

STRAUSS SVT-30

30 WATT CLASS 'A' TUBE AMPLIFIER COMBO

We take another look at Australia's newest Class A combos. By Craig White

In our last issue we took our first look at the new range of Strauss Class A amplifiers. In that review of the SVC-30 30-watt combo, we noted that Strauss were an Australian manufacturer in the 60s and 70s, however these amps are not re-issues of their classic models but rather new, Chinese-manufactured amps that simply resurrect the Strauss brand name. That said, we were pretty impressed by the SVC-30, it had a nice tone and performed as we would expect from a Class A device, all for \$799. While we acknowledged that there would be purists for whom such an amplifier would not even be an option, we thought the SVC-30 was well worth a look for less critical types. This issue we are going to take a look at another 30-watt combo from the Strauss range, the SVT-30. Though they are styled quite differently, the control panel of the SVC-30 was situated at the front in the more conventional manner while the SVT-30 has a top-mounted control panel such as Vox AC amps feature, they are actually quite similarly appointed – indeed, the control layout is identical. Like the SVC-30, the SVT-30 is a two-channel, master volume amp and both feature a single 12" speaker.

SPECS

Made designed in Australia, made in China

Price \$829

Features

■ Output Power 30 Watts

■ Speaker 12" 8ohm

■ Power Consumption 100 Watts

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WHAT WE RECKON

PROS

- ▲ Heavy duty construction
- ▲ Affordable
- ▲ Sounds pretty good to these ears

CONS

- ▼ Owning one will not earn you bragging rights among Class A aficionados

POWER UP

As we discussed in our review of the SVC-30, due to the Strauss combos being master volume amplifiers, it is possible to drive them by pushing the channel volume control, while using the master volume to regulate output level. While this is an adequate way to achieve overdrive at low volume, it is not the way to hear the Strauss amps at their best. This technique, which relies on the pre-amp to generate overdrive, tends to diminish the effectiveness of the tone controls and produces an output that is less substantial than can be achieved by opening the master volume and using the overdriven power amp to colour your output.

When overdriven in this fashion, the SVT-30 does have a tone that is similar to the SVC-30, though I think the SVC-30 was maybe a little brighter, particularly when pushed. Running both amps clean, the difference was less apparent and both models have a nice, full clean output. As with the SVC-30, the SVT-30 has a drive button on the control panel to engage the gain channel, or an optional footswitch can be employed.

QUALITY CONTROL

The build quality of these models is quite impressive for Chinese-manufactured amplifiers, a situation that is enhanced by their sturdy design, which borders on over-engineering. As one might expect, they are quite heavy, and while you should always treat a tube amplifier with respect when moving it (and allow it to cool down before doing so), you get the impression that these would comfortably take a few knocks, which is inevitable when you are gigging or even just dragging it around to your mate's garage for a jam.

The importer has spent some time going back and forth with the manufacturer, adjusting the design of the Strauss range, and once they arrive in this country, amps are inspected and tweaked where necessary. This level of involvement is absolutely essential when you are selling gear that was built to order – manufacturers usually try to do the right thing, but expectations can be quite different and good communication ensures a good product, which the Strauss amplifiers undoubtedly are.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The market for budget valve amps is no longer the barren wasteland it may have been in the past, but the Strauss range still manages to distinguish itself. While the models we have featured so far have both been 30-watt combos, which will no doubt be a very popular configuration, the company is also producing 10-watt combos and 30-watt heads. Snobs and tossers can probably give them a miss, it would likely only generate a whole lot of negative feedback via online forums and music store BS sessions, but anyone else who is interested in checking out an affordable Class A amplifier should definitely give them a listen.

