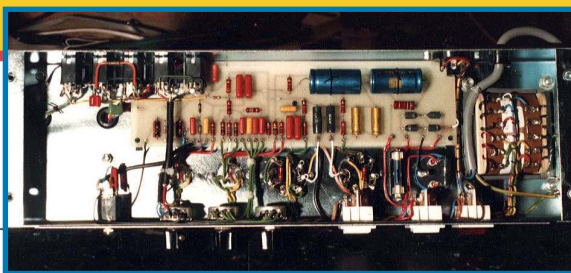


REPRINT OF REVIEW BY DAVE MANN - I.M. & R.W. JULY 1981

NOTE PM:60 NOW AVAILABLE



YOU MAY REMEMBER A LITTLE while ago that we had on test a combo simply called "Session" manufactured by a new company in Basingstoke called Axess electronics. The design philosophy behind the combo was no frills — no nonsense in terms of controls and use with a great deal of emphasis placed on the quality of the electronics especially with regard to noise thus supposedly making it ideal for studio work.

The combo itself was all valve with an output (switchable) of 15 or 30 watts, feeding into a single 12" loudspeaker.

Since that time one or two more units have been added to the range  
114 IM & RW

and it is these, in conjunction with the original combo, that we are looking at today.

Three amps were supplied for review, these being the Session 15-30 guitar combo (valve) and two versions of the Session PM-120 guitar monitor amplifiers. Before looking at each in a little more detail I will just run down a few things that these amps have in common.

Essentially from the front the amps look identical in their colour scheme of black and silver. The cabinet is a very sturdy plywood construction covered in black leather cloth. Overall dimensions are 22 1/2" x 16" x 12" although the front of the cabinet

slopes back a little to give a bit of extra projection upwards and to make the amp look at little smaller than it actually is. In fact I quite like the neat appearance which is enhanced by removing all the operational controls from the front of the amp. All that can be seen from the front is the protective black with silver lines speaker grille. Corner protection is provided by chrome corner caps with four soft p.v.c. feet to hold the amp firmly down on stage.

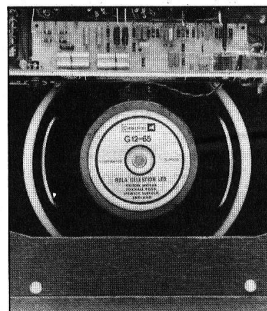
The control panels on the amps are located — traditional Vox fashion — centre top back and a bit more usefully have markings designed to be seen from the front of the amp rather than

the back. A carrying handle is provided on top.

I think a quick look at the guitar combo is in order now although I will not dwell on it as the amp has already been reviewed previously. It is an all-valve combo with switchable 15-30 watts output. This power is quite ably handled by a single Celestion Loudspeaker.

Three rotary controls are provided — volume, treble and mid/bass. I am still not too sure about the mid/bass control in use but that is by the way. One or two extra slide switches are now provided although unfortunately these are not labelled. By a process of trial and error I deduced the function of these. A 3 position switch next to the input jack gives degrees of treble boost except that this operates across the volume control and is completely non-functional when the volume is turned up full. One of the other switches brings the Eq in and out and the other one seems not to do very much at all. In fact trying to measure the combined effect of the switch plus the mid/bass control was extremely difficult.

Various inputs and outputs are located just underneath the chassis at the back. One thing I am not too keen on is that the loudspeaker output jack is just next to the line outputs. Although in normal use this l/s output

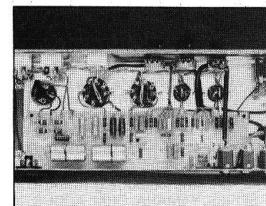


jack would not be touched there are occasions when it could be a little awkward.

So much for a quick look at the amp. The other two units supplied are part of what is called a guitar monitor system. Simply these combos are just add-on amp/speaker units to up the output capability of the valve combo or

## SOUNDCHECK

### SESSION Amps



in fact any other electronics with line outputs.

In basic form a single combo coupled with a single guitar monitor cabinet would just increase the output power and performance. In more complex form several monitors could be run from the one amp or as many bands do these days can cross couple one side of the stage to the other. Anyway before I get too carried away I will look at these units in a bit more detail.

Interestingly both of the monitors supplied use transistor power amps rather than valves. I suppose the thinking here is that for upping output power once the basic sound is determined (by the valve preamp) it is far more economical to use a transistor power amp especially when the output power is far in excess of the standard combo. To be honest a 100 watt valve output stage in this format would require much more cooling than the small vent provided and of course would be considerably heavier.

The two guitar monitors are basically identical with the exception of the type of loudspeaker fitted — one a Celestion, one an Electro-Voice. The chassis for both is quite neat with hefty heat sinking and a toroidal mains transformer to keep hum and noise to a minimum.

The only connection on the back is to the loudspeaker the rest of the controls are on the top front panel.

These are from the left: 2 jacks for line in and line out for looping through between monitors; gain; 2 fuses — for mains and for speaker protection. As on the guitar amp there is a mains on/off rocker neon.

Both amps provided 100 watts of r.m.s. power into their respective speakers. Now although the Celestion is a good speaker in its own right I do like the Electro-Voice drivers very much and most certainly the sound from the EVM series II was superb.

I also like the principle of add on self contained amp/speakers as a very quick and efficient way of either increasing output power or giving better sound coverage or as the name implies better monitoring of other instruments. The monitor can of course be used with any amp mixer or whatever with a slave output and considering the overall size pushed out an extremely high level of acoustic output — I think I have said that before about the EVM drivers in the Mesa Boogie amps.

The power amp driving the EVM unit showed up a bit of crossover distortion which to be honest could not really be noticed and probably could be removed by adjustment.

Interestingly the slave output from the combo is derived from the output transformer. This means that any or all of the distortion produced by the guitar amp (specially output stage) is fed to the monitor amp. In practise the sound fed to the monitor amp was really excellent especially when the guitar amp was overdriven substantially. Here the usefulness of having a low power output (15 watts) meant the sound level was determined mainly by the monitor. However it was surprising how much output the guitar amp pushed out on its own.

It is difficult to know quite what to say regarding the overall sound of these two units as to a greater extent the sound is determined by the preamp feeding into the amp. I personally would now like to see a slightly more comprehensive preamp (valve) either as a self contained unit or perhaps built in as a combo. Then I think the full potential of these monitor cabs would be realised. ●

#### Test Report

1. Power output. Measured at 1kHz into 8 ohms.  
103 watts r.m.s.
2. Input sensitivity. For full output (1kHz).  
0.74 volts r.m.s.