

RANDALL RG75 G3 PLUS

A TOUCH MORE VALVE WITH YOUR SOLID-STATE?
PAUL SALTER TESTS OUT AN AFFORDABLE COMBO
FEATURING RANDALL'S 'VALVE-DYNAMIC' TECHNOLOGY

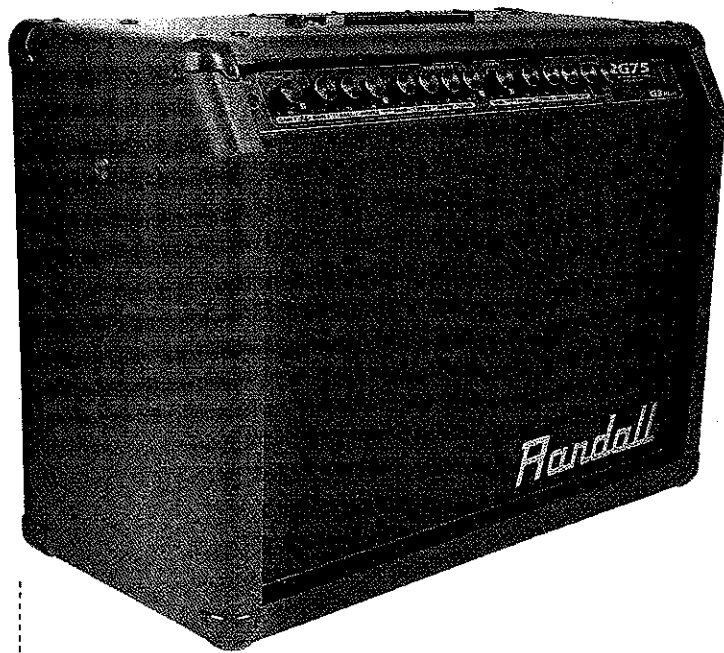
Solid-state amps have certain advantages over those that use valves, not least that they are usually cheaper to build, are physically lighter and you don't have to replace those fragile valves on a regular basis. While the vast majority of professional guitarists still choose to use valve amplification on stage and in the studio, amp designers continue to use their ingenuity to come up with good-sounding, good-value solid-state amps.

Last month we featured a solid-state signature half-stack from Randall Amplification bearing the name of none other than Kirk Hammett of Metallica. This month we're looking at another solid-state offering from this USA-based amp manufacturer, but there's more going on inside that black cabinet than you might expect.

PRE & POWER AMP

The Randall RG75 G3 Plus is a 75-watt combo that's almost entirely solid-state – if it wasn't for the valve in there, that is. Before you start to yell foul, we have to point out that this isn't a hybrid amp in the traditional sense. Strictly speaking, a hybrid amplifier would involve either a valve preamp or power amp stage. Here, Randall is using a single 12AT7 valve as part of its 'Valve-Dynamic' circuit.

Randall isn't giving all the secrets away concerning this, but the gist of it all is that this part of the amp concerns itself with the feel and response of the amp, rather than the clipping that causes the actual overdrive. Vox successfully used a similar idea with the Valvetronix range of amps, in an attempt to add that elusive valve amp feel to its already credible digital models. It's been shown that solid-state preamps



GBINFO

RANDALL RG75 G3 PLUS

PRICE £329
ORIGIN China
TYPE Solid-state combo
POWER 75 watts
VALVES 1 x 12AT7
FEATURES Clean channel with level, reverb, treble, middle & bass controls & boost switch, overdrive channel with 2 x switchable gain controls, voicing switch & bass, middle, mid sweep, treble, reverb & level controls, master volume control, effects loop with level control, line out with level control, footswitch input, 2 x external speaker outs (4 & 8 ohms)
FOOTSWITCH RF4G3 4-button footswitch included
SUBSTRATE 1 x Celestion Seventy 80
DIMENSIONS 500(h) x 630(w) x 290(d) mm
WEIGHT 21.4kg (47lbs)

CONTACT:
Sound Technology plc
PHONE: 01462 480000
WEB:
www.randallamplifiers.com

and stompboxes can get very close to emulating the way that valves distort, so perhaps it makes sense to concentrate on these less tangible but just as desirable qualities.

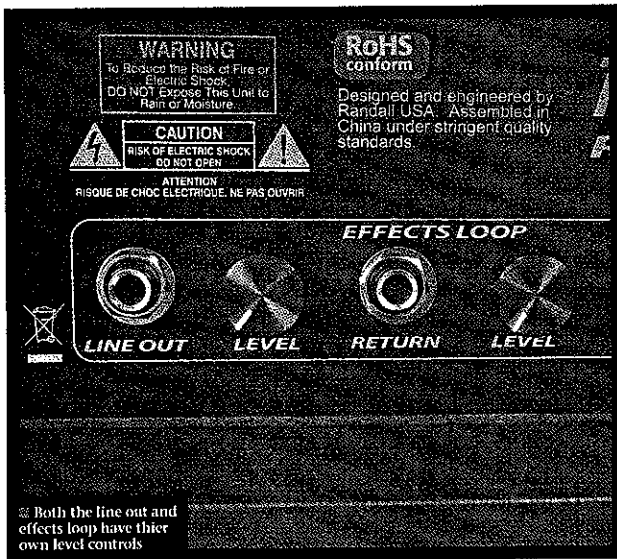
On a more practical level, what you get for your money with the RG75 G3 Plus is a two-channel combo that is equipped with the kind of features that make it far more flexible than that format might suggest. For a start, most of the major functions are footswitchable, with the sturdy RF4G3 foot controller included with the amp.

The clean channel has its own bass, middle, treble and reverb controls as well as a level control, but it also has a boost switch to offer two different volume levels. The overdrive channel is even better catered for by the addition of a sweep control and a voicing switch to the middle control. You also get pseudo three-channel operation, with the two separate gain controls for the two overdrive 'modes'.

One is designated as the classic high-gain mode, the other as modern high-gain. Thanks to that foot controller, you can switch between the two gain modes, the clean tone and the boosted clean tone, and even switch your reverb in and out. Not a bad bunch of options for the average guitarist's live rig. There are more options on the back panel too. As well as a pair of extension speaker outputs (both 4- and 8-ohm varieties), there's a series effects loop with its own level control and a line output, also with a level control. Sadly there's no speaker emulation on this latter function, but it could prove useful if you want to hook the combo up to a larger rig. ■



The clean channel has its own bass, middle, treble and reverb controls



Multiple channels and footswitchable functions add to the RG75's versatility

CABINETS & SPEAKERS

We had a few reservations about the road-worthiness of the Randall Kirk Hammett half-stack that we reviewed last month, but there are no such worries with this sturdy combo. The plywood used to build the comparatively roomy cabinet is thick and securely put-together, and the plastic corner protectors are big and chunky. Even the vinyl covering seems more durable here.

Randall has chosen to give the cabinet an almost totally closed back, which bodes well for a good bass response, but means that you'll finally have to give up that bad habit of storing your effects pedals in the rear of the cab. There is a small opening, just below the large-finned heatsink on the back panel, which allows just about enough of a view to identify the

GBOPINION

RANDALL RG75 G3 PLUS

GOLD STARS

- ★ Lots of features
- ★ Excellent footswitch
- ★ Decent distortion sounds

BLACK MARKS

- Clean channel is a bit disappointing

GBRATING



A switchable boost on the clean channel adds yet more possibilities

single 12-inch Celestion Seventy 80 speaker that lurks inside.

SOUNDS

We've already pointed out that there are plenty of tonal options available from the overdrive channel. You'll soon know where you are with the bass and treble controls, of course, but the additional sweep and voicing controls on the mid-range band results in far more tweaking than we'd like

feeling like you're taking away far more than you're adding in, and that can't be right.

If you do get close to what you're looking for, then you'll probably be quite pleased with the quality of the overdrive. It's smooth, easy to handle, and there's plenty of it from either of the two modes. Like the Randall Kirk Hammett half-stack, the classic and modern modes are quite similar, with more of a difference here at lower levels. There's a

more open feel on the classic mode, but it's still hard to achieve a convincing Stones or Faces-like crunch with the right kind of vintage sound and feel. Higher levels of gain are far more satisfying, with the modern mode kicking out some aggressive thrash sounds.

The bottom end is surprisingly full from this 1x12 combo, and it hammers out some appealing metal tones, albeit scaled down somewhat. It's hard to see just what the Valve-Dynamic arrangement is doing most of the time – indeed the clean channel is very ordinary and uninspiring at best – but there is something about the punchiness of the overdriven tones at high volumes that doesn't seem at all typical for a solid-state amp.

CONCLUSION

Chasing claims of valve-like qualities from solid-state amps almost always ends in disappointment. There's certainly still potential in this area and Randall may well have made some progress here with this 'Valve-Dynamic' concept.

However, it's probably better to let Randall and other manufacturers tinker away with stuff like this, while we approach each amp for what it offers, not what's populating the circuit boards inside. From this point of view, the RG75 G3 Plus is a really affordable combo that gives some respectable heavier overdrive tones, with enough volume to work with the average rock band. Though we weren't completely blown away by all the sounds on offer, the multiple channels and an excellent footswitch add a lot of versatility. **GB**

