



“Thanks to its compliment of workable tones, and small size, I easily can imagine the Little Giant appealing to a wide variety of players of all styles”



Preamp has presets, semi-parametric, and shelving EQ options.



Note serial number! This is an exclusive.

Ashdown Little Giant/Superfly Cabs

EXCLUSIVE AMP REVIEW!

Ashdown Little Giant Head & Superfly 2x8 and 2x10 Cabinets

With the current trend towards lighter, more transportable gear, Ashdown made a notable entry two years ago with the introduction of the Superfly, a small but powerful digital amplifier loaded with features and reviewed in Issue 29 of *BGM*. It seems however that the Superfly was too complicated for the masses, and has now been discontinued. For 2008 Ashdown unveiled its successors: the diminutive Little Giant amps, available in two formats, 350-watts and 1000-watts. We were sent the first 1000-watt model off the assembly line as well as two of the Superfly cabinets, the 2x8 and the 2x10 for our exclusive review. My first impression of the Little Giant was good. It is indeed small and lightweight, although a lot deeper than I had previously imagined. Ashdown say that it should fit into the front pocket of the average gig bag, and this seems to be true – but

it's a tight fit! The amp looked to be well assembled, although the front face is a little cluttered in my opinion – the EQ combination of sliders and rotary controls is a little bewildering initially, and I must hold my hand up to confessing that I preferred the 7-band graphic layout of the Superfly. From left to right the Little Giant has a standard jack input labeled *Instrument* with an *Active* switch and a five LED bar graph to indicate *Signal* gain. This is followed by two EQ preset switches, *Shape* and *Deep*. *Shape* is an EQ curve that boosts highs and lows and cuts the mids – sounds like the basis for a good slap tone. *Deep* boosts the low end; 15dB at 50Hz according to the accompanying documentation, meaning that using this preset should result in some nice low-end grunt. Both of these EQ presets can be used in conjunction with the rest of the EQ controls making them good starting points. The main EQ section consists of

a shelving +/- 15dB *Bass* slider control, two semi-parametric +/- 15dB controls (each with a one octave bandwidth covering 180Hz to 1.6kHz for *Lo-Mid* and 750Hz to 7.5kHz *Hi-Mid*), and a variable frequency +/- 15dB shelving *Treble* control. Finally we have the main *Output* volume control and power switch. Oh, and a graphic of a giant in a posing pouch!

The rear panel features a *D.I.* out with *Pre/Post* switch, *Line In* and *Line Out* jacks, and *FX Send* and *FX Return*. There are also two combined *Speaker Output* Speakon/Jack

connections. Each speaker output is driven independently by a 500-watt output stage and can run into a 4 ohm load for maximum output power. This means that, like the Superfly, in order to get the full usable 1000-watts out of it, you'll need to use two 4 ohm cabs. The two mono amps are not able to run in stereo, nor do they have a bi-amping facility, although Ashdown did speculate that this could be an option in the future. As it stands, the Little Giant should have enough power to handle most small gigging situations with one cab, and the extreme portability makes



it an attractive prospect. We were sent two of the new Superfly cabinets to use with the Little Giant, the 2x10, and the 2x8. These are both rated at 4 ohms and are designed to be used in conjunction with either the Superfly or Little Giant heads. Both were covered with vinyl and had simple metal corner protectors as well as a sturdy grill emblazoned with the Superfly logo. Both cabs use Neodymium magnets to keep the weight low, and as a result both were easily transportable – the 2x8 has a side mounted carrying strap, while the 2x10 has recessed metal handles.

Set flat, the Little Giant had a very basic natural tone that boasted a quick, responsive attack and a solid low end that made for a good sonic starting point. Switching in the shape preset yielded a heavily scooped tone that to my ears was on the thin side, and required additional EQ-ing in order to make it workable in a live situation. The shape feature is audibly a mid-scooped preset that is designed for slap tones, but for me, the basic flat tone of the amp with some small EQ adjustments (mostly in the bass and low mid range) was far superior. The deep preset was altogether more successful, adding some much needed low-end weight to the tone – I actually elected to keep this preset switched in at all times. The EQ itself responded well for the most part: boosting the low mids at 160Hz added in subterranean bite that made for a nice fingerstyle tone that also served well for slap, while boosting the upper mids meant that digging in with a pick sounded

pretty good as well. In all, the Little Giant seems versatile enough to handle most live situations and seems a lot quieter than its predecessor the Superfly. Thanks to its compliment of workable tones, and small size, I easily can imagine the Little Giant appealing to a wide variety of players of all styles.

I have to say that I was impressed by the Little Giant during the trial period. It's lightweight, relatively quiet and versatile enough to please most bassists. While I'm personally not particularly fond of the design of the EQ, at just £325 RRP there's no denying that it's certainly one of the most competitive lightweight amplifiers available at this power rating, even if the usable 1000-watt output requires the two cabinets. It might be argued that the requirement of two cabinets – even lightweight models such as these – goes some way to negating the portability advantages of the head. I was also impressed by the Superfly cabinets, retailing at £425 for the 2x8 and £525 for the 2x10, their higher price reflecting they are UK produced. The Little Giant heads will be available from July, and are

certainly worthy of a test drive. If you don't need the full output there are several alternatives to consider, but for the most part it seems like Ashdown have brought down both weight and price levels to a new all time low.
Stuart Clayton



Little Giant

Price: £325
Made In: China
Power Output (RMS): 1000-watts
Controls: Signal gain, bass, frequency x 3, lo-mid, hi-mid, treble, deep, shape, EQ bypass, output
Dimensions: H/W/D 65mm x 215mm x 310mm
Weight: 3.5kg (7.7lbs)

Superfly Cab 2x8

Price: £425
Made In: UK
Power Handling: 500-watts
Speaker Configuration: 2 x 8-inch
Impedance: 4 ohms
Dimensions: H/W/D 285mm x 465mm x 345mm
Weight: 12kg

Superfly Cab 2x10

Price: £525
Made In: UK
Power Handling: 550-watts
Speaker Configuration: 2 x 10-inch
Impedance: 4 ohms
Dimensions: H/W/D 590mm x 465mm x 345mm
Weight: 20kg

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What we think

Plus: The head is lightweight, versatile, and it's competitively priced. The cabs look great, and are also easy to transport.
Minus: We weren't keen on the cluttered EQ, and it's a shame that in order to get full whack out of it you'll need two 4 ohm cabs. The cabs aren't quite as competitively priced as the head.
Overall: A good entry into the competitive world of small lightweight amplifiers.

BGM RATING: Little Giant
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

BGM RATING: Superfly Cabinets
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★
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