



Output
Plug headphones into the speaker-emulated output or send your signal to a PA/recorder

Power
The one-watt output means you can crank for valve tone at reasonable volume levels

Channels
The default channel goes from clean to pushed, but there's also an overdrive switch for extra gain

BLACKSTAR HT-1R £199

The UK brand goes micro with this all-valve one-watt practice amp



Blackstar didn't exist four years ago, but in a short time the Northampton-based manufacturer has cemented its place in the market. It helped start a boom in low-output valve amps with the HT-5 series, and is now taking you down to 'mood-volume' with the new HT-1 models.

There are three separate platforms in the range: a head (HT-1RH, £169), and two combos (HT-1, £169; HT-1R). The HT-1RH and the combo we're testing here both come equipped with a digital reverb. Aside from this, the amps all share the same fundamental design, using an ECC83 and ECC82 valve, while both combos come loaded with an eight-inch Celestion speaker.

The HT-1R is a one-watt valve amp with two channels and some extra features that you might recognise from previous Blackstar releases. First is the ISF control, which gives the tonal characteristics of either UK or US amp voicings (and anywhere in between). Next, the speaker-emulated output bypasses the HT-1's speaker for recording

use or sending to a mixing desk. This amp is designed for home and studio use, so the emulated output doubles as a headphone output for silent practice. You'll also find an MP3/Line input.

Starting with the clean channel, the first point worth noting is one of headroom. The main reason for choosing a micro-powered valve amp is to reduce the headroom of the power amp, thus achieving full power amp drive at lower levels. The HT-1 stays clean to a point, but if you like crystal sounds all the way to 11 you should use a higher powered amp.

The satisfying creamy break-up from the clean channel offers some great sounds for blues, classic rock and dirtied clean parts, but flicking the switch brings in the overdrive proper. With some decent high-output humbuckers, you can push it into hard rock and even metal levels of filth. The trade off is that an eight-inch speaker is hardly likely to flap your drainpipes in the same way as a quartet of 12-inch speakers, but you can always connect an external speaker cab.

The onboard reverb gives a sense of space and dimension, making that extra £30 over the other combo worth it to our ears.

Conclusion: For every negative you throw at the HT-1, it answers with a positive counterpoint. This practice amp is aimed at a different player to the modelling units in this month's Group Test, but also presents itself as a great recording tool. Blackstar has once again delivered a useful product at a price that appeals to hard-up and flush tonefreaks alike.

Stuart Williams

At a glance

Blackstar HT-1R

TYPE: Valve practice amp
OUTPUT: 1 watt
SPEAKER: 8" Celestion
VALVES: 1x ECC82, 1x ECC83
CONTROLS: Gain, volume, EQ, reverb, Overdrive switch
SOCKETS: Input, aux phones/line/speaker outs
WEIGHT: 6kg
DIMENSIONS: [HxWxD] 260x310x175mm
CONTACT: 01604 652844
WEB: www.blackstaramps.com

SUMMARY

For: Valve tone at controllable levels

Against: No footswitch, small speaker



TG says... Get one before they sell out!

"BLACKSTAR HAS ONCE AGAIN DELIVERED A USEFUL PRODUCT THAT WILL APPEAL TO HARD-UP AND FLUSH TONEFREAKS ALIKE"

