

With a generous 500W of oomph, loads of great features and neo speakers to ease the pain, the C210H is a combo you can really rely on at gigs. Review: Gareth Morgan

Ashdown

Klystron C210H-500 Combo

The Klystron C210H-500 combo is part of Ashdown's flagship Classic Series. Though it's fairly bulky at 340mm high, 610mm wide and 645mm deep, 575W versus 37kg (81lbs) isn't a bad trade-off, and the recessed steel handles or leather straps afford decent lugging capability. A thick vinyl skin protects the 18mm birch ply cabinet; the front view is dominated by a very British spread-wings logo sitting above a silver 'radiator' grille, while inside lurk two 10" Ashdown neodymium speakers and a horn.

The control panel includes switchable passive/active input with Gain and Pre-Shape switch, a rotary three-band EQ (+/- 20dB at 60Hz, 660Hz and 5KHz), a balanced DI Out and FX loop, and a Valve Drive control which lets you blend the solid state preamp stage with the additional dual triode tube circuit and ECC83 valve therein. Four additional EQ sliders offer +/- 15dB at 180Hz, 340Hz, 1.3kHz and 2.6kHz, with onboard compression helping keep everything audible and spike free. Ashdown's trademark Sub-Harmonics feature is basically an octaver effect, tracking your note an octave below, and the Level control offers infinite blending capability. A footswitch (provided) lets you operate the Valve Drive, EQ, Compression and Sub-Harmonics features.

SOUNDS

With flat EQ the C210H faithfully reproduces the bass' acoustic sound: even response and full-range clarity with a pleasing growl and plenty of width is not a bad start. The EQ is seriously powerful, so increasing Bass induces booming width which graduates to washy and worryingly room-shaking on full: luckily, ratcheting-up 160Hz similarly thickens your sound but retains definition all the way. Hiking the 340Hz low-mid slider unleashes the Ashdown's inner pugilist with a darker vibe and pleasing rasp and a tighter, brighter sound is easy to find via Middle. You can use the 1.3 and 2.6kHz sliders as tonal spring-cleaners:



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use the 1.3 to reclaim lost definition without a bass-end trade-off and the 2.6 to sharpen tonal focus and attack. Adding Treble to this mix increases harmonic life very nicely but don't go too far as it gets clanky very quickly.

VERDICT

This is a classy, superbly built unit with a host of easily accessible, quality sounds. The distortion available from overdriving the valve stage is warm and classy, the compressor fattens everything up without squeezing out all the dynamic life and a warm, synthy rumble awaits when you uncork Sub-Harmonics. All of these are made more practical and useful by

comprehensive blending capability. It's priced to be competitive, and although it's a little bulky, what comes out when you plug in is definitely worth it.

FINAL SCORE

Build quality.....	19/20
Playability.....	16/20
Sound.....	18/20
Value for money.....	16/20
Vibe.....	17/20
TOTAL.....	86%
Good for... Plenty of power and a high-quality sound for a wide range of styles	
Look elsewhere... For a more compact, lower power package or the pure valve experience	



FACTFILE

KLYSTRON C210H-500

Description: Single channel, 500W 2x10" transistor combo. Two Neodymium 10" speakers and a piezo tweeter. 22mm plywood cabinet with front porting. Made in the UK

Price: £1199

Controls: Input with Passive/Active switch, Bass, Middle, Treble and Output controls, switchable Valve Drive, Compression, and Sub-Harmonics controls, four EQ sliders. Flat/Shape, EQ In/Out and Mute switches. Input, Tuner, Line out, FX loop, Line Input and Footswitch jack sockets, Balanced DI XLR socket with Pre/Post EQ switch

Range Options: 1x15" 500W combo, the C115H-500, £1099; 4x10" 500W combo, the C410H-500, £1299

Contact: Ashdown Engineering 01245 441155 www.ashdownmusic.com

COMPETITION

MARKBASS

CMD-102P 400W Combo

Lightweight and chock-full of high-quality sounds in a distinctive package

RRP: £970

EUPHONIC AUDIO

IAMP-500c 500W Combo

Made in the USA, this high-power, high-quality unit weighs a sensationally paltry 20kg

RRP: £1395

EBS

Gorm GET-115 350W Combo

Versatile, powerful and stuffed with innovative features

RRP: £1349