

## Ashdown Engineering Klystron Bass Magnifier System

BY SCOTT MALANDRONE

The new kid on the bass-amplification block is England's Ashdown Engineering. Well, the amps may be new, but the forces behind the eye-catching heads are Mark Goody and Mike Markure, two ex-big wigs from Trace Elliot. The fruits of their labor is the Klystron Bass Magnifier line, which includes 24 models spanning from a tiny 1x10 combo to a 930-watt head and 8x10 cabinet. The design goal? "A simple, reliable amp with a big, fat sound." We previewed the amps at the '98 Winter NAMM show and were very impressed, so we asked the duo to ship us a rig for review. Our test system included a 430-watt head, a 4x10, and a 1x15.

The Ashdown system sounds superb. If you love deep, clean, round bottom with tons of headroom, this amp is it. Combined with the amp's footswitchable sub-harmonic circuit, which adds an octave below the clean signal, the Klystron Bass Magnifier fills up a room with some of the fattest sounds we've heard. This circuit makes 2x10s sound huge, and it's great for simulating an 8-string or for adding suboctave to fretless lines. Tone-wise the Klystron falls in the middle of warm, '60s-era sound and '90s L.A.-style brilliance.

The head's preamp section is super straightforward. We love the back-lit VU meter, which displays

the level present at the input jacks. An INPUT MIX knob blends the FET and tube sections from clean to

that guitar player go?) EQ-wise the head combines three rotary-style controls for basic sound adjustments plus four sliders for fine tuning. The BASS control is especially effective, adding gobs of

passive and active basses. The TREBLE is voiced at just the right spot to bring out the string windings without being brittle. Engaging the PUSH EQ button also changes the sound, adding a subtle EQ curve similar to the pre-shape circuit found on Trace amps. Finally, the sub-harmonics circuit has a dedicated knob and bypass switch. Settings of 12 o'clock fattened up most instruments, while higher settings added extra depth. Unlike some octaver effects boxes, the Ashdown circuit is very stable; however there is a bit of warble when playing the E string in the first position. Overall, though, the Klystron rates high on ease of use for its clean layout. Our only complaint about the front-panel labeling concerns the pre/post EQ button; at a soundcheck we had to use our ears to figure out which position was pre and which was post.

grind, adding a touch of hair or full-blown overdrive. (Crave a unique sound? Kick in the sub-harmonic circuit with the input cranked. Where did

The Klystron head is very solid. The 16-gauge steel chassis sits inside a screwed and glued plywood case. We like the position of the side-mounted bar handle,



### AKBM-400

List Price: \$1,599

SCORE: 1 2 3 4 5






Construction:   
 Electronics:   
 Ease Of Use:   
 Sound:   
 Value: 

Bottom Line: Excuse me, sir... may I have my spleen back?

### ABM-410H

List Price: \$999

SCORE: 1 2 3 4 5





Construction:   
 Components:   
 Portability:   
 Sound:   
 Value: 

Bottom Line: Smooth bottom with a polite top.

### ABM-115-400

List Price: \$799

SCORE: 1 2 3 4 5

Construction:   
 Components:   
 Portability:   
 Sound:   
 Value: 

Bottom Line: Tight thump.

which makes the head easy to carry from car to stage. Inside, a toroidal transformer supplies power and reduces weight. For improved reliability, the head includes two DC-controlled fans to keep components cool. (The fans do their job well; we left the head in idle mode for two days and the chassis stayed cool.) The head features modular construction throughout; each component section has a dedicated circuit attached via push-on-style connectors. This makes the head easy to service—but we'd like to see the push-on connectors more firmly fastened together. Our test head took a good fall in transit, and the adhesive that locks the AC-in connector broke free, disconnecting the toroidal transformer. Ashdown's Mike Markure says, "The transformer connector has been more securely anchored and should not disconnect from the mains even if the unit is dropped from six feet. Also, the connectors in