



# TUBE RIDE

## Peavey ValveKing 212 combo

BY ERIC KIRKLAND

**W**HEN JOHN FIELDS took over as Peavey's analog engineering manager, he saw the company's new ValveKing amp project as a chance to make a statement. For one thing, Fields was filling the shoes of James Brown, his mentor and an amp guru with more than a dozen years of estimable service as Peavey's head of analog engineering. For another, the ValveKing was an opportunity to refute industry perceptions that it was impossible to build a high-quality all-tube amp at an affordable price.

It would seem that Fields has made his statement loud and clear. The ValveKing is a two-channel 100-watt design that covers almost any style of music, from Fender-like blackface cleans to high-gain British overdrive. If its performance is any indication of the tones to come from Peavey and Fields, then we can expect some very exciting new amps to roll out of the Peavey shop in the near future.

### FEATURES

**THE VALVEKING'S RATHER** plain exterior may be a disappointment if you're shopping for a showpiece amp. Serious players, on the other hand, will appreciate that the ValveKing's budget was devoted almost entirely to the amp's quality, tone and performance. Four 6L6 tubes create the King's bois-

terous 100 watts, while three 12AX7 preamp valves take care of gain and tone shaping.

In classic Peavey style, the ValveKing is easy to understand and use. The Clean channel includes a bright switch and basic controls for volume, middle, bass and treble. The Lead channel has gain, volume and EQ controls plus pushbuttons that boost the volume and gain; channel switching and volume and gain boost can be activated with the optional footswitch. A master reverb knob sets the level of echo for both channels. Other features include a buffered effect loop and a three-position impedance switch. My combo was loaded with two Peavey specially designed 12-inch speakers, which are connected to one of the amp's two output jacks.

The key to the ValveKing's malleability and performance potential lies in how players can control the power amp's output. Global resonance and presence knobs let you fine tune the power amp's bass and treble output, but the amp's most powerful control, the Texture knob, is inconspicuously located on the back of the amp. Its patented circuitry gives you sweepable selection between Class A and Class A/B power structures. With the knob set fully to the A/B position, the amp runs at full power, hitting hard and offering tons of headroom. As you rotate the knob toward Class A operation, the amp be-

comes increasingly sweet, with a softer attack and lower volume. Even-order harmonics are added in the process, and the power output can drop to as little as 40 watts. I think this useful and well-integrated circuit should be standard equipment on every tube amp.

### PERFORMANCE

**IF YOU BUY** an amp purely for the way it sounds, I can't imagine you would be disappointed with the ValveKing. Its clean tones can be throaty and powerful, or sweet and smoky, depending on the Texture knob's setting. At times, this inexpensive amp even sounded very close to a Blackface-era Fender, offering a dark character that was open, loud and chunky. The reverb was also vintage in character, adding cavernous and transparent echo. It has the effect of making the cabinet sound larger and as if more air is flowing through the amp's open back.

Lead tones on the ValveKing are decidedly British but with the big low-end response that you'd expect from 6L6s. In A/B operation, the Lead channel's crunch is crisp, and the abundant low mids provide plenty of punch. If you dial the gain high and activate the gain boost, this channel responds with the same style of metallic overdrive as a modified JCM800 amp. With the gain set high and the texture knob dialed halfway between Class A and A/B, the ValveKing responded to my Les Paul with the thick harmonics and gritty sustain that have become ZZ Top's signature tone. When I turned the Texture knob fully to Class A operation, I discovered American high-gain tones that were reminiscent of an early Boogie amp's smooth saturation.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

**FOR AN ALL-TUBE** 100-watt amp at this price, the Peavey ValveKing has no competition. Its two channels deliver vintage-style American clean tones and modified British high-gain distortion with a pure focus on sound quality. In addition to its pleasing tones, the patented Texture control allows players to tweak the power amp's voice like no other amp on the market.



**PEAVEY VALVEKING 2x12 COMBO**

**LIST PRICE:** 1x12 combo, \$579.99; 2x12 combo, \$799.99; head, \$679.99

**MANUFACTURER:** Peavey Electronics, peavey.com

**POWER OUTPUT:** 100 watts

**CHANNELS:** Clean, Lead

**FEATURES:** Patented variable Texture control emulates change from Class A to Class A/B power, three-position impedance switch, buffered effect loop, two speaker output jacks, dual inputs

**CONTROLS:** Clean channel: Volume, Bass, Middle and Treble with a Bright switch; Lead channel: Gain, Volume, Bass, Middle and Treble with switches for Volume Boost and Gain Boost; Master Reverb; Global Resonance and Presence; Texture

**COVERING:** Black textured vinyl

**TUBE COMPLEMENT:** Four 6L6, three 12AX7

**SPEAKER:** Two Peavey specially designed 12-inch ValveKing

**FOOTSWITCH:** Optional, three-button

**BUTTON FUNCTIONS:** Channel Switching, Volume Boost, Gain Boost

(On back panel) The patented Texture control lets users change the amp's response progressively from Class A to Class A/B.



Two channels offer Fender-style clean tones and high-gain British overdrive.

The specially voiced 12-inch ValveKing speakers are warm and punchy.



PRO	CON
EXTREMELY VERSATILE; INCREDIBLE AMERICAN AND BRITISH TONES; LOW PRICE	PLAIN APPEARANCE; FOOTSWITCH NOT INCLUDED; TEXTURE KNOB ON BACK PANEL