

REVIEW

Ashdown Engineering Perfect 10 Combo

By EVAN RUSACKAS

THE MIDDLE CHILD

Ashdown Engineering has recently announced the addition three new combo amps to their product line. Weighing in at the light end of the scale is the After Eight, a 15 watt combo with an 8 inch driver, and at the heavy end is the Five Fifteen, a 65 watt combo with a 15 inch driver. The middle of this three amp range—the Perfect 10—is the focus of this particular review, however. All three of these amps share similar characteristics across the board, but the Perfect 10 is the one I can speak of with extensive hands-on experience.

MIGHTY MOUSE

The Perfect 10 features a 30 watt amplifier powering a 10 inch driver, which obviously limits its applications, but the same holds true for any small combo. If what you're looking for is a small, portable amp that's loud enough to play in a setting such as an acoustic gig or a rehearsal, you'll get a lot out of this amp. There was a bass player that said in an interview I read once that if you have to turn an amp up much more than half way, you need a bigger amp. I tend to agree. I've found that the Perfect ten is a great balance between weight and power. It's not the lightest amp, but it's very easy to carry around one handed, and it's been loud enough to suit me in all but one (very loud) jam session I've played in since I've been using it. When it's cranked most of the way up, the sound does begin to distort a bit, but it's still a very intelligible sound compared to most solid state combos when you're at the far end of the volume knob.

THE NITTY GRITTY

The controls for this beast are on the top of the amp, which is a back saver in itself—I hate having to drop to my knees to adjust knobs. Those controls include gain, a pre-shape “deep” circuit, three band EQ, and of course master volume. Also included are a headphone output and an 8-ohm extension speaker cabinet output for when you need to move more air.

By keeping it simple, Ashdown has created a great combo for those that need to be set up and have a good tone dialed-in in a matter of seconds. The overall sound of the amp tends to be a bit heavy on the midrange for my taste, but that's easy to dial out—the EQ is in just the right spot. The bass response is amazing for a 10 inch driver—its quick response gives you amazingly clear lows that can knock your pictures off the walls without sounding mushy. The

highs are equally well defined, bright and detailed without being harsh. The tonal nuances of every bass plugged into it came out exactly as they should, and that's the whole point, isn't it?

EASY TO HANDLE

If you're looking for an amp that won't break the bank or your back, the Perfect Ten should be high on your priority list of combos to check out. Its \$229 price tag is easy to handle for those that need a reasonably priced amp to start with or those who want a more portable alternative to their more bulky rigs. Although it would be easier to lug the amp around with side handles in some cases (up a flight of stairs, for instance), the handle on the top does suffice. Weighing in at only 47 pounds, it's not hard at all to carry it around one handed, especially with a bass case in the other hand to balance you out.

PLENTY OF OPTIONS

If the Perfect Ten doesn't suit your exact needs for power or portability, the folks at Ashdown have saved the day by giving you the options of the After Eight and the Five Fifteen. Goldilocks would have loved this amp. There's an amp for baby, mama and papa bear, but naturally, the one in the middle is just right—thus the name, I suppose. No matter which choice you make, it's a good one. You'd be hard pressed to find an amp that sounds this good and is this useable at this price.

For more information, contact Ashdown Engineering, www.ashdownmusic.com. **E**

