



TOP GEAR

Vox Classic Plus AC50CPH head and V412BN cabinet

BY CHRIS GILL

FOR SEVERAL DECADES Vox was pretty much considered a one-trick pony when it came to amp production, but the AC30 was one hell of a studly stallion to build any company's stable around. Since the dawn of the new millennium, Vox has introduced several impressive amp models to expand the company's appeal beyond AC30 aficionados, including the acclaimed Valvetronix digital modeling series and the Custom Classic series, which adds modern features and flexibility to the timeless Vox sound.

Vox's new Classic Plus range further broadens the company's offerings by providing an even wider palette of tube tones, including high-gain distortion as well as classic Vox chime and grind. The line currently consists of 50- and 100-watt heads and a 50-watt combo. I tried out the AC50CPH 50-watt head with a matching Vox V412BN cabinet loaded with four Vox vintage-style 12-inch speakers.

FEATURES

WHEREAS MOST PRODUCTS in the Vox line feature genuine Sixties styling, the AC50CPH head seems to take visual inspiration from another British legend—Hiwatt—right down to its white piping, recessed cutout control panel and chicken-head knobs. However, the knobs (all 15 of 'em) are white, allowing you to quickly confirm settings even across a dimly lit stage. Each of the two channels features its own separate three-band EQ section (bass, middle, treble), reverb, volume and gain controls for truly independent operation. Channel 1 also includes a tone cut control to mimic classic AC30 Top Boost tones, while Channel 2 offers a presence control and bright and fat switches to provide more modern sounds and flexibility. A master volume control is also included for overall volume level settings.

The AC50CPH's rear panel offers a similarly robust and versatile selection of features, which include two parallel speaker outputs, an eight-/16-ohm impedance selector switch, an effect loop and a versatile direct output section. The effect loop is mono and features an on/off switch and a high/low level switch that provides +4/-10dB settings to match most outboard gear. The direct output features a level control that operates entirely independently of the amp's volume settings (a truly useful



Each channel's EQ section is voiced to different center frequencies to provide the personality of two amps in one.

Channel 2's fat switch boosts midrange for singing solos, while the bright switch restores those characteristic "chime" tones.

The tone cut control creates AC30-like Top Boost tones.

Forget the footswitch? No problem. A channel-select switch is located on the front panel.

feature that makes it easy to set ideal D.I. levels when connected to a recorder or mixing board and running the amp live), balanced XLR and unbalanced 1/4-inch output jacks, a ground-lift switch and a low-pass filter switch that cuts harsh highs and emulates the warm, rounded tone of a speaker.

Featuring two EL34 power amp tubes and four 12AX7 preamp tubes, the AC50CPH provides 50 watts of output. Because EL34 tubes do not compress as quickly and easily as the EL84 tubes in a classic AC30 circuit, the tones in the classic-voiced channel are not spot-on emulations, although they come pretty close, especially in the crucial upper mids and highs where a lot of an AC30's distinctive "chime" resides. The power tubes really come into their own in the high-gain "modern" voiced channel where they deliver the crunch and tight bass today's players prefer.

PERFORMANCE

VOX AMPS HAVE always been great choices for players who want something with different personality than the typical tones of a Marshall, Mesa/Boogie, Fender, etc. The AC50CPH lives up to this reputation while broadening the tonal palette of the characteristic Vox voice (isn't that redundant?). This is not a soundlike amp with tones that you've heard a million times before but rather an extension of the Vox personality into high-gain tones that are ideal for metal and hard rock. This is particularly evident in the

VOX AC50CPH HEAD AND V412BN CABINET

LIST PRICES: AC50CPH head, \$1,450.00; V412BN 4x12 cabinet, \$750.00

MANUFACTURER: Vox Amps, voxamps.co.uk

OUTPUT: 50 watts

TUBES: Two EL34 (power amp), four 12AX7 (preamp/reverb)

SPEAKERS: Vox vintage-style GSH 12-30 12-inch (V412BN cabinet only)

CHANNELS: Two (classic and high-gain)

FRONT PANEL: Master volume; Channel 2: volume, reverb, presence, bass, mid, treble, bright switch, fat switch, gain;

Channel 1: volume, reverb, tone cut, bass, middle, treble, gain; channel select switch, 1/4-inch input jack

REAR PANEL: Two speaker outputs (parallel); 8-/16-ohm impedance switch; effect loop: on/off switch, send, return, high/low level switch; direct out: level, XLR output, ground lift switch, unbalanced output, low-pass filter switch; footswitch jack

OTHER: VFoo2 footswitch (channel select, reverb on/off functions) included

midrange and treble response above 3kHz where the AC50CPH exhibits almost three-dimensional brilliance.

Channel 2 features EQ controls with different center frequencies than Channel 1 and delivers the gamut of modern distortion tones, from crunch to crush, although it doesn't quite equal the massive low-end "woof" of some modern amps. Instead, it provides thick, singing midrange (especially with the fat switch engaged) that is better suited to soloing and precise rhythmic work than meathead power chord bashing.

The Vox V412BN cabinet is a decent, affordable match for the AC50CPH head as it tames the highs somewhat and rounds off the midrange. However, if you can afford to spend a little more, I highly recommend trying a cabinet loaded with Vox Alnico Blue speakers or Celestion Vintage 30s, which produce more "hi-fi" treble response and tighter bass.

THE BOTTOM LINE

IF YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED to own a Vox amp but found the sounds a little too antiquated for your tastes, the AC50CPH is the perfect solution. It delivers crushing high-gain tones while still capturing the essence of that vintage Vox vibe. Vox fans couldn't ask for much more. ✨

PRO	CON
TWO CHANNELS WITH INDIVIDUAL EQ VOICING CHARACTERISTICS; HIGH-GAIN TONES; FLEXIBLE DIRECT-OUTPUT SECTION	EFFECT LOOP PROVIDES ONLY TWO SETTINGS

