



THE FULL ENGLISH

A HAND-WIRED AMP HEAD BUILT IN THE UK ALONG TRADITIONAL LINES? YES PLEASE, SAYS **DAVID GREEVES**

We looked at a pair of low-powered amp heads from the Norfolk-based company English Valve Amps back in issue 88 and were mightily impressed. These were great-sounding, old-fashioned amps hand-wired in the UK with astonishingly low price tags.

The latest design from EVA – the Artist 36 Watt Head – is a much more powerful beast that carries a higher, but still extremely competitive price. Let's see if lightning can strike for a third time.

PRE & POWER AMP

The Artist 36 Watt Head has a simple front panel layout of gain, treble, middle, bass and master volume controls. These are joined by a single input socket on one side, with power and standby switches on the other. The back of the amp is equally straightforward, with 8- and 16-ohm speaker outputs and an IEC mains socket. This is clearly not an amp that requires a lengthy instruction manual.

We can never resist the urge to nose around and a look further inside the Artist reveals some very tidy work indeed. The valves and transformers

are properly mounted on the sturdy plated-steel amp chassis, while the components are neatly laid out and soldered onto a traditional turret board. The process of building an amp by hand in this way is time consuming – and therefore expensive – but it should guarantee a high level of attention to detail.

The Artist 36 Watt Head uses a quartet of EL84 valves in its power amp, with three 12AX7s in the preamp. The EL84 is celebrated for its wonderful 'chiming' top-end response but also offers a great overdriven tone that's sweet-sounding and gritty all at once. This valve is most closely associated with the Vox AC30, but it also featured in some great Marshall amps of the early '60s, before the company switched to the more powerful EL34 valve.

The Artist also features a GZ34 rectifier valve, another feature of old Vox and Marshall amps. This is the bit that supplies DC current to the rest of the amp and it can have a big impact on how the amp 'feels' to play. While a more efficient solid-state rectifier responds more or less instantly to the amp's power demands, a rectifier valve is not always able to keep up when

suddenly called upon to supply a lot of juice. The end result is a gentle compression effect on the note attack (known as 'sag') and a little more 'give' and elasticity in the overall sound and feel of the amp. While a solid-state rectifier is preferred for a tight, snappy response (and is an absolute necessity for more powerful amps), many players, especially those who are turned on by more traditional tones, swear by a valve rectifier.

CABINETS & SPEAKERS

But for the snazzy snakeskin covering option (a £10 extra), the styling of this head and angled 2x12 cab has strong Marshall associations. If this lounge lizard look is not for you, EVA offers a wide array of standard colour options, from regulation black to white, cream, green, red, orange and burgundy, all at no extra charge.

The closed-back cabinet is fitted with a pair of 12-inch Celestion G12 Anniversary speakers, though you can also opt for a set of Vintage 30s for no extra charge. The good thing about this style of cabinet, which is a bit smaller (and a lot lighter) than a Marshall-style 4x12, is that the speakers not only have plenty of room

GBINFO

EVA ARTIST 36 WATT HEAD

PRICE: £758 as reviewed
 BUILT IN: UK
 TYPE: All-valve head
 POWER: 36 watts
 VALVES: 4 x EL84, 3 x 12AX7, 1 x GZ34
 FEATURES: Gain, treble, middle, bass & master controls, 8- & 16-ohm speaker outputs
 DIMENSIONS: 260(h) x 580(w) x 220(d) mm
 WEIGHT: 11kg (24.25lbs)
 OPTIONS: Base price £748; 'snakeskin' covering (shown, £10), spring reverb (add £100)

EVA 212 CAB

PRICE: £295.75
 BUILT IN: UK
 TYPE: 2x12 angled-front, closed-back cab
 POWER: 60 watts @ 8 ohms
 SPEAKERS: 2 x 12-inch Celestion G12 Anniversary
 DIMENSIONS: 660(h) x 630(w) x 295(d) mm
 WEIGHT: 24kg (53lbs)
 OPTIONS: Base price £285.75; 'snakeskin' covering (shown, £10)

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DETAILS

A GREAT BRITISH-BUILT STACK THAT WON'T BREAK THE BANK



■ Inside the amp chassis, the components are neatly hand-wired onto traditional turret board



■ The gold 'Plexi' control panel and red power light are straight out of the Marshall playbook



■ EVA offers the choice of chrome or black barrel knobs and black or white chickenhead pointers

GBVERDICT

ARTIST 36 WATT HEAD & 212 CAB

GOLD STARS

- ★ Excellent build quality
- ★ Super drive sounds
- ★ Great dynamic response

BLACK MARKS

- None

IDEAL FOR...

Anyone looking for a no-nonsense valve amp for classic clean and dirty sounds

GBRATING



to work in, but the angled front means that one speaker points directly forwards while the other points slightly upwards, directing more sound towards the standing player and helping to really fill the room.

SOUNDS

Filling the room is exactly what you'll be doing with this amp and cab, which offer enough volume to cater for all but the biggest of stages. Keeping the gain knob in its lower reaches, there's a decent amount of

clean headroom. The tone is full, well balanced and commendably transparent, revealing the inherent character of each guitar you plug in.

The point at which the amp starts to break up will obviously depend on the output level of your pickups, but by setting the gain knob appropriately you can get a nice fat clean sound with a satisfying touch of 'hair' and fizz around the edge of the tone when you hit a big power chord.

However, most players will want to set the gain up past half-way, where this amp starts to properly overdrive. With its EL84 power section, the Artist leans more towards vintage Marshall sounds than Vox. The driven tone has a thick, solid centre with an aggressive top end that has real snarl and bite. However, this delicious dirt cleans up very nicely when you turn down the volume control on the guitar.

Meanwhile, the valve rectifier is very much in evidence, with a lovely meaty articulation to single notes. True, the low end is not quite tight and punchy enough to cater for modern metal sounds, but flipside of this is a wonderfully expressive, organic tone.

GBCONCLUSION

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

■ Looking at the price of this head and cab, you easily could spend the same amount of money on a mass-produced, multi-channel monster, with more power, more features and more brand-name recognition. But that would be missing the point.

This is an old-fashioned amp, built by hand to a high standard and designed to do less, perhaps, but do it very well. There's still a wide range of great clean and overdriven sounds here, but the more important factor is that amp provides a platform to let your fingers and your guitar do the talking. It doesn't obscure the nuances of your playing or the character of your instrument with unnecessary circuitry. This would be the ideal companion for gigging guitarists looking for an amp that can provide classic rock and blues tones. Build quality is high and we'd expect this amp and cab to provide many years of reliable service, at a price that is very good for a hand-built British amp. **GB**