



1 DUAL POWER LEVELS

The new power-reduction feature reconfigures internal voltages to drop the output from 40 watts down to about four watts.

2 FOUR-VOICE FUN

Both clean and overdrive channel voices are now footswitchable. The optional FS-14 footswitch adds extra functionality while the amp can also be configured for remote switching.

3 HASSLE-FREE USB

The MkII's USB recording out produces four channels: speaker-emulated stereo, preamp out and dry. It's also a stereo USB input, handy for backing track playback.



AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Hybrid valve/solid-state preamp with digital reverb and valve power stage
OUTPUT: 40W, switchable to 4W
SPEAKER: 1x Celestion G12
VALVES: 2x 12AX7, 2x EL34
CONTROLS: Clean channel volume, bass and treble, voice switch. OD channel gain, volume, ISF, bass mid and treble, voice switch. Global master volume, reverb level, power reduction switch, effects loop level switch, reverb dark/light switch
SOCKETS: Guitar in, speaker out x3, effects loop send/return, footswitch in x2, speaker emulated line out jack and XLR, USB out
WEIGHT: 24kg
DIMENSIONS: [HxWxD] 480x588x260mm
CONTACT: Blackstar Amplification 01604 817817
www.blackstaramps.com

BLACKSTAR HT CLUB 40 112 COMBO

£699



More is more... Blackstar redefines its best-selling valve amp series

For years, Blackstar's best-selling HT Venue range of valve amplifiers has been the benchmark in the highly-contested mid-price market, where the Venue amps have become go-to favourites for working players. So, replacing or upgrading them becomes a nail-biting challenge. There's the old adage of 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it', but for Blackstar, standing still has never been an option – it's why the company was formed in the first place. So, after nearly three years and possibly the most intensive R&D project in the company's 10-year history, here we are with the new, improved MkII HT Venue, and the amp that could well become the range's bestseller, the HT Venue Club 40 1x12 combo.

The new HT Club 40 looks reassuringly familiar, with the

same front-facing control layout, however, practically every detail has been worked on and sweated over. It's a smart-looking combo with pleasing proportions and looks the part on bigger stages, while being portable enough for smaller pubs, clubs and restaurants. The HT Club 40's control panel has separate

you'll find extension speaker outlets and an effects loop, with new features including a USB recording output together with speaker-emulated line outs on jack and XLR. Inside the chassis, most components live on a high-quality PCB, which is through-plated for long-term reliability. The parts are first-

of generating gain and overdrive effects, while top-quality op-amps are used elsewhere for effective EQ and filtering.

The MkII's clean channel has a completely reworked architecture with two tightly-defined voices, best described as classic American and classic British, which can be pre-set on the control panel or footswitched. Although only one button is pressed, lots of changes happen inside, including preamp voicing, EQ and valve gain structure, as well as the power amplifier damping. A similar thing happens on the overdrive channel, with a choice of two voices called 'classic crunch' and 'super-saturated lead', which can be infinitely tweaked between Brit and USA response using Blackstar's patented ISF control. Like the clean channel, these voices have been reworked to

A SMART-LOOKING COMBO WITH PLEASING PROPORTIONS

channels for clean and overdrive, with two footswitchable voices on each channel. There's also a new, low-power option, which reduces output from around 40 watts down to just four watts. Global controls include a master volume and level control for the Club's built-in digital reverb. On the rear panel,

class, and the economical layout is typical Blackstar, keeping his and hum to absolute minimum levels. Like all Venue amps, the Club has a hybrid valve and solid-state preamp joined to a classic dual-EL34 valve output stage. The choices are pragmatic, using valves where they do the best job

Blackstar

ISF: Blackstar's secret sauce

Why Blackstar's ISF is so special?

Developed as a tool to help dial in custom EQs for artists, Blackstar's Infinite Shape Feature (ISF) is a patented technology. The passive three-knob guitar EQ network of bass, middle and treble controls is a fundamental part of traditional guitar amp topology. Classic American and British designs have different versions, which helps create their unique voicings. The ISF control allows you to adjust the response of the tone control network between these traditional voicings, so you can find and create your own signature sound. ISF is a passive circuit, so it responds musically, simultaneously moving bass, mid and treble responses while, the tone controls remain fully interactive. The ISF control is variable between all the traditional responses allowing you to design your own sound.

be richer and more responsive. The icing on the cake is the HT Club's integral digital reverb, which can be switched between a bright plate or a darker room setting.

In use, the HT Club 40 MkII is jaw-droppingly good – while the MkI version was efficient if a little bland sometimes, the MkII is full of character and attitude, with astonishing tonal depth and response that will have many top-dollar boutique amps struggling to keep up. From punchy Fender and Vox-influenced cleans that work equally

well with single coils and humbuckers, with enough reserve headroom to really cut through, to stunning classic rock touch-sensitive mild distortion that's perfectly matched for a decent Les Paul and all-out modern rock sustain, the new MkII HT Club 40 is, well, much more of everything that made the MkI so good.

It's great to see the HT Venue's good looks combined with new stand-out features like the power reduction, which drops the output down to useful recording and practice levels, as well as the dual

line outs and USB audio. Other clever touches are a smart, valve-saving standby mode and a Kensington lock. It's the sounds that define the MkII HT Venue and they're superb. Has Blackstar created a perfect amp? Quite possibly, yes.

Nick Guppy

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★



Blackstar say that the ISF technology allows you to: 'Find the sound in your head'



HT Venue: a shining star in the mid-price market

ALSO TRY...

ORANGE ROCKER 32 COMBO

Orange's super-groovy Rocker 32 combo may cost a little more, but it is a 2x10 and true stereo that opens up many intriguing possibilities.



£829

VOX AC30VR

Vox's AC30VR features the clever Valve Reactor output stage, using a 12AX7 as a small output valve to produce proper valve dynamics and warmth.



£469

FENDER HOT ROD DELUXE III

The latest version of Fender's long-running mid-price combo is a scorching three-channel powerhouse, featuring a beefy Celestion G12 speaker and Fender's classic spring reverb effect.



£799