

LINE 6 DT25 & 112 CAB £599 & £199
GUITAR AMPS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP SOWELS



Line 6 DT25 Head & 112 cab **£599 & £199**



The market leader in digital modelling has teamed up with valve-amp specialist Reinhold Bogner to create this medium-power, do-it-all amp *by Mick Taylor*

What we want to know

1 So – this new digital modelling amplifier has valves in it. Eh?

Indeed. Line 6 spent the last bit of the 20th century convincing us we no longer need the ol' glowing bottles... and the first bit of the 21st century re-engineering them back into some of its amps...

2 But it's not a straight valve amp either?

No, it's a hybrid, albeit a much more integrated hybrid than we've seen from any other manufacturer. The best bits of valves, the best bits of modelling – or at least that's the theory.

3 And who is Bogner?

A man, a brand, a legend. Reinhold Bogner makes eye-wateringly expensive boutique amps under his own name, but has worked with Line 6 to develop the DT Series.

As we reported in our DT50 review (issue 338), Line 6's DT series is a significant departure from the company's customary do-everything-in-one-box philosophy. First, it runs at least partially on real vacuum tubes in both the preamp and power sections. Second, there are no effects other than reverb, and third, rather than four million sounds, Line 6 is instead offering "four boutique amps in one". That's to say classic American Clean (mid-sixties 'Blackface' Fender); British Crunch (Marshall, although Line 6 doesn't say which one); Class A Chime (Vox) and Modern High-Gain (Mesa Rectifier and the amps it inspired). Pump those out at anything from a whisper to a maximum of 25 watts and that, Line 6 assures us, is a killer do-it-all amp for home, studio and real-world live use for most guitar players.

The DT25's power valves are a pair of EL84s, but you need to suspend your preconceptions of how those valves 'sound' historically. The whole amp uses a series of digital and analogue components to alter

the basic stuff such as the EQ response and shape of the preamp, right through to power-amp fundamentals such as operating class (choose 10 watts class A cathode biased, or 25 watts class A/B fixed bias); pentode or triode modes (the former is higher power with more strident dynamics); and lastly the relative amount of negative feedback loop. Lest we

get into a physics lesson, but NFL describes the amount of the power amp signal fed back into the circuit in order to stabilise certain aspects such as gain, distortion and extraneous noise. If you care not for the theory (and why should you?), just know that mid-sixties 'Blackface' Fenders and most modern high-gain amps have quite a lot of negative feedback in their circuits, many Marshalls have less, and classic Vox AC amps have none. In any case, it's a big part of why classic valve amps sound the way they do. Enough theory.

You have to hand it to Line 6 and Reinhold Bogner – the DT25 head and cab looks the boutique business. Green leather-look, lightly textured vinyl and gold piping, plus a very classy back-lit front panel screams quality all over. The



The Bogner name is a huge valve-amp integrity coup for Line 6

Use Line 6's Link facility to connect the DT25 to a POD HD, so the two products can communicate, and you open up an endless world of options

only anomaly is the blocky L6 logo, where something scripty might be more appropriate for aspirant tone tweakers.

The front panel is straightforward enough: two identical rows of controls that deal with two footswitchable channels, A and B. You can then configure your two channels with any one of the four voicing modes (American, British, Chime and High Gain); you can have the two channels exactly the same should you so wish. Furthermore, you can assign whatever combination of operating class and triode/pentode options you prefer. The amp 'remembers' where you set it last, but if you want to go beyond the standard channel switching, you can assign a separate MIDI controller or indeed use Line 6's Link facility to connect to a POD HD, so the two products communicate, and open up an endless world of options. For this review we're staying on planet two-channel.

Additional functions include a series effects loop, a cabinet-simulated direct output on XLR

and just about the most sensible configuration of speaker outputs we've seen on a valve amp: versatile, descriptive, idiot-proof. Let's plug in.

Sounds

Line 6 provides a card with a selection of sample settings so that seems as good a place as

any to start. First up is classic American Clean. Extended, room-filling bass, sparkly trebles and a superb, digitally modelled spring reverb that's frighteningly close to real thing. Anyone who's spent any time with a Strat and a decent Super Reverb recently will find these settings somewhat sterile and wimpy, but upping the drive pot to around one o'clock really gives us a kick in the viscera and things are infinitely more satisfying. Thanks to the power amp/operation options it's much more tweakable than any 'Blackface' Fender we've played and as such enables you to get

closer to the sound you want, rather than the sound somebody tells you that you should have.

Moving to the British Crunch suggestion, the bottom end tightens back in and there's some more urgency from the front end that definitely does sound 'modelled' or 'created' to these ears, certainly compared with, say, a JTM45 or 50-watt Super Lead. But here's the thing, push the drive, volume and master settings and a remarkable transformation takes place: you get ample volume, punch, depth and a really satisfying classic rock

The Rivals

Modelling/valve amps aren't as popular as they might be.

Peavey's Vypyr Tube 60 (£531) combines 24 amp channels, 11 stompbox sims and 11 additional effects with a dual 6L6 power section for 60 watts. The **Hughes & Kettner Switchblade 50** combo (around £899) has four preamp modes in the same vein as the DT25, plus digital delay, reverb and modulation effects. A pair of EL34s puts out a stated 50 watts. For a less expensive option, the **Vox Valvetronix VT40+** (£199) is packed with amps and effects models and uses a single 12AX7 in its power amp circuit to create the feel and dynamics of a full valve power section.





Two channels, two identical sets of knobs, two identical sets of options

Modern High Gain is where Line 6 has long excelled and buckets of thick distortion fill the front end

tone. Whether it's the modelling, whether it's the valves, who knows? Most important, this emphatically does not sound like, with all due respect to Line 6, a Spider or any other all-digital-modelling amp. Switching down to 10 watts, the volume drop is not what you'd expect. In fact at low levels it seems to get louder! Perhaps that's the quicker, more lively dynamics of class A operation. At higher volumes, the squashier feel and sound of 10 watts is more obvious.

On to Class A Chime and this is the least convincing of the modes compared with the 'real' thing (a Vox AC15 or 30). In class A mode there is that increased immediacy in the attack and there's plenty of extended high-end response to get close to the Vox ballpark. Yet the classic AC30 circuit is so radically different from the Marshall and Fender circuits modelled here – plus the unique tone of the classic Blue speakers – the DT25 offers, at best, a reasonable stab at it. It is partly reminiscent of an AC30; there are some satisfying Britpop and classic rock rhythm tones here for sure, again especially as you push the volume. Not the same, then, but dare we say it's actually more usable than a classic non-master volume AC30 in the real world? It is.

Finally, Modern High Gain is a territory in which Line 6 has long excelled and so it is here. Buckets of thick, cascading distortion fill the front end while the power section has surprising grunt on offer to hit you in the chest – no wholly modelling amp has done that yet. The EQ enables you to shape everything to make it thick and cloying, or you can pare it out to incisive, cutting mid-range to keep your metal chugs in order and your lead notes searing through. It's very impressive, and with the right guitar, has a good EVH 'Brown' sound too, surprisingly. Volume junkies will favour the extra power and projection of the DT50 head atop a 4 x 12, but this ported, closed-back 1 x 12 on the end of 25 watts still kicks out plenty for small, full-band gigs.

In fact the Celestion G12H-90-loaded cabinet has been paired with the HD25 brilliantly. It's asking a lot of a single 1 x 12 closed-back cab to cover all this ground, but we don't perceive any huge compromises tonally. A three-quarter back 2 x 12 for extra air and spread? Don't tempt us...

Verdict

Some context. This reviewer is the fussiest of all Guitarist staff when it comes to PVA – proper valve amps. Two-Rock, Boogie,

Matchless and so on – you get the idea. As such, your correspondent finds digital modelling superb for home use, good as an additional recording option, and at best almost adequate for pro-level live gigs. The DT25, however, along with its big brother the DT50, is a game-changer. Line 6's best modelling yet in the front end, coupled with some clever analogue tweaks to Reinhold Bogner's valve power section, makes it an extremely good product that beats many mid-level valve amps tonally and in terms of versatility and functionality.

Our main tonal criticisms are in mode III (British Chime); our only functionality moan is that we'd like all four sounds at the feet as standard, not just two. It's loud enough for most pub and function gigs and thanks to the low power mode, can sound good at home without risking divorce. A final look at that price, and there's no reason why this shouldn't be extremely popular. Great work once again, Line 6. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Sounds; looks; size; price

We dislike: Blocky Line 6 logo; only two sounds footswitchable as standard

Guitarist says: Massively versatile yet easy to use and good sounding at every real world volume – this is a seriously impressive amp



Line 6 DT25 Head

PRICE: £599.99

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Hybrid, two-channel, four-mode head with solid-state rectification

POWER: 25 watts fixed bias or 10 watts cathode biased

VALVES: 1 x 12AX7, 2 x EL84

CONTROLS: Both channels have: drive, bass, mid, treble, presence, reverb, volume. Global controls:

master, mode switch, class A/class A/B switch, pentode/triode switch

FOOTSWITCH: Not included, works with any two-button TRS latching switch for channel selection and reverb on/off

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Series effects loop, 4/8/16-ohm speaker outputs, modelled spring reverb, cabinet-simulated DI out, low volume mode, L6 Link for proprietary connection to POD HD

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 14/30.8

DIMENSIONS: 530 (w) x 265 (h) x 238mm (d)

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: DT25 1 x 12 combo (£669), DT50 head (£959), DT50 1 x 12 combo (£1,099), DT50 2 x 12 combo (£1,315), DT50 412 cabinet (£539)

DT25 112 Extension Cab

PRICE: £199.99

TYPE: 1 x 12 extension speaker cabinet

POWER HANDLING: 90 watts @ 8-ohms

SPEAKER: 1 x 12 inch Celestion G12H-90

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 16/35.2

DIMENSIONS: 530 (w) x 450 (h) x 295mm (d)

Line 6 UK

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www.line6.com



Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★