



The EQ contour enables extremes of scooped-out thrash metal, to mid-rich blues wailing



MARSHALL MG 15 MS II

MARSHALL RELAUNCHES ITS MINI STACK, UPGRADED WITH MODERN FEATURES THAT MAKE IT ROCK OUT LIKE THE BIG 'UNS. **TIM SLATER** PEEPS OVER THE TOP

As the saying goes, size isn't everything, it's how you use it that counts. Marshall first had a crack at building miniature stacks back in the mid-1980s and its diminutive 3005 Micro-Stack caught the attention of several professional guitarists including Billy Gibbons and Steve Lukather. Lukather fell in love with the 3005 and even had effects guru Bob Bradshaw build one into his giant effects rack. Good as it was, the 3005 was a fairly basic one-channel amp, but Marshall's new MG 15 MS II boasts several new bang up-to-date features over its predecessor, including reverb, channel switching, a speaker-emulated line out and adjustable speaker damping.

BABY CHAOS

Marshall's new baby isn't one of those battery-powered novelty amps; no siree, this is a scaled-down version of the legendary Marshall stack based on a small 15-watt solid-state head, and a pair of wee Marshall cabs loaded with

unbranded 10-inch speakers. The headphone and line out jacks are both speaker emulated, with the line out jack also doubling as a CD input so that you can use the tiny stack to jam along with your favourite tunes.

Channel switching is courtesy of a selector switch on the front panel and the amp's extra secret weapon is the FDD ('frequency dependent damping') speaker damping circuit. In sonic terms, lowering the damping factor boosts the low-end by allowing the speakers to 'flap' around a bit more inside the cabinet. The resulting tones have a looser and more vintage-sounding flavour that helps to make this one-metre-high stack sound much bigger than it really is. Using the FDD switch to raise the damping factor speeds up the speaker's reaction time, resulting in a brighter tone with a noticeably tighter-sounding bass: thrashers and new metallers take note.

SMALL AMP, BIG TONE

Powering up the MS II induced silly grins on faces in the GB office instantly. This is a practice amp, but the classic

thumping Marshall overdriven tone that lies at its core is extremely impressive, not to mention pretty disconcerting when you look round and see the midget-sized stack sitting behind you. The clean tones sound better when the FDD switch lowers the damping factor, then the clean channel instantly fattens up and springs to life.

Despite the fact this is a low-output transistor amp, the clean tones mostly sound convincingly warm and tube-y, a characteristic that the distorted channel also pulls off with aplomb. The amp's dirty sounds feel dark and fat, with a natural-sounding richness that just makes you want to keep playing for hours. Of course, it isn't just the sounds that won people over – everybody who sees this amp is instantly smitten by its looks. In that respect, we can see just as many MG15 MS IIs planted in the corner of sitting rooms for pure visual pleasure, as those planted in recording studios and rehearsal rooms. Irresistible. **GB**

• TURN TO PAGE 126 FOR A CHANCE TO WIN THIS VERY AMP!

GBINFO

MARSHALL MG15 MS II

PRICE: £199

BUILT-IN: Korea

TYPE: Solid state head and cabinets

POWER: 15 Watts

FEATURES: Clean and overdrive channels, 3-band EQ, speaker-emulated line out/CD input jack, emulated headphone jack, FDD speaker damping switch

SPEAKER: 2 x generic 1x10-inch drivers

WEIGHT & DIMENSIONS (HEAD): 4.6 kg, 373(w) x 203(d) x 155(h) mm

WEIGHT & DIMENSIONS (CABINETS): 7.1 kg, 375(w) x 234(d) x 377(h) mm

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GBOPINION

GOLD STARS
★ Looks fabulous; Brilliant tones

BLACK MARKS
● No remote channel-switching

GBRATING
★★★★★