

# SOUND CHECK

## SESSIONETTE 75

IN THE SHORT SPACE OF TIME THAT has elapsed since the first Session amp was reviewed it seems that every other month there is a new unit to be reviewed. That is a bit of an exaggeration perhaps and I think that the profusion of new products is a direct result of the success of that very first valve amp.

Interestingly, with the emphasis on valve amps for the units already produced, this Sessionette is totally transistorised. Whether this is a new line

in valve sound amps for the Session range or just an attempt to capture a slightly different market remains to be seen.

The Sessionette 75 is a 1 x 12" combo with control panel and chassis combined into an opening at the back of the cabinet.

The cabinet itself looks just like a baby version of the valve Session amp reviewed previously. It measures 17" x 14 1/2" x 10" and is covered in black vinyl with chrome corner caps and centre strap handle.

Without damaging the covering it was not possible to see what the cabinet itself was made of but judging by the weight (extremely light) and its solid feel it must be plywood.

In common with the other Session amps the speaker grille is black with a silver cross hatch which looks rather smart.

As already mentioned the chassis is fitted into the top back of the cabinet. It is in the form of an inverted L-shape with controls mounted on top and the main part of the chassis which extends half way down the back of the cabinet forming the heat sink for the power amplifier mounted inside.

All the electronics are mounted onto a single p.c. board with the exception of a toroidal mains transformer mounted onto the woodwork at the bottom of the cabinet and the power amp which is an encapsulated module mounted onto the back panel. The only other item is the Accutronics triple spring reverb unit bolted upright inside the amp.

Now onto the facilities. The operational controls are all across the top of the cabinet to be operated from the front of the combo (the amp for review was a prototype with the front panel the wrong way round). A mains on/off rocker switch with mains fuse is provided. Rotary controls are as follows: Reverb, Bass, Middle Treble, a Filter control and three gain controls. A single input jack is provided with two rocker switches — one for Eq in/out one for selection of channel A or B. Effectively the channel selection is purely input gain selection as the single set of tone controls is common to both A and B. The reason for three gain controls? — two operate on channel A giving a master volume facility and the other just gives master only for channel B. I did find it a little confusing the way that these gain controls were labelled and each time I went to the amp to use it I had to stop and think before touching the appropriate control. Gain B is actually the master volume for channel B which is fairly straightforward but for channel A Gain 1 refers to input gain (and therefore overdrive) and Gain 2 refers to master level.

Across the back of the chassis (inset slightly to afford some protection) are the auxiliary in/out connectors. These are: extension speaker jack (mutes internal speaker), phones (stereo jack only), footswitch (5-way DIN — no footswitch available for review), effects send, effects return, and monitor output with volume control.

That just about covers all the facilities with the exception of its performance. Bearing in mind the confusion with the gain controls, once this has been mastered then the sounds obtainable with the amp are very good. Although totally transistorised, some of the circuit ideas and designs have supposedly been taken from valve type circuits. Quite what this really means in terms of design I am not sure, however, certainly the operation and

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range of the tone controls was very similar to what would be achieved using valve design. Interaction between the controls was noticeable with 16.4dB of variation at 3kHz for the treble control, 10dB of variation at 200Hz for the Bass control and 8.5dB of variation for the Mid control. However, lack of range was not a problem and the smooth interaction and responses are much to be preferred to the high Q 'peaky' sound normally encountered with transistor amps.

The Eq controls are all pre the distortion stage with the exception of the filter control which is post distort. This is basically just a high frequency roll-off circuit, although it is described as something a little more complex. This affects the sound fed to the power amp and can take off a lot of the harshness of the distorted signal especially when used at low levels, 20dB of boost and cut is provided by this control at 10kHz.

With an input sensitivity of 1mV for full output, the overdrive capability on the amp is remarkable. Channel B is almost as good with 11mV sensitivity but here of course it is designed for an undistorted sound (no preamp overdrive control).

At low levels the sustain and warmth of the combo are amazingly good with plenty of clarity even when overdriving. The sustain obtainable can sometimes be extreme, but of course this means that even low output guitars can be catered for. Output power into 8 ohms (internal or external) was measured at 76 watts r.m.s. (pretty close to the 75 watts specified) and through the built in speaker was LOUD. The cabinet was remarkably free from rattles, and the bottom end warmth at high levels was very good. The only strange thing was that at high output levels the overdrive circuit sounded a little harsh and



edge. It tended to sound better at low levels. This was not imagination as it was noticed by all the musicians who tried the amp. Mind you, once in the live situation that extra edge was useful for cutting through. It is assumed though, that as its name implies this amp is designed for recording work as well as live.

The reverb unit sounded excellent with NO buzzes or hums (probably the toroidal transformer). Apart from the odd point regarding the high level sustain and the labeling of the controls, the combo came out very favourably, especially when it retails for under £200 it has got to be a bargain!

## GOOD IN PARTS!

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