



The supplied footswitch allows you to switch between channels or mix them



Tech 21 Landmark 300 Bass Head £599

True to its name the Landmark 300 offers a new point of reference for any serious minded bass player by Roger Newell

TECH 21 LANDMARK 300 BASS HEAD

PRICE: £599

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Solid-state bass

combo with valve preamp

OUTPUT: 300W RMS @

4 ohms

DIMENSIONS: 431 (w)

x 406 (d) x 89mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 9.5/21

CHANNELS: Single with

associated gain switch

CONTROLS: Channel

One - drive, bass,

presence, blend, treble,

level. Channel Two -

drive, bass, mid, mid-

shift, treble, level

FOOTSWITCH: Triple

function - channel, mix

& tuner

ADDITIONAL

FEATURES: Effects loop,

SansAmp DI output, tuner

RANGE OPTIONS: The

Landmark 600 (£1,299);

B410 Cabinet (as here,

£499); Bass Driver DI

Rack-Mount with extra

features (£349)

Rocky Road Distribution

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Tech 21 may not be the first name to trip off the tongue when looking for new bass amplification, but the company build with such care and attention to detail its products should be fully investigated. The problem is that relatively few shops keep them in stock and in the UK Tech 21 is probably best known (and loved) for the SansAmp Bass Driver and DI box (see boxout opposite).

The Landmark 300 bass head was originally designed as an all-singing, all-dancing, 600-watt monster bass head, and although this latest 300 version has a somewhat more modest output it still retains the same high degree of sophistication when it comes to the sound. As can be seen by the proportions and the front panel handles, this head is designed for rack mounting (though it can be used as a standard small head) requiring a 2U space. The addition of standard fixing brackets brings the width to the appropriate size.

A single input jack gives access to the two independent channels, and the significance of the SansAmp Bass Driver becomes immediately obvious when you realise that channel one is equipped with exactly the same controls. Channel two is set out more conventionally with the drive and level controls backed up by bass, mid and treble, with an additional mid-shift control for selecting the desired frequency for the middle to operate.

This semi-parametric performance for the mid-range is currently very popular among players and so is obviously a welcome addition here.

It's all neatly set out and efficient, and using the gain switch over the input offers optimum signal matching for both active and passive basses while the channel switch engages channel 1 or 2. An indicator lights up to confirm which channel is active. Both channels can offer that same valve-y front-end overdrive emulation that the DI pedal does so well, and channel 1 also has the blend control so that your direct instrument signal can be retained. This is particularly useful with piezo pickups where you require the natural sound of, say, an acoustic-bodied bass to be amplified. With a solidbody bass, however, you're more likely to have the blend set flat-out for the amp to entirely take control of your sound.

The simplicity at the front is mirrored at the rear with really only

the bare essentials provided. A pair of speaker connection jacks are sensibly coloured red for easy recognition, while others are provided for the footswitch and tuner. The preamp output and power amp input are the correct terminology for what is more commonly called the effects loop. That leaves the XLR socket for the SansAmp direct out with a pair of related switches offering a 10 dB cut in signal and a ground-lift option, both of which can prove highly useful in action.

Even more useful generally is the triple function footswitch. Originally this was an optional extra, but sensibly Tech 21 has now included it as part of the package and it is extremely useful. It allows you to switch directly between channels or, by using the mix switch, operate both channels simultaneously so you can blend the two together for the ultimate in tone generation and projection. The third function simply allows you to mute your bass for some silent tuning.

SOUNDS: For the purposes of this review we've coupled the Landmark head to a Tech 21 B410 cabinet. It's the standard 4 x 10-inch cab with cast frame speakers and handles this head quite beautifully.

A second cabinet could also be attached should you require a full stack, but even with this minimal combination the sound is totally awesome and remains tight even when

TECH 21 LANDMARK 300

TEST RESULTS

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

WE LIKED No nonsense almost industrial design, big punchy sound
WE DISLIKED Lack of case for when its not rack-mounted



pushing the lower frequencies really hard. And when you are pushing the amplifier, you can rest assured that the cooling fan will switch in automatically. Otherwise on standby, this is a real cool customer.

It's one of those rigs with a great plug-in-and-play attitude. Getting a good sound is a doddle, getting a great one takes a little more thought but with the excellent guide diagrams in the manual it's still an easy process. Tech 21 also provides alternative sounds within a style so you can set both channels to, let's say, SVT 1 and SVT 2 or Slap 1 and Slap 2 for some different

but complementary sounds.

Alternatively you can use opposing sounds like a Bassman 1 and Kings X 2 for some real instant variety. This is ideal if you want an altogether different delivery, or perhaps just a boost in level for a solo section, and this will perform either job with style. The same goes for the drive control, which provides the warmth and slightly distorted sound of an overdriven valve preamp. It can be used to great effect for that funky grunt of a sound that projects so well in live gigs, so try matching that with a clean sound for even more contrast.

Verdict

The compact bass head is definitely all the rage at present and this is another fine example of how good these little units can be. The Landmark 300 offers both powerful sound and distinctive American delivery at a very competitive price. As we said, finding one to try in your local shop may not be too easy as they are considered to be 'specialist' fodder, but seeking one out is well worth the effort and it could easily become your amp of choice. **B**

Tech 21 Landmark 300

Guitarist RATING



SansAmp Bass Driver DI £199

This is a superb little unit that many bass players keep with them at all times. It was first produced back in 1992, and although the tube amp emulation effect of the SansAmp DI seems more in tune with the amp modelling products of today this is all analogue technology. The original design has been expanded so today's unit can be used as a stomp box or as a preamp (by plugging into the power amp input on the back of an amp) as well as performing the direct injection (DI) function from which it gets its name. Extremely compact and simple to operate, the SansAmp is perfect

for shaping and retaining your preferred bass sound no matter what playing situation you find yourself in.

The standard input and output jack sockets are accompanied by an XLR socket for direct connection to a studio desk or on-stage mixer. So it's your source sound that gets transferred to the hard drive or front-of-house PA system. This can be tweaked by means of six rotaries, and as the treble and bass are active tone controls there's a lot that can be achieved. There's no mid control, but by boosting both bass and treble you experience mid-

cut and by reducing them you get mid boost – clever but logical and it keeps things simple. Level sets input volume and drive offers the fatter overdriven sound of an overworked valve preamp, while blend gives you a gradual mixture of clean unaffected sounds right through to complete SansAmp control. Now, imagine this powerful little miracle expanded into a fully blown amp head, and you get the Landmark 300 bass head. Neat.



The rivals

Ampeg PortaBass 250	£225
Warwick PRO TUBE IV	£345
Mesa Boogie Walkabout	£1,095

If it's the small but powerful combination you're looking for then the relatively recent Ampeg PortaBass and the Mesa Boogie Walkabout bass heads both fill the criteria nicely. Both deliver 250 watts and a host of great sounds and there's nothing much smaller than the Ampeg, which is not even full rack width! Warwick's Pro Tube IV offers more dual channel facilities and is another 2U-sized unit, using Mosfet technology (as does the Mesa), but it delivers a cool 400 watts