

TECH 21 VT BASS 1000 & B410-VT

BY JORDAN WAGNER

Tech 21's new VT Bass 1000 head incorporates the same amp-modeling ideals of its groundbreaking SansAmp direct boxes of yore, but it goes a step further than past company offerings: It focuses solely on reproducing the brawn *and* characterful sounds of Ampeg's storied line of all-tube bass amps, including the mighty SVT.

Welterweight Whippersnapper

The VT pumps out 1,000 class D watts at 4 Ω (2,000 watts peak) or 600 watts at 8 Ω (1,200 watts peak), and yet its rugged, 12-pound chassis is *considerably* easier to move than the notoriously heavy and bulky originals. It has two identical channels, each with its own 3-band, +/- 12 dB active EQ, as well as character, level, and drive controls. The VT also features a 10 dB gain-boost switch, and the included foot-switch enables muting, and either selecting between or combining channels.

Tech 21's new head also has their famous SansAmp DI circuitry—the long-time friend to many a gigging and recording bassist. The rear panel also features a direct in (for bypassing the preamp in favor of an external rig), a serial effects loop, a tuner out, and a pair of Speakon outputs.

We tested the VT Bass 1000 through an 8 Ω, rear-vented Tech 21 B410-VT 4x10 cab with a 500-watt power-handling capacity.

True Grit

When I plugged in my Fender P bass and set the VT Bass 1000's EQ flat, the first channel delivered lusciously thick cleans with warm lows. Its springy response to flatpicking was very tube-like, as was its tendency to accentuate midrange and low end under heavy attack. Fingerpicking

pulled the highs back and slowed the attack somewhat, but most noticeable was how the low end relaxed and bloomed in a way that was perfect for jazz and R&B. The B410-VT cab delivered the tone evenly at all volumes and served up fat lows.

The VT Bass's wide-ranging character knobs enable you to completely change each channel's voicing. Turning up the drive control and setting character in its lower or mid regions yielded a smooth, overdriven purr, and harder picking brought out snarl and grit. The treble was stronger and cut

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more with higher gain, so I found myself turning down the treble with heavier drive settings. However, I had to really lay into the strings to unleash grinding distortion—even with the drive and character maxed.

Designed to sweep through several decades' worth of Ampeg flavors, the character knobs are immensely powerful tools for shaping the response and texture of each

channel, with even tiny adjustments yielding significant results.

At 9 o'clock, character yields the deep lows and articulate mids and highs of an early-'70s SVT. Dialing it higher smoothed out and warmed up the midrange while filling out the lows. Around 3 o'clock—and with a hefty drive setting—character gave the amp a decidedly tough voice perfect for erecting a dirty wall of thunder.

Some of the VT Bass 1000's best tones are made possible by how brilliantly its drive and master controls interact. When I set channel one's volume at a club-friendly 3 o'clock and drive at 9 o'clock, the tone tightened up with crisper highs and taut lows. Conversely, pushing drive higher and lowering the level yielded warmer, spongier tones. The interplay between the two controls is eerily similar to how actual tube amps react.

The Verdict

The VT Bass 1000 and B410-VT combination makes for a pretty incredible bass rig that gets very, very close to the sound and feel of a classic Ampeg SVT. Tech 21

has done an excellent job of designing a preamp that reacts to playing dynamics like an all-tube amp. With copious amounts of headroom, the VT can cover an impressive variety of jazz, blues, rock, and metal tones. All this power and versatility makes the VT Bass 1000 a real winner for players

who want the aggression and depth of an actual SVT, but don't want to deal with the weight, bulk, and unavoidable tube-maintenance issues. Factor in its powerful overdrive tones—which *can* occasionally get a little unruly on the treble side—and you've got an amp that's ready to take on just about anything.

RATINGS

Tech 21 VT Bass 1000, \$1,879 street, tech21nyc.com

Pros: Luscious cleans and extremely powerful and saturated overdrive. Roadworthy build. Gets you well within the SVT ballpark—and then some—sans weight and tube issues.

Cons: Somewhat pricey. Heavy overdrive can yield strident treble.

Tones
Ease of Use
Build/Design
Value

RATINGS

Tech 21 B410-VT, \$609 street, tech21nyc.com

Pros: Powerful, punchy, and loud. Very well built.

Cons: Grille cloth doesn't offer much protection against rogue sharp objects.

Tones
Versatility
Build/Design
Value

