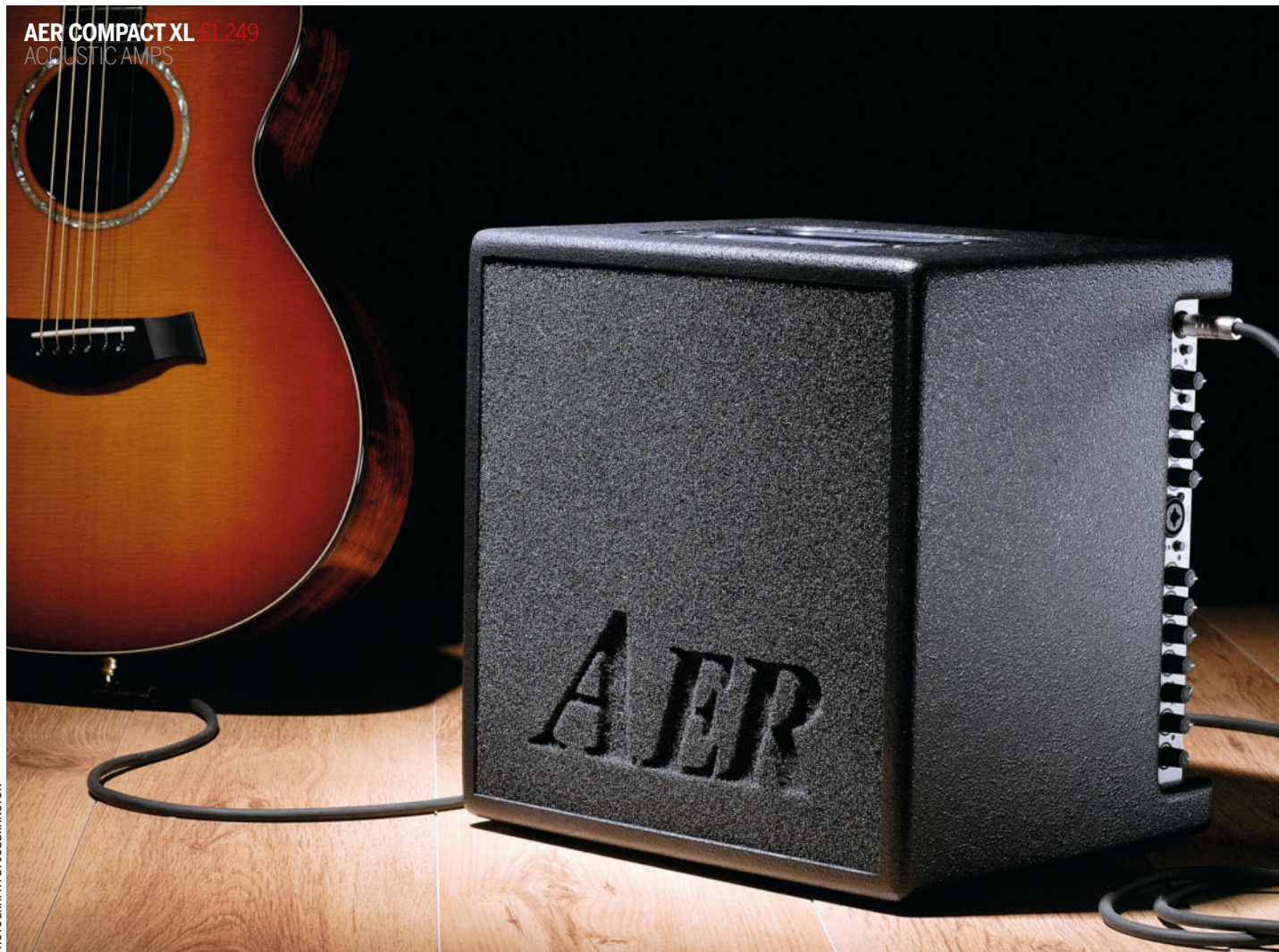


AER COMPACT XL £1,249
ACOUSTIC AMPS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOE BRANSTON



AER Compact XL £1,249

Need more power but still in a compact box?
Once again, AER has the answer... **by Dave Burrluck**

**Guitarist
CHOICE**

AER's Compact 60 has pretty much written the rulebook when it comes to portable acoustic amplification. If you're serious about your gigs, you probably have one, or have at least thought about investing. You come across these lil' black cubes wherever you see professional working players in small bars and clubs – you'd be forgiven for thinking they hand them out when you join the Musician's Union...

But take the 60-watt Compact 60 to a bigger gig where your drummer swaps brushes for sticks and you might be in trouble. Enter, then, the Compact XL – effectively a 200W version, but only marginally bigger and heavier.

Housed in black splatter-finished 15mm birch ply cabinet, the XL is the same width as the 60, 60mm taller,

50mm deeper and 3kg (6.65lb) heavier. It comes, therefore, in a slightly bigger padded carry bag – it's still compact, but is a heavier and chunkier proposition if you're carrying it to a gig. The large carry handle is now placed on the side, with four large feet both opposite it and on the base, giving you placement versatility. That means the control strip, cited on the back edge, can either be vertical or horizontal.

The control layout is identical to the Compact 60: dual channels, with input one being the instrument channel and sporting a single standard jack input, high/low sensitivity switch, gain with clip LED, colour preset (a low-mid cut/treble boost) and bass, mid and treble EQ. Input two has a jack/XLR combi socket, line/mic switch and the same controls, except for the colour preset and

mid-range rotary. The effects section controls (pan, select and level) are the same too, although here we get two reverbs (small and large) and two preset delays (240 and 330

msec) and, finally, master level. Rear panel features are comprehensive, but the main difference lies in the uprated fan-cooled power section and the presences of a twin speaker. The idea? Considerably more clean headroom.

Features such as input one's 9V phantom power switch to power compatible instrument preamps connected via a stereo cable and, of course, the 48V phantom powered XLR mic input, give the Compact XL a thoroughly pro feel that's



The rear panel has a comprehensive selection of sockets and switches



The build quality is typically rugged and reassuring

The Rivals

The new **Trace Acoustic** combos are worth a look. The **TA300** (£1,429) offers 200W of power, extensive EQ and digital effects. The smaller **TA200** is almost as compact as the XL, but lighter and with 2 x 100W delivery. Also try **Fishman's Loudbox Performer** (£1,029). It's a two-channel, triamp design with 130W of power and good feedback rejection facilities.

lacking from many lower-priced acoustic amps.

Sounds

Yup, it's pretty pokey alright! There really does seem to be a lot of power on tap here. It's a big, bold sound too from such a small box. But the overall sound quality is typical of an AER unit: clean, clear and that's with EQ options set pretty flat. That colour preset is instant new-string modern acoustic sound, which may be a little too hi-fi for those of us chasing a more natural old-school tone, but generally the EQ produces highly musical results.

The massively increased volume and headroom before any noticeable limiting affects the sound is what's key to the appeal here

The massively increased volume and headroom before any noticeable limiting affects the sound is what's key to the appeal here. As well as giving you more than enough power to compete when playing in bigger venues, you also know you're not going to run out of steam at smaller ones.

Verdict

With so much in the amplified acoustic world, you buy something only to find that once you get it out on the road, something is lacking. Thankfully, AER's hard-earned reputation – which costs, of course – means that you can buy with confidence. It's really not surprising that these amps are so well used, especially by working musicians.

So, the Compact XL simply adds a turbo-charge in the power stakes to the best-selling Compact 60. It adds a little bulk

and weight – and substantial cost – but the key to amp'd acoustic playing is being prepared: no gig ever seems the same, and the XL just keeps giving you clean power after the 60 reaches its limit. If you need it, the XL has it. **A**

The Bottom Line

We like: It's a Compact 60 but with much more power and headroom; good feature set; intuitive

We dislike: Many acoustic amps have more effects (though, for many players, simple is better); lack of mute switch and any specific feedback busting controls; it ain't cheap...

Guitarist says: A supercharged Compact 60, the XL ensures you'll be heard – clearly



AER Compact XL

PRICE: £1,249 (inc padded gigbag)

ORIGIN: Germany

TYPE: Compact acoustic instrument amplifier with digital effects

OUTPUT: 200W RMS

DIMENSIONS: 330 (w) x 285 (d) x 325mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 10.6/23.30

CABINET: 15mm birch plywood covered with black splatter finish, foam-covered steel mesh grille

SPEAKERS: Two-way system – eight-inch polypropylene low-midrange plus one-inch dome tweeter, lightweight neodymium alloy magnets

CHANNELS: Twin channels. Input one: 6.4mm jack; input two: XLR/6.4mm jack combi-socket (line/mic)

CONTROLS: Input one – high/low push switch, clip LED, gain, colour preset push switch, bass, middle, treble controls. Input two – line/mic push switch, clip LED, gain, bass, treble controls. Effects section: pan, select switch, level. Master level control

FOOTSWITCH: Standard two-way footswitch (not included), switches effects on/off

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Four preset digital effects (short reverb, long reverb, short delay, long delay). Ground lift switch, 9V phantom power, aux inputs (L&R) plus level, footswitch input, tuner out, XLR DI out plus level, FX send and return, headphones out

RANGE OPTIONS: The single-channel 40W Alpha kicks off the range at £629. The Compact 60 (60 watts, two channels, digital reverb/delay) is £799 or £979 in a hardwood cabinet. The 120W AcoustiCube 3 (£2,199) is the ultimate compact AER experience
Westside Distribution
0141 248 4812
www.aer-amps.de

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★