown diamond grille cloth. The cosmetics are pure vintage Vox, with a grey/black control panel and cream chicken head knobs. Robust build quality, a

custom 12" Celestion speaker and a massive pair of transformers mean the AC30S1 is no lightweight, although it's easier to carry than a traditional 2x12 AC30.

The electronics are contained in a tough steel tray chassis, with one large PCB supporting the front panel controls and smaller boards

AC30S1 also feature's Vox's Euro-friendly energy-saving power supply, which can detect if the amp isn't in use and turn it off (mercifully, this can be disabled). This design change means the traditional mains toggle switch is replaced with a momentary action version, so there's no 'clunk' as the mains is turned on. There's no footswitch jack on the AC30S1 either, because there's nothing to footswitch – you just plug in and turn up.

We tried out the AC30S1 with a variety of guitars, including a PAF-loaded Les Paul Standard, a custom shop ES-335 and our regular testbed Strat, equipped with Duncan Alnico Pro single coils. Like all cathode-biased amps, the AC30S1 takes a few minutes for its voltages to stabilise, after which a slight initial hum fades away to practically



EL84 power

Still going strong: the EL84 valve remains Vox's secret sauce

The EL84 valve was originally made for small radios and portable record players, and was also the heart of Mullard's legendary 5-10 hi-fi amplifier. A true pentode, the EL84 was designed with high internal gain so it could be used without a driver valve in low-cost circuits. Together with its small size, this made the EL84 very popular, and hundreds of European audio products used it.

Introduced in 1953, it was still quite new when Vox chose it for its AC15, and quickly became a key part of the classic Vox sound, powering many British pop and blues bands from that era. Vintage EL84s weren't so good at withstanding the torture of guitar amp use; thankfully modern versions are much more rugged. Today, the EL84 is still a very popular valve for many amp brands. Of course, as with many other innovations, Vox was there right at the beginning.

inaudible levels. With the gain set low and master volume set high, the AC30S1 delivers some cracking vintage pop and blues tones. Shadows fans in particular will be impressed with the digital spring reverb emulation, which can be used at extreme levels without swamping the guitar. Using the Strat's bridge pickup and playing in 'Marvin style', with the little finger holding the tremolo arm and the pick over the neck pickup, all that's really needed is a decent delay in the effects loop for a sound that's uncannily close to Hank's original recordings.



There's nothing paltry about these chicken head knobs



The elusive treble chime of classic Beatles hits is there, too, with the heavier tones of their later albums if you add extra gain. Push the gain higher, and you're into classic early-70s blues-rock, while with everything maxed out, the AC30S1 will almost get you into Brian May territory, with that heavily compressed, vocal lead tone. There's lots of bass from the single 12" speaker mounted in a near closed-back cabinet, and volume to spare for any gig.

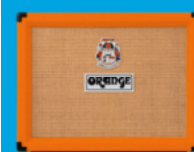
We think Vox has nailed it with the AC30S1: killer Top Boost tones plus authentic vintage styling and a

studio-quality onboard digital reverb makes for a very tempting package. It's a real player's amp that will flatter any guitar and style – and it's particularly well-suited to pedalboard users. If you're in the market for an AC30 that won't break your back or your wallet, the AC30S1 is just what you need.

Nick Guppy

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

ALSO TRY...



£899

ORANGE ROCKER 32

Costs a little more but features two channels, two 10" speakers and proper stereo.



£829

PEAVEY CLASSIC 30 112

The same quartet of EL84s adds a unique British flavour to a USA voice. Competitive prices, too.



£949

LANEY LIONHEART L20T

Another quartet of EL84s, arranged in a unique parallel single-ended circuit for 20 pure Class A watts.