



PEAVEY VALVE KING VK100 & 412 SLANT

100W ALL-TUBE AMP & CABINET

A monster feature-packed head and cab at a midget price

\$1,195 / \$895



PEAVEY'S new Valve King series arrived in the country early this year and at the very mention of a well-priced range of all-tube amplifiers, we quickly got to fidgeting in anticipation of the opportunity to plug into one. That opportunity came in issue 52, when Craig White tackled the VK112 50W combo with the help of his gonzo acquaintance Rohan "Hootin' Bottle" Stanley, and came away suitably impressed with the amp's boutique features and hotrodded tones, not to mention blown over by the retail price. Of course, a 50W combo is obviously only going to be useful in certain situations, probably for recording or in small venues, but for those situations when we need to really crank things up and fill a room with the unnerving sea of energy our instruments are known for, most rock, metal, punk and even blues guitarists look to the age-old combination of a two-channel 100W head plugged into a 4x12 cabinet. And that's exactly what the Valve King 100 and its companion 412 slant is.

Forwards In Reverse

FOR reasons unknown to us, the front panel of the VK100 is set out in the reverse order of that which graces its combo siblings. Moving from the right, there are two inputs, followed by the clean section (volume, channel select and bright switches, bass, mid and treble), then the lead channel (gain, volume boost and gain switches, volume, bass, mid and treble), a master reverb control, effects send and return, global presence and resonance controls like those introduced on Eddie Van Halen's original 5150 design, power indicator, and finally the standby and power switches. Around the back is a 4/8/16-Ohm impedance switch and this amp series' stand-out feature, the Texture control, which allows sweeping between Class A (simulated) and Class A/B power structures, meaning you can blend a modern, hard-edged distortion sound with the more syrupy, mellow, vintage overdrive of Class A amplifiers (it's in the lead channel that the Texture control makes most of an impact). The clean channel is fairly decent and nicely shaped, although a little generic, and while both the Texture control and Resonance/Presence controls – which effects damping, the Presence boosting high end as it's dialled in, while the Resonance boosts the lows – are capable of subtle tone improvements, the most effective means is the usual volume and EQ parameters. Of course, your guitar and its pick-ups are a major factor when running clean, so the output is going to vary from axe to axe.

I Wanna Rock

Now, it's unlikely that you're going to find a jazz musician using a Peavey amp such as this one. The second channel is just a bit of a giveaway there. Peavey is best known for serving the rock and metal crowd – indeed many Peavey users play guitars with headstocks and bodies that reflect the pointy font of the amp-maker's logo. I must confess, when playing rock, punk, metal and the like, I very rarely engage the clean channel, instead using a fat lead channel setting as my 'clean' tone, and kicking the gain switch for distortion/overdrive. The lead channel on the Valve King served me very well indeed. From squealing buzz-saw guitar to crunchy, bone-rattling swamp-rock rhythm, I walloped my band with an in-your-face guitar assault that, I like to think, left them trembling. The Texture, Resonance and Presence controls made considerable difference to the lead sound, enabling some extremely effective tone tweaking, although Texture created more of an approximation of a Class A power-amp rather than replicating those low-voltage treasure chests of tone like the Vox AC series. Backing off the gain, the Valve King VK100 also proved an extremely capable blues beast, producing a signal that was warm, full and just that little bit crunchy. Add reverb to taste and there's little to complain about.

The Bottom Line

Although I'd almost certainly require a footswitch to kick the gain in and out – footswitch being an optional extra on this amp – I would be more than happy using a Valve King 100 on stage. The stereo/mono switchable 412 slant cabinet, which packs rear-mounted Valve King speakers, emitted a thundering sound best suited to music that's hard and heavy, as mellow and clean isn't really the Valve King's strength. That said, I'm willing to bet the breed of guitarist attracted to it isn't going to be too put out by that.

Karl Mayerhofer

SPECS

- Made China
- Price VK100 \$1195 / VK412 \$895
- VK100 Features
 - ◆ 100W into 4/8/16 Ohms
 - ◆ 4x 6L6GC and 3x 12AX7 tubes
 - ◆ DC-powered pre-amp tube heaters
 - ◆ Two independent footswitchable channels
 - ◆ Separate three-band EQ for each channel
 - ◆ Footswitchable gain/volume boost on lead channel
 - ◆ Dual speaker jacks in parallel
 - ◆ Reverb with level control
 - ◆ Buffered effects loop
 - ◆ Resonance and presence controls
 - ◆ Patent-pending Texture variable Class A/B simulation control

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WHAT WE RECKON

PROS

- ▲ The price is low for such an all-tube beast
- ▲ Versatile lead channel with flexible distorted sounds
- ▲ Texture control creates some fairly unique tones

CONS

- ▼ Footswitch not included
- ▼ Back location of Texture control inconvenient for onstage adjustment

