

SOUNDRROOM

ORANGE • MUSIC MAN • BASSLINES

Orange Terror Bass, SP410, SP212, & SP210

BY JONATHAN HERRERA

AS LIGHTWEIGHT AMP TECHNOLOGY evolves from a burgeoning trend to a well-established product category, we're seeing increasingly diverse approaches from man-

ufacturers. The initial array of Class D amps with switchmode power supplies (SMPS) and neodymium cabinets to hit the market seemed geared toward players looking for extreme portability and crispy and quick tone. While this continues to be the main thrust of light-amp engineering, a few companies are making slightly less schlep-focused rigs. The Orange Terror Bass and SP-series cabinets deliver big furry rock tone, not the speedy precision and tickly treble of other rigs using similar fundamental technology.

The Orange Terror Bass head and SP-series cabinets employ some left-of-center concepts to achieve their distinctive tone. The head is a hybrid, coupling the all-tube preamp from Orange's AD200B head with a Class D power amp and SMPS. The preamp signal path does appear to be a true all-tube design, with a pair of 12AX7's handling gain staging and driving the EQ. This will please those looking for that distinctive tube sonic signature, although it does mean the simple 3-band EQ is less precise and more interactive than the opamp-driven filters found on most solid-state heads.

The Orange cabinets utilize an isobaric speaker configuration. Derived from the Greek word *isobares*, meaning "of equal weight," isobaric cabinets employ two woofers in a configuration that preserves constant air pressure between the two in a sealed space. The result is a single air-driving cone with two voice-coil "motor" assemblies. While there are several means of achieving this, Orange utilizes a cone-to-magnet configuration. An identical speaker placed on a baffle doubles the

front-most speaker in each Isobaric cabinet. The space between the rear-speaker cone and front-speaker voice coil is sealed, achieving the constant air-pressure key to the design. The advantages of the design

ORANGE TERROR BASS

Street \$899

Pros Cool design; big and tube-y rock tone; loud

Cons Inflexible EQ

ORANGE SP-SERIES CABINETS

Street SP410, \$1,249; SP212, \$869; SP210, \$779

Pros Huge sound from a small box

Cons Limited treble extension and transient response

TECH SPECS

TERROR BASS

Power output 500 watts @ 4Ω or 8Ω

Tone controls 12AX7-driven Bass; Mid; Treble

Tube complement 12AX7 x 2

Power amp topology Class D

Power supply Switchmode

DI output Balanced XLR with ground lift

Weight 11 lbs.

SP-SERIES CABINETS

Drivers Neodymium in isobaric configuration

Power handling SP410, 1,200 watts; SP212, 600 watts; SP210, 600

Weight SP410, 68 lbs; SP212, 53 lbs; SP210, 44 lbs.

Made in China

Warranty Terror Bass, two year limited; SP cabinets, 90 days limited

Contact www.orangeamps.com



are numerous: isobaric cabinets can achieve lower frequency response and greater power handling than a cabinet of the same physical size, although they're heavier and can cost more, too.

The Terror Bass is a pretty cool design, exuding a vintage low-wattage tube head vibe, with its top-mounted handle and boxy lunch-pail look. The PC-board layout is intriguing, with the preamp and power amp boards residing in the main chassis and the power-supply board stood off above it on the same surface as the two preamp tubes.



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When the SP-series cabs' front baffle is removed, the rear driver is clearly visible. Not the ample heatsinking on the Eminence neodymium driver.



The all-tube-head-esque design continues through the dead-simple controls: VOLUME, TREBLE, MID, BASS, and GAIN, with cool pictographs above each knob. In lieu of a mute switch, the Terror has a 3-position power switch with a “STBY” setting, like a tube head. Interestingly, the Orange’s post-EQ EFFECT LOOP and BALANCED OUTPUT are side mounted, an opportunity afforded by the unit’s unique chassis design.

As described above, the SP cabs are unusual in the bass cab universe. A mind-blowing moment occurs when you realize that each box holds basically twice the speaker than it seems like it should. The cabs were substantial and well built, with beefy birch-ply cabinetry and hefty protective rails. I didn’t like the top-mounted handles, though. They made it hard to perch a head in the just-right spot on top of the cabinet. The cabinets utilize neodymium drivers and have no tweeter. The neo speakers do mitigate the weight somewhat, but with double the driver for each cab, they’re quite dense and heavy for their size.

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Coupled with the Isobaric cabs, the Terror Bass immediately impressed with its loud output. In either 4Ω or 8Ω mode (a rear-panel switch ensure the full 500-watt output for either load impedance), the head was incredibly loud, even at relatively low volume positions. The overall sonic foot-

print of the head is raw, gritty, and thick. It’s not a particularly clean sounding head with fast transients and sizzly treble response. It seemed geared for the kind of big and colorful tone that works well with passive basses and aggressive technique. A significant amount of tube-y grit is available by messing with the GAIN:VOLUME ratio, although at high volume settings it got a little too burly and raw for my tastes. The EQ is potent, but not particularly predictable and precise. It does, however, suit the brawny rough-and-tumble vibe of the head.

The cabinets are ideally suited to the head or in any rig that would benefit from their substantial output and rock-focused voicing. Like the head, they sounded big and loud for their size, with impressive low-frequency extension and midrange propulsion into a room. The lack of a tweeter coupled with the obvious focus on punch and grind made them ideally suited for lo-fi rock and R&B styles. Their furry texture and slow transient response are not well suited for slap and crisp fingerstyle. Of the three cabs, I like the 2x12 best, as it combined the size benefits of the isobaric design with excellent power handling and presentation.

The Terror Bass and SP cabs make for a fantastic rock rig. Not only do they expand preconceived notions about lightweight amps, they can stand against many much bigger and heavier go-to rigs for assertive rock tone. **BP**