



MUSIC MAN 212HD 130

AN ABSOLUTE LEGEND RETURNS. BY **STEVE HENDERSON**.

Released in 1974, Music Man's 212HD 130 was an immediate hit. It was Music Man's version of Fender's Twin Reverb (ironically, designed by the same guy) and, for quite a time, gave the Twin some serious competition. While the Twin was all-tube, the HD 130 was a hybrid design, with two solidstate preamps feeding a tube power amp. The control layout was pure Fender: a short channel with the basic volume and tone set that fed dry to the power amp, and a long channel that included reverb and tremolo. And whereas the Twin was driven by four 6L6 tubes, the Music Man had a quartet of 6CA7s (EL34s), thus grabbing a little of the Marshall vibe, too. Alnico speakers completed the package, making the HD 130 a loud and toneful gigging amp. Somehow, Music Man managed to ring some extra grunt out of those large-bottle power tubes because the HD 130 was, simply put, the loudest combo on the market. (If you were around in the early '80s, you might have seen the Emmanuel Brothers blasting away at a local venue: Tommy with his Twin and Phil with his 212 HD 130 - not just one of the most enjoyable gigs you'll ever witness but also one of the loudest).

So, Music Man have FINALLY reissued this wonderful amp and they've wisely chosen to partner with DV Mark to bring us a 21st century version of this classic. If you're looking for a faithful reproduction, you may be disappointed. This HD 130 has all the features of the original - the vintage styling, the control plate layout, the hybrid electronics, the volume - without the back-breaking

weight. The DV Mark engineers have used their light-weight-but-solid-as-a-rock cabinet expertise and a pair of specially-voiced neodymium speakers. If you're nervous about this new speaker technology, it's worth checking out (either in this amp or in a DV Mark 212 cab) because these drivers sound like traditional speakers. They've also brought new millennium manufacturing to the componentry for efficiency AND so that each amp sounds exactly the same as the next (which was, 30 years ago, an issue with large-scale production of "handmade" amps).

Firing up the HD 130 is a somewhat weird, "back to the future" experience. There's that long-remembered delivery - serious grunt that seems to be independent of the master volume setting. Also, there's the latency-free attack that, somehow, remains round and toneful, not harsh and thin: beautifully clean tones at any volume. You have to plug in a Strat to really appreciate the breadth of tone. Let an E chord ring out and you'll hear the depth that these speakers can reproduce. In both "in between" positions, there's a clean, throaty quack with loads of sustain; switch to the front pickup and there's a woody attack and a rounded top end. With a Les Paul, the HD offers some serious midrange body with plenty of muscular treble. Single notes and chords seem to ring out for ages and with more prevalent harmonics.

The reverb adds some lovely dimension to the sound and, while it doesn't have the sweetness of a Deluxe Reverb or a Mesa/Boogie, it's a good-sounding spring reverb that

can take you from subtle ambience to Hawaii's Banzai Pipeline. Add some tremolo and you'll feel the spirit Dick Dale take over. I played my Falcon through this trem circuit and the Filter Trons ate it up. You won't find that manic chopper-style tremolo that some pedals offer, but it's super-expressive and (be warned) completely infectious.

Pedal friendly, I hear you ask? Absolutely. And the amp's near-hifi quality clean sound is a great vehicle for almost any effect. Don't expect your TS-9 to do here what it does into a Marshall or Vox - it's not designed for this type of amp. However, a Boss DS-1, a Suhr Riot, a Zendrive, a Mesa Flux Drive... These will all do the business with an extraordinary level of clarity.

The HD 130 is rated at 100 watts (yeah, but it SOUNDS a lot louder) and has a half-power switch for those smaller venues. On the 50 watt setting, it still retains all the bold robustness but you can lower the master volume and crank the channel gain for some crunchier sounds. It'll never do a Boogie-style overdrive but it's a good low-gain distortion that can be bluesy or rocky, and can be preamped with a drive pedal (or two!).

THE BOTTOM LINE

It's refreshing to see that someone can still build an amp that's loud and clean, and not feel the need to load it with a bunch of semi-modern bells & whistles. The 212 HD 130 offers power, tone, vintage good looks, an easy lug, quality manufacture and the kind of features that most of us are looking for. If you already have an overdrive

pedal, there's absolutely no downside to owning this amp. The legend returns. **AB**

PRICE: \$2,550

- 100/50 watts
- 4 x EL34, 1 x 12AX7 power amp
- 2 x discreet channels
- 2 x 12" vintage-voice neodymium speakers
- Reverb, Tremolo
- footswitch port
- various speaker outs
- 19.6 Kg

▶ WHAT WE RECKON

PROS

- ▲ Great tone
- ▲ Power to spare
- ▲ Simple, vintage control layout
- ▲ High quality build values

CONS

- ♥ None

CONTACT

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DV MARK LITTLE 40 II AND DV MARK NEO CLASSIC 212

A SERIOUS MID-POWERED AMP WITH SOME SERIOUS ATTITUDE.

BY **STEVE HENDERSON**.

Every now and then, someone comes along with one of those "why didn't anyone think of that before" ideas. So, with the resurgence of overdrive pedals as the principle drive source, it makes perfect sense to fit one into an amp. Actually, the DV Mark folks aren't the first people to have a go at this. Ibanez, marketer of the most famous overdrive pedal, produced the aptly-named Tube Screamer Tube Amp, a single channel 6V6-powered amp with a built-in TS-9. It worked fine but the TS circuit was overly compressed and gave every guitar a fairly generic treatment. DV Mark has taken a more professional approach to this idea, producing an amplifier that is simple to understand and operate, and one that is gig-ready in every way.

The Little 40 II looks and performs like a two channel amp, which it kind of is. It's a head version of their DV 40 212 combo and features DV Mark's famous solid-but-light construction values and flash livery. And where Ibanez offered a single channel preamp and amp driven, when required, by a basic Tube Screamer circuit, the Little 40 is a tube power amp that can be driven by either a tube preamp or a solidstate and fully-EQed Tube Marker, DV Marks's version of a TS-9. There's no further preamplification between the solidstate "pedal" circuit and the power amp. Or, if it helps, it can be described as a two-channel amp, with one all-tube channel and one hybrid channel.

The Little 40 II is a Class A/B amp loaded with a pair of EL34s and a 12AX7 driver tube, and a single

12AX7 in the clean channel. There's a presence control, an effects loop (with a level switch) and a sweet-sounding reverb unit. The loop works really well with various pedals but there may be a choice to make: the loop is located after the reverb, so any chorus or delay effects will be receive an already-affected signal. However, using the send to drive another amp, the satellite amp will also receive that lovely reverb.

For the test drive, the nice folks at DV Mark supplied a Neoclassic 212 cab: an open-backed, horizontal, mono/stereo box containing 300 watts worth of their super-efficient neodymium drivers. One great feature is that, at 12.4kg, it's an easy lug. But, best of all, it sounds great - a broad tone with rounded tops and tight bass, plus a fast response.

The Little 40 really kicks. The clean channel is as pristine as a tube amp gets and it has loads of depth that makes it sound bigger and louder than "40 watts" would suggest. There's easily enough volume for most venues and the 212 cab throws it in a wide, even spread. The tone controls offer lots of scope for gain/volume balance, which means that a nice organic crunch can be achieved without losing the low-end thump.

Hitting the switch engages the "pedal" channel - the solidstate drive unit connected directly to the power amp. This is more of a distortion circuit than overdrive, so it does the whole crunchy rhythm-thing REALLY well and it's surprisingly sensitive to your picking. It can be as smooth and warm or as edgy and nasty as

you like, pick a little harder and the channel will respond accordingly, and the complete tone set provides plenty of extra options. Plug in your favourite overdrive pedal and you'll find loads of other sounds, and the channel remains touch-sensitive. Even just a boost pedal will kick this channel enough for some serious power chord action that breathes with the player. Brilliant. In fact, both channels are really pedal friendly - as they should be, these days.

Through the second channel, a Strat or Tele offered very cool rhythm tones, from scooped crunch to mid-heavy chunk, but needed some extra oomph (technical term) to create some thick single note sustain. A Les Paul and a 335, however, had no problem pushing this "drive" channel into a Paul Kossoff- or Keef-style sound and delivery. Humbuckers provide the upper-mid honk that the Little 40 seems to love. And why not! And, just to be fair, I found the same response though a vintage Boogie quad and a custom 212 with G12-65s - great tones and generous levels.

THE BOTTOM LINE

With the Little 40, there's no doubting which channel is on. Not only is there a tiny light above the switch, there's also the logo - it entirely lights up and changes colour to tell the player, and everyone in the stadium, exactly which channel is engaged. The Little 40 II is a serious little package that has some serious tone and volume in a super-portable package - small, light and built tough. And at this price, it's hard to find better value. **AB**

PRICE:
DV Mark Little 40 II - \$1,450
DV Mark Neo Classic 212 - \$995

DV MARK LITTLE 40 II

- 40 watts
- 2 x EL34, 1 x 12AX7 power amp
- 1 x 12AX7 preamp
- 2 x discreet channels (sort of)
- footswitch port
- various speaker outs
- effects loop, with level switch
- 9.2 Kg

DV MARK NEOCLASSIC 212

- 2 x 12" Neoclassic DV Mark custom-made
- 300W RMS
- 8 ohms (mono) or 2x 16 ohms (stereo)
- horizontal, open back
- 12.4 kg

▶ WHAT WE RECKON

PROS

- ▲ Great tone
- ▲ Loads of power for its size
- ▲ Simple layout
- ▲ Well built

CONS

- ♥ None

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