

TC ELECTRONIC RH450 BASS HEAD, RS210 & RS212 CABS £899, £449 & £549
BASS AMPS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOBY SESSIONS



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Surfing on a huge wave of interest, we put TC Electronic's new bass head and cabs to the test *by Roger Newell*

How often does an air of expectancy arise over bass amplification? Not often is the answer. And yet that's been the case with TC Electronic's RH450 bass head. For months we've been requesting a review unit and at last the product has arrived. And even from first impressions it's clear to see what all the fuss is about.

For a start, the head is amazingly compact and neatly designed – although there are relatively few controls, it still comes packed with features. The front panel is as easy to operate as it looks, but there's a touch of added functionality in the form of a shift button that offers up some alternative features. Used in its simplest and obvious form this is still a mighty powerful bass head with that specialist TC punch, but having this extra option means that the sound potential is widened enormously.

There can be times when you need instant information about the settings on your amp on stage, and the RH450 is top of the class in achieving this. A ring of red LEDs surrounds each rotary control so you can see the exact setting at a glance. Also the memory and shift buttons have central green indicators so it's easy to see which is in operation at any time – even the mute button has a bright red indicator.

Setting the memory function on the amp is really easy to achieve. Once set, this provides a selection of personal tonal choices at the touch of a button, giving the opportunity to instantly change your sound during a performance. This is even easier when using the optional footswitch, but it's certainly not essential. The onboard chromatic tuner is also very easy to use and has a bold display, it also continually tracks your notes as you play, adding a visually interesting element to proceedings.

RS212 and RS210 cabs

For the purpose of this review we've selected the RS212 and the RS210 cabinets to pair with the RH450. No prizes for guessing the individual driver content, and in both cases the top speaker (when used

vertically) has a dual-concentric HF Driver to minimise on size and to deliver maximum effect.

Each black cabinet has a curved edge design and is covered with an anti-scratch, anti-skid surface treatment to help them stack securely. They also feature double rear ports, an HF Attenuator, jack and Speakon links and an expanded metal grille. The amp can also be run safely with only headphones attached.

The RS410 has also recently become available in the UK and allows perfect stacking with the other two units. And as the head is capable of linking to three cabinets this has to be the ultimate sound experience. However we also understand that a single 12-inch cabinet is currently in production for a more modest stack option.



The RH450 has all the connections you need to make it a practical gigging tool

Sounds

First things first – tuning is rather fun with the RH450, for while the basic tuner display works well enough, for far more accuracy hit the mute button and the LEDs on the bass control become sharp and flat indicators – easier to adjust and fun to look at. Like the rig itself, it handles the excesses of five- and six-string basses with ease.

The gain control allows perfect linking for all manner of basses and we found that, whatever we plugged in, this control has a great overall sound with an excellent flat response. Any additional tonal adjustment is a plus and getting a solid sound is simple, in fact it's virtually impossible not to do so. But there are loads of tonal options here, so you can adapt the settings to your personal taste with ease. The glorious Tube Tone is a valve simulator, but the control provides both preamp and power amp valviness and is a very nice touch.

The shift button is invaluable and as the tone controls are all semi-parametric, pressing it changes their parameters significantly. It also allows access to a feature known as the spectro comp from the gain control. The spectro comp is a sophisticated three-band compressor that enables independent adjustment of lows, mids and highs so that the

The Rivals

Micro bass amplification has become a reality – one of the first on the scene was **Mesa/Boogie's Walkabout bass head** (£1,350). It delivers a healthy 300W from an all-valve preamp and a MOSFET power block. With a semi-parametric-EQ, it weighs in at just 5.9kg. A similar power rating (at 8 ohms) comes from the **Markbass SA450** (£789). This solid-state, analogue powered unit is well equipped but still tiny and weighs a mere 3.4kg. **Eden's WTX500 bass head** (£700) offers 500W in a 203 x 64 x 229mm package that weighs under 2kg. Fully equipped with Eden's tonal qualities, this has to be a record!



dynamics remain in place as you only compress as much (or as little) as you desire. All these functions make practical sense, as each will enhance your sound potential enormously. When happy with a particular sound, press the desired memory button to store it in one of three user locations. This is ideal if you use more than one instrument, or to add distinct tonal variety to just one bass as and when required.

It's hard to accept the amount of power and performance from such a small stack. The bottom-end is full and robust and the output is strong and forceful. Using either cabinet produces great sounds, but linking the two pays dividends by offering a wider response and greater note definition. The HF Horns obviously enhance this definition but without thinning the sound.

Verdict

It's great when something so anticipated fully lives up to expectations and, while its practical applications cannot be denied, the stylish design of the head and cabs is pure icing on the cake. It's certainly a quality design and not in a hi-fi way either (which is the route that some other manufacturers have pursued), as the control layout is kept as minimal as possible. In short, the RH450 head is a joy to use, offering clear, distinct and robust sounds that bring new life to your bass. With great bottom end and powerful delivery from a well-presented control panel, this is a real winner. It's a versatile beast to boot, as it can be used

with just headphones attached and it can also be plugged into the mains anywhere in the world and still perform at maximum efficiency. As a stack it offers a very powerful and punchy delivery over a full and throaty tonal range. There's loads of headroom and no discernible background hum, even when pushing the threshold. The head will fit neatly onto a single cabinet or you could stack this particular pair vertically for a tall, slender effect with excellent sound dispersal. Broken into individual components it's much easier to transport than even a combo and the sound distribution is much better. However, in our opinion, it's the amplifier that really holds the appeal here. This is definitely a new breed of bass amp, one that doesn't sacrifice any ability in order to reduce the physical size of the unit. Ideally suited for travelling bassists, it's enough to carry anywhere and man enough to cope with the vast majority of gigs. A little gem!

The bottom line

We like: Size-to-power ratio; robust construction; excellent sounds; highly transportable unit
We dislike: Nothing
Guitarist says: A truly stunning performance from such a small head – and compact cabinets – means it has the potential to become a friend for life



TC Electronic RH 450 Bass Head

PRICE: £899
ORIGIN: Thailand
TYPE: Solid-state class D bass amplifier
OUTPUT: 450 watts RMS at 4 ohms
DIMENSIONS: 290 (w) x 275 (d) x 66mm (h)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 4/8.8
CHANNELS: Single, with gain control to suit passive and active basses
CONTROLS: Gain, bass, low mid, high mid, treble, Tube Tone and master. Three user preset buttons plus shift and mute
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Universal mains supply, on board chromatic tuner (constantly on), Spectra Comp compressor, combined Speakon/Jack cabinet connector
OPTIONS: RC 4 Footswitch (£135)
TC Electronic UK
0800 917 8926
www.tcelectronic.com



Test results

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

TC Electronic RS210 & RS212 Cabinets

PRICE: £449/£549
ORIGIN: Thailand
TYPE: Bass cabinets – 18mm plywood construction
POWER HANDLING: 400 watts at 4 ohms
DIMENSIONS: 356 (w) x 500 (d) x 664mm (h) & 356 (w) x 500 (d) x 664mm (h)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 19/38 & 22/44
SPEAKERS: Two Eminence Custom 10-inch, Dual Concentric HF Horn/Two Eminence Custom 12-inch, Dual Concentric HF Horn. Both speakers feature a 33mm voice-coil and titanium diaphragm
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: (Both) HF horn attenuator, dual rear ports, two Speakon & two jack connectors
RANGE OPTIONS: Also available is the RS410 (£799)



Test results

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