

FIRST PLAY



VICTORY SHERIFF 22 HEAD
£799

WHAT IS IT? Small-footprint, steel-cased 28-watt EL84-powered head with high/low power option



VICTORY SHERIFF 44 HEAD
£1,149

WHAT IS IT? Plywood-sleeved 45-watt EL34-powered head with high/low power option





Round 'Em Up

UK-based Victory is going from strength to strength, and now presents two new heads boasting classic sounds in the 'Plexi' format

Words Nick Guppy **Photography** Joseph Branston

Victory amps are designed by Martin Kidd, who has been responsible for some of the UK's best-loved boutique products, and with Guthrie Govan, Rob Chapman and James Bay heading up its artist roster, you can be sure Victory's sonic heritage is one that bodes well for the future. Here, we're taking a look at two new heads that apply Victory's ethos to the tried-and-trusted 'Plexi' format, the Sheriff 22 and Sheriff 44.

Both amps have a fairly similar layout and features, the most obvious difference being that the smaller EL84-powered Sheriff 22 is housed in perforated steel, and the EL34-powered 44 is protected by a plywood sleeve. Both are smart, with portable dimensions and a gold-paint finish on the chassis that echoes the inspiration behind their design, as does the offset control panel of the Sheriff 44.

Inside the chassis, the electronics are mostly PCB-mounted, with one large board holding most of the components including the front panel controls and valve bases. Smaller boards take care of rear panel sockets and switches. The general standard is high, with Victory's clean, economical board layout complemented by top-quality components, including close tolerance metal film resistors to keep hiss levels low. There are two input jacks, which feed separate footswitchable preamp channels, followed by a passive tone network with treble, mid, bass and presence controls. One of the Sheriff 44's front panel toggle switches is Victory's clever three-way mains/standby/on control, while the other offers a choice of high or low output power.

On the rear panel of the 44 head, you'll find a comprehensive set of speaker outlets, a series effects loop that can be hard-bypassed, and another toggle switch for selecting fixed or cathode bias operation. The more compact Sheriff 22 replaces the high/low power switch with a separate low power speaker jack, attenuated to 0.3 watts for bedroom use, in addition to a trio of jacks delivering the full 28 watts of output.

Both Sheriff heads are built to handle anything from occasional weekend warrior use to full-on touring. We like the clever understated styling, with nods to classic British and top-end American boutique designs, and less obvious touches such as the heavily damped pots that mean the Sheriff's gas-cooker control knobs stay where you put them, together with a satisfyingly loud 'clunk' from the toggle switches.



1. The gold sparkle control panel evokes the spirit of the original 'Plexi' amps from the late 60s and early 70s. However, what's behind it is much more evolved
2. The 22's chassis contrasts against the 44's plywood sleeve with a perforated steel casing
3. The two input jacks connect to separate differently voiced preamp channels
4. Both Sheriff amps have a simple series effects loop that can be hard bypassed from a rear panel switch



Both amps power on smoothly and quietly, with practically inaudible hum and hiss

Feel & Sounds

Teamed with Victory's vertical 2x12 enclosure, the Sheriffs look the business from any angle. Both amps power on smoothly and quietly, with practically inaudible hum and hiss. The simple control layout means they're easy to dial in as well, the standard passive EQ controls interact smoothly with no nasal midrange peakiness, while the Master and Presence controls sit after the phase inverter stage. We tested both Sheriffs with a variety of guitars, including a Strat with regular low-ish output single coils, and a Les Paul Standard with PAF humbuckers.

The preamp channels are voiced differently: Channel 1 has slightly less gain, with a glassy treble, tight bass and edgy overdrive that translates into a great multi-purpose rhythm/crunch sound, while Channel 2 has an extra gain stage for thicker overdrive sounds and a hint of American influence that still has plenty of Plexi punch and harmonic density, but with the sharp edges ever so slightly rounded off. We like this channel's versatility: it can be bold with plenty of cut, while backing off the guitar tone controls edges things into Dumble/Bogner territory. Both channels are equally well-suited for humbuckers and single coils and the post phase inverter presence



control adds a nice sparkle to highs without becoming shrill.

The two Sheriffs are loud and easily powerful enough for any gig, but with different characteristics. The Sheriff 22 has a little more midrange grind when pushed hard, with slightly less clarity from Channel 1, while the Sheriff 44's fixed bias option opens up the cleaner end of the spectrum, with enough power to ensure the subtle harmonic edge isn't lost. Alternatively, switching to cathode bias mode creates a more dynamic feel that's great at lower volume levels but tends to be slightly squashed and compressed when pushed hard. Overall, we feel the Sheriff 44 is more versatile with a wider range of vintage clean and nearly clean sounds. However, for instant gratification from Channel 2's higher gain, the Sheriff 22 edges it for us, especially as the low volume 0.3 watt output is perfectly suited for home use and recording.



5. The Sheriff 44 offers a comprehensive set of speaker outlets, and its bias switch gives you a choice of fixed or cathode bias modes, which have an effect on output power and power stage response

6. The Brit-based Victory Amps is headed up by designer Martin Kidd





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The V212VH cabinet uses a popular combination of Celestion Vintage 30 and G12H30 drivers and sounds excellent, with a nice low-end punch. The series effects loop is quiet and works fine with semi-pro rack and stompbox-type effects. However, it would be more useful if Victory had made that hard bypass footswitchable.

Verdict

These Sheriff amps are likely to become very popular: they're simple, straight to the point and uncluttered – in terms of functionality and sound. The boutique-influenced touches, such as the gold-sparkle control panels and gas-cooker knobs, are appealing. Build quality is first class, as we've come to expect from Victory, and we think both heads represent very good overall value for money, with no distributor in the middle of the UK retail chain. They're also compact and easy to carry, with a padded gigbag for the Sheriff 22 and a traditional slip cover for the 44.

They have the kind of sonic character that should appeal to a lot of players, centred in classic British rock and blues but with a refined top-end and attack that's more versatile and suitable for a wider range of musical genres. Aimed at players of all levels, the Sheriffs are likely to be on many players' must-try list – we just hope Victory can make enough of them! 



VICTORY SHERIFF 22

PRICE: £799

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: All-valve preamp and power amp dual channel head

OUTPUT: 28W RMS

VALVES: 4x 12AX7, 2x EL84

DIMENSIONS: 185 (h) x 342 (w) x 185mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 6.5/14

CABINET: Steel

CHANNELS: 2, footswitchable

CONTROLS: Volume 1, Volume 2, treble, middle, bass, presence, master volume

FOOTSWITCH: Single button footswitch (supplied) changes channels

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Full power and low power (0.3W) speaker output, external bias trim and test points. Series effects loop with bypass switch

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The Sheriff 44 costs £1149, as reviewed; the V212VH cab (as pictured on p16) is £549

Victory Amplification
www.victoryamps.com

8/10

PROS We love the great-sounding 0.3-watt speaker output; ideal for recording and home use

CONS It would be more versatile with a footswitchable effects loop



VICTORY SHERIFF 44

PRICE: £1,149

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: All-valve preamp and power amp dual channel head

OUTPUT: 45W RMS

VALVES: 4x 12AX7, 2x EL34

DIMENSIONS: 235mm (h) x 480mm (w) x 235mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 12.5/27

CABINET: Ply

CHANNELS: 2, footswitchable

CONTROLS: Volume 1, Volume 2, treble, middle, bass, presence, master volume

FOOTSWITCH: Single button footswitch (supplied) changes channels

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: High/low power switch (45W/6W), cathode/fixed bias switch (45W fixed bias, 30W cathode bias), external bias trim and test points. Series effects loop with bypass switch

OPTIONS: None

8/10

PROS A greater range of clean and mildly distorted tones

CONS As with the 22, it's a pity that the effects loop is switchable but not footswitchable