

## FIRST ▶ PLAY



**ORANGE ROCKERVERB 100  
MKIII HEAD**  
£1,499

**WHAT IS IT?** Heavy-duty 100-watt head with classic British tone in spades



**ORANGE ROCKERVERB 50  
MKIII COMBO**  
£1,699

**WHAT IS IT?** Substantial 2x12 unit that's the only combo in the new MKIII range







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# POWER OF THREE

The third generation of Orange's pro-aimed Rockerverb range is here. Are you worthy?

WORDS **NICK GUPPY**

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**M**aking its debut at this year's Frankfurt Musikmesse, Orange's new Rockerverb MKIII range builds on its popular two-channel format, adding some significant improvements to the package. The new range includes 50- and 100-watt heads and a 50-watt 2x12 combo, all of which are built in traditional Orange fashion with heavyweight cabinets and enamelled steel control panels, printed with Orange's distinctive graphic symbols.

One immediately noticeable change is the front panel, which is 'pics only', like the classic 'graphic' amps of the early 1970s. This means a modicum of thought may be needed to understand the controls if you don't read the manual first. We like the cleaner, text-free look.

Under the skin there are more significant changes, including a redesigned 'chimier' clean channel with more headroom, and a reworked valve-powered spring reverb. We also get the same footswitchable attenuator found on the Thunderverb and Dual Dark amps. The classic ply picture frame cabinets are neatly covered, too, and feature contrasting black string detail and corner protectors. The combo's control panel is modified with smaller chrome handles, and the panel graphics are flipped so they can be read from in front.

Both amps have a heavy duty steel chassis with welded corners, supporting a pair of huge transformers that make up a significant chunk of the weight. Talking of which, both amps are seriously heavy: the head weighs more than many combos, and if the point of a combo is to be portable, the Rockerverb stretches things somewhat, with a kerb weight of 40kgs – definitely a two-man lift for most. A pair of





- 1** Behind the graphic symbols is a straightforward two-channel amp with great tone and cool features
- 2** The Rockerverb's footswitchable attenuator continuously varies down the pre-set output power all the way to zero
- 3** Channel selection, reverb and the attenuator can all be operated from footswitches, or controlled round the front
- 4** The basket-weave speaker grille is part of the classic Orange style, and some players believe it slightly softens high frequencies

heavy-duty grab handles makes it easier, although the head should have them, too.

Inside, the electronics are mostly contained on one large printed circuit board, including the front panel controls and valve bases. A smaller board holds the rear panel sockets. The layout and soldering is well up to Orange's usual high standard and the wiring has been neatly routed and terminated. A very tidy job.

The Rockerverbs are proper two-channel designs with volume, bass and treble controls for the clean channel; and gain, bass, mid and treble, together with a master volume, for the lead channel. All the knobs have stepped detents with 20 clicks between full on and full off – a neat way to help repeat that great tone from last night's gig, while hopefully preventing the panels from being covered in marker pen or stickers!

There are global controls for the valve-powered reverb and footswitchable attenuator next to a bank of toggle switches that handle mains, standby and channel switching. The standby switch selects full or half power with a four-valve/two-valve switch on the 100-watt head's rear panel roughly halving these outputs again if needed. A trio of speaker outlets, a pair of send/returns for the fixed level series effects loop and three footswitch jacks complete the rear panel layout.

The toggle switches don't have the satisfying, industrial 'clunk' of the old AD series, but still feel very solid and dependable. Overall, the new Rockerverb range exudes power, reliability and cool, boxed up in a unique package that hasn't lost any of its hip visual appeal since being introduced way back in the late 1960s.







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### Feel & Sounds

Both amps are essentially the same with small differences in headroom. The combo is an open-back design loaded with a pair of Celestion Vintage 30 loudspeakers, while the head is designed to work with Orange's PPC range of cabinets, although it's quite tolerant of different loudspeaker types.

While the Rockerverbs sound great with single coils, both amps come alive when

combined with the throatier punch of a good humbucker. The extra warmth and zing of the clean channel is very noticeable – a real improvement over the slightly sterile clean sounds of earlier models. By using the power switches and attenuator (which incidentally works backwards, turning down the volume as you rotate clockwise), you can dial in a really sweet overdriven edge that time warps straight back to the heady days of the 70s.

While the Rockerverbs sound great with single coils, they both come alive when combined with a good humbucker







The lead channel covers a huge spectrum of overdrive, from blues to classic rock and modern metal, with plenty of low-end punch to flatter down-tuned or baritone instruments, and a hint of fuzz that evokes the brand's 1960s origins. This is very refined British guitar tone, with a sweet treble, powerful midrange and tight bass that flatters lead lines as well as chords. Both amps are loud – very loud, in fact – but easily tamed using the power switches and attenuator, blending in real power stage distortion to devastating effect, while the EQ controls on both channels work smoothly and predictably. The stepped detents on all the controls make recalling settings a doddle, and the new reverb circuit sounds impressive with a smooth warm decay and practically no noise.

## Verdict

There's no doubt that the extra refinements on these new Rockerverbs have been worthwhile: the amps sound great and should continue to do so for many years. As you might guess from the price and weight, they are aimed primarily at pros and dedicated, muscle-bound amateurs. The weight may well put off casual gigging players who value portability (and their back), but these are roadworthy rock tools, while the new attenuator makes it easy to create stunning tone at any volume level, too, from very authentic early 70s classic rock on the redesigned clean channel, to modern metal.

You're also paying for a UK-made product that's second to none when it comes to build quality and reliability; all in, that represents very good value for money. If you want a commanding, flexible rock amp, but you don't want to spend ages fiddling with presets and parameters, few amps match up to these new Rockerverb MKIIIs. **G**



## Orange Rockerverb 100 MKIII Head

**PRICE:** £1,499

**ORIGIN:** UK

**TYPE:** All-valve preamp and power amp

**OUTPUT:** 100 watts RMS, switchable to 70, 50 and 30 watts

**VALVES:** 4x 12AX7, 2x 12AT7, 4x EL34

**DIMENSIONS:** 270 (h) x 550 (w) x 280mm (d)

**WEIGHT (KG/LB):** 25/55

**CABINET:** Ply

**CHANNELS:** 2

**CONTROLS:** Clean: volume, bass, treble. Lead: gain, bass, mid, treble, master volume. Global reverb level and attenuator level

**FOOTSWITCH:** Not supplied – separate footswitch sockets for channel, reverb and attenuator

**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:**

Footswitchable attenuator, half power (4/2 valves) and pentode/triode switching, series effects loop

**OPTIONS:** Also available in black

**RANGE OPTIONS:** The new MKIII range also includes a 50W head (£1,399). The PPC412 matching cabinet costs £739; a PPC212 is £549

**Orange Amplification**

**0208 905 2828**

**[www.orangeamps.com](http://www.orangeamps.com)**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★	
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

**Guitarist says:** A loud, versatile head that easily swaps from classic rock and blues tones to modern rock and metal



## Orange Rockerverb 50 MKIII 2x12 combo

**PRICE:** £1,699

**ORIGIN:** UK

**TYPE:** All-valve preamp and power amp

**OUTPUT:** 50 watts RMS, switchable to 25 watts

**VALVES:** 4x 12AX7, 2x 12AT7, 2x EL34

**DIMENSIONS:** 530 (h) x 660 (w) x 300mm (d)

**WEIGHT (KG/LB):** 40/88

**CABINET:** Ply

**LOUDSPEAKERS:** 2x Celestion

Vintage 30 12"

**CHANNELS:** 2

**CONTROLS:** Clean: volume, bass, treble. Lead: gain, bass, mid, treble, master volume. Global reverb level and attenuator level

**FOOTSWITCH:** Not supplied – separate footswitch sockets for channel, reverb and attenuator

**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:**

Footswitchable attenuator, half power (pentode/triode) switching, series effects loop

**OPTIONS:** Also available in black

**RANGE OPTIONS:** See Rockerverb 100 MKIII head

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★	
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

**Guitarist says:** A loud combo that weighs a ton, but provides a huge range of great British tones in a reasonably compact package