1 AMP MODELS The amp model knob cycles from the cleanest through to the dirtiest tones, with an 11th clean 'line' option for acoustic guitars and keyboards

2 TAP TEMPO / TUNER Exactly what it says on the tin! Tap the button to set your delay times by feel or hold it down to access the onboard tuner

3 I/O SOCKETS Use the 3.5mm TRS jack socket to plug in a digital music player and jam along. A headphone/line output includes speaker cabinet emulation for playing at home

VOX CAMBRIDGE50 £275

TG gets hands-on with Vox's hybrid of valve and digital tech

When it comes to guitar amplification it's particularly hard to overstate the longstanding influence of Vox. Found in the rigs of pioneers such as Hank Marvin, Brian May, The Edge and, frankly, countless other icons of guitar, the company's legendary AC15 and AC30 models have shaped the sound of rock music for more than six decades.

The Cambridge50 continues in the vein of the company's Valvetronix digital modelling

"IT REALLY IS LOUD! AND REALISTIC? YES THAT TOO!"

series of the early 2000s, employing a NuTube preamp valve alongside Virtual Element Technology (VET) and a solid-state power amp to deliver "realistic and stage-ready" sounds. Analysing that statement, we'd agree that this is indeed a stage-ready offering – for small gigs at least. For a relatively lightweight amp, this Vox box dishes out impressive volume levels. It really is loud! And realistic? Well, yes, that too!

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Cambridge50's most authentic

sounds come from Vox's own AC30 and AC30TB (Top Boost) models. There's a warmth and naturalness to these, and the breakup on the grittier TB model is especially pleasing. The three obviously Marshall-inspired Brit models also see the Cambridge50 in its sweet spot. Think classic 70s Led Zep riffing, AC/DC style rock 'n' roll, Oasis drive tones – you get the idea.

Head into high-gain territory and you'll find the Vox has a biting top-end. We found ourselves winding the treble right back to tame the highs on the SL-OD and Double Rec models. A touch too much top-end perhaps? We'll let you be the judge of that, but even if it does sound harsh to your ears, consider that it might be just the ticket to get you heard in a busy mix or over a heavy-hitting drummer.

Eight effects are included on the Cambridge50 – four modulations and four delays/reverbs – and, though you can't dial all eight in at once (and, let's face it, most players wouldn't do so anyway!), you can save up

to 11 presets. That's probably enough for most gigs and a fair reflection of the amp's capabilities – this is a product designed for players who want to dial in their tone quickly, and not for those who want to go deep into menu editing. Suffice to say you'll get the most out of the effects via Vox's included Tone Room editor app for Mac, Windows, iOS and Android, and there's also an optional VFS-5 footswitch controller (£60).

These days modelling amp devotees will expect a bit more than just mere amplification, so the Cambridge50's onboard tuner, audio interface, auxiliary input and preset recall controls are welcome additions. JamVOX III modelling software is also bundled.

The NuTube valve is the ace up the Cambridge50's sleeve though, helping to deliver a natural feel and response in those traditional Vox-inspired medium drive tones – and the amp certainly represents great value for money. Well worth a look!
Chris Bird

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Digital modelling guitar combo with NuTube valve

OUTPUT: 50 watts

SPEAKER: 1x12"

VALVES: NuTube 6P1

CONTROLS: Power On/Off, Preset Write, Amp Type (Deluxe Clean, Boutique Clean, Boutique Overdrive, Vox AC30, Vox AC30TB, Brit 1959, Brit 800, Brit VM, SL-OD, Double Rec, Line), Gain, Treble, Bass, Volume, Modulation Type/Level, Delay/Reverb Type/Level, Tap Delay, power level

SOCKETS: Input jacks, footswitch, aux in, line out, headphones out with cabinet simulator, USB (type B) port

WEIGHT: 8.9kg

DIMENSIONS: 410mm (h) x 452mm (w) x 240mm (d)

CONTACT: Vox Amplification voxamps.com

SUMMARY					
FEATURES	★	★	★	★	☆
SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	☆
VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	☆
USABILITY	★	★	★	★	☆
OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	☆