





FIRST PLAY



**SUPRO BLACK MAGICK
REVERB 1X12 COMBO**
£1,529

WHAT IS IT? Inspired by an amp owned by Jimmy Page (and reputedly used on some famous Zep recordings) we now get improved function and reverb

Box Of Tricks

Supro's Black Magick gets a spring-loaded upgrade. We check the shimmer...

Words Nick Guppy **Photography** Olly Curtis

Whether it's guitar amps or chocolate bars, relaunching a brand that's been out of the marketplace for a good few decades isn't always easy. So it's been gratifying to see the successful return of Supro during the past few years, especially after its extended sojourn in near-stasis.

Now under the control of Pigtronix gurus Absara Audio, the revitalised Supro brand mixes vintage vibes with modern reliability for some exciting results. And this is particularly apparent in the Black Magick series, inspired by a unique Supro amp owned and allegedly used by Led Zep legend Jimmy Page, now on loan to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame museum.

This issue we're looking at the new Black Magick Reverb combo, developed in association with Lenny Kravitz – a man who knows a thing or two about vintage tone, as well as writing and producing the occasional hit single here and there.

1. The Black Magick uses a specially designed Supro BD12 loudspeaker
2. The Black Magick Reverb has a different control panel to the non-reverb version, with independent bass and treble controls
3. Plenty of extension speaker jacks let you hook the Supro up to almost any cabinet
4. The Black Magick's reverb and tremolo effects are both valve-powered and can be switched on and off from this footswitch jack
5. There are two parallel channels – input jack sockets access Channel 2 or Channels 1 and 2 linked for extra volume and gain
6. The collaboration with Kravitz has seen the addition of a master volume control



The Black Magick Reverb sits in the same almost-square cabinet as its non-reverb version, with plenty of vintage Supro eye-candy, including vintage-correct silver-sparkle grille-cloth, black-and-silver rhino-hide vinyl with a white strip and black stringing, and, of course, that famous thunderbolt badge. Its control panel, however, is quite different – the Kravitz collaboration has added increased flexibility in the shape of a master volume, separate gain controls and independent bass and treble tone controls. There's a speed and depth control for the built-in tremolo and a level control for the conventional reverb spring, both of which are valve-powered. Around the back, you'll find a quartet of extension speaker jacks and a socket for a dual-latching footswitch, which can be used to toggle

The Black Magick excels at medium-gain bluesy lead and classic rock crunch

the reverb and tremolo effects easily. The Black Magick has two channels and two input sockets, one of which accesses Channel 2, the other Channels 1 and 2 linked together in parallel for more volume and gain. There's no integral means of switching them, but you can use an ABY pedal to switch sounds remotely if needed, as both channels are in phase with each other.

The Black Magick's power-valve complement is typical vintage Supro, with a pair of 6973s producing around

25 watts into the single custom-designed BD12 loudspeaker. Similar in looks but not interchangeable, the 6973 is a beam triode developed in the late 1950s by RCA, as home-grown competition for the European Philips/Mullard EL84 mini pentode. Not so common in the UK but abundant in the US, 6973s feature on several old Supro designs, not to mention countless American jukeboxes, hi-fi amps and other compact audio circuits.

Inside the chassis, the Black Magick Reverb is typical modern Supro, with a single high-quality PCB supporting everything except the mains and rear panel sockets. Metal film resistors are used for low noise and consistency, while the wiring is neatly twisted and routed to reduce hum to a minimum. Overall, the Black Magick Reverb looks solid, just like its ancestors.



Sounds

The name may suggest otherwise but the Black Magick isn't a high-gain affair; rather, it excels at medium-gain bluesy lead and classic rock crunch. Sonically, it comes over as a slightly more refined tweed, with lots of vintage warmth, less midrange grunt and a complex treble (which can be sweet or edgy, depending on where you set the gain and tone controls). It's equally good with single coils and humbuckers, delivering excellent articulation and a friendly, touch-sensitive dynamic response that makes single notes appear to sustain for longer.

The best sounds come from middle-of-the-road settings, with the tone controls and gains set around halfway. Using an ABY footswitch enabled switching between channels and it was fairly easy to set up a

decent balance for rhythm and lead. The effects are both valve-powered and sound suitably vintage, with an improved speed range on the tremolo and a quiet reverb that stays warm and smooth as long as you don't overdo it, when there's a tendency for things to get a little splashy.

Verdict

Another superb amp from the Supro stable, the Black Magick Reverb certainly seems to have benefited from a magical potion of coolness, upping its game and taking what was a mass-market amp brand 60 years ago into today's boutique market. Aimed at serious players across most genres, it comes at a hefty price. However, this is a US amp designed and built by some of the world's top wizards of tone. Will you fall under its spell? We certainly did... **G**



SUPRO BLACK MAGICK REVERB 1X12 COMBO

PRICE: £1,529

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: All valve preamp and power amp

OUTPUT: 25 watts RMS

VALVES: 4 x 12AX7, 1 x 12AT7, 2 x 6973

DIMENSIONS: 475 (h) x 520 (w) x 220mm

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 18/40

CABINET: Ply

LOUDSPEAKER: 1 x 12" Supro BD12

CHANNELS: Two, parallel

non-switching

CONTROLS: Gain 1, Gain 2, Bass, Treble, Reverb, Tremolo speed, depth, Master volume

FOOTSWITCH: Double latching footswitch toggles Reverb and Tremolo effects

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Extension speaker outlets

OPTIONS: A matching 1x12 extension cabinet costs £519 or there's a 1x15 for £539

RANGE OPTIONS: There's a head version at £1,299. The non-reverb Black Magick combo also costs £1,299, while the non-reverb head is £1,129

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8/10

PROS: Portable yet with plenty of bottom end and volume, making it a great 'grab and go' amp

CONS: The reverb effect tends towards being splashy at higher levels