

TECH 21 Landmark 600

By Terry Buddingh

Long before software-based sound modeling, Tech 21 introduced its solid-state, all analog, tube-emulation circuitry with the original palm-sized SansAmp. Enabling musicians to record direct and still reap the tonal characteristics of a miked tube amp, the SansAmp quickly became a staple of home recordists. Tech 21's new Landmark 600 bass head uses tube-emulation circuitry borrowed from its SansAmp cousin to add color, beef, and distortion to its range of tones.

Tough & Simple

The Landmark 600's rugged steel chassis and simple controls give it a look of understated authority. Two front-mounted handles help with transporting its 40-pound weight. Four rubber feet are mounted to the chassis bottom, and detachable ears allow optional rack-mounting. A large cooling fan draws air through the rear panel and exhausts it through front-panel vents. The airflow is noticeable when you're standing nearby; thankfully, the breeze is always refreshingly cool, even during extended high-power use.


The Landmark 600 has two footswitchable preamp channels, each with its own row of BASS, TREBLE, and output LEVEL controls. Two distinctly different tones can be preset and selected by either the optional footswitch or the front-panel channel-selector button.

Inside, a huge toroidal power transformer feeds 12 large bipolar transistors. The Landmark's solid construction and heavy-duty components inspire confidence—it's as tough on the inside as it looks on the outside.

Retro Rocker

The Landmark 600 is a refreshing departure from the current trend toward ultra-high-fidelity amplification. While it's capable of producing crystal-clear clean tones and heavy Jack Bruce-like grunts, I found its more subtle shades of overdrive to be surprisingly effective at helping bass cut through, even in conservative settings.

I tried the Landmark 600 with a raucous five-piece R&B group and a relatively loud 17-piece big band, using a vintage Fender P-Bass, a Music Man StingRay 4-string, and a Modulus Flea J5. Each bass sounded punchy, assertive, and even a bit vicious when I dialed up light distortion in Channel 1. The SansAmp tube emulation enhanced the instruments' fullness and thickness without sounding buzzy or ratty. The amp's stout, fleshy tone is thoroughly Old School. I found the PRESENCE control particularly effective at emphasizing pickstyle bite and grind. Turning up DRIVE and BLEND



The **CAN** button increases preamp gain by 10dB to accommodate low-output pickups, or to increase preamp drive with higher-output pickups.

produced a wickedly powerful pick tone that sounded tight, focused, and forceful with detailed low-note definition. The range and effectiveness of the well-voiced PRESENCE and TREBLE controls compensated for the tweeter-less Tech 21 B410 cabs (see page 70)—together, the head and cabs form a particularly effective combination. Channel 2's semi-parametric EQ makes it easy to dial in clarity-enhancing upper-mid scoops or forceful low-mid bumps.

I loved the feel of the reserve power provided by the Landmark's ample 600 watts—it gave me a great sense of dynamics. Accents jumped out of the speakers with authority. I never felt the amp strain or approach its limit, even during high-volume testing. The Landmark 600 is one of the strongest-sounding heads I've used.

Mixing the two channels with the help of the footswitch can produce especially intense tones. With the DRIVE, PRESENCE, and BLEND controls cranked, Channel 1 can serve up ripping top-end distortion, while a low DRIVE setting and some MID scoop produces a clear, deep bottom in Channel 2. Usually you need a multi-amp or bi-amped rig to get this type of split texture.

Mean Machine

The Landmark 600 is a unique alternative to the clean amplification trend. Though it can get crisp sheen, it excels at grittier Old School textures. It also really rocks with a pick. Considering its power, flexibility, and distinctive voice, the Landmark 600 is quite fairly priced—and for distorted rock, it's a tough act to follow. **BP**

You can get a pre-EQ direct feed via the TUNER OUTPUT.



Tech 21 Landmark 600

List price: \$1,595

Score 1 2 3 4 5

Construction: ●●●●●●●●

Electronics: ●●●●●●●●

Ease of Use: ●●●●●●●●

Sound: ●●●●●●●●

Value: ●●●●●●●●

Pros: Grunt and dirt with footswitchable flexibility.

Cons: Easy to get cool tones, but some may want more versatility.

Channel 2's MID control has a variable MID SHIFT frequency.

Channel 1's BLEND knob adjusts the amount of SansAmp tube emulation. PRESENCE enhances upper-harmonic complexity and bite.

The XLR DIRECT OUT taps the signal after both preamp channels, so all of the tone-shaping features can be fed to a PA or recording mixer.



Channel 1 (the top row of knobs) features SansAmp tube emulation. The unusual BLEND knob adjusts the amount of signal that's routed through the tube-emulation circuitry. Here's where it gets interesting: The effect of channel 1's DRIVE and PRESENCE controls depends on the BLEND control's setting, because they all function together in the SansAmp circuitry. The DRIVE and PRESENCE controls become more effective as you turn up the BLEND knob.

Channel 2 substitutes a two-knob semi-parametric EQ for channel 1's PRESENCE and SansAmp BLEND controls. This allows you to tailor a midrange scoop or boost to suit cleaner textures. Channel 2 can also produce overdriven tones with its DRIVE knob turned up.

Power rating: 600 watts RMS into 4Ω

Dimensions: 17" x 5¼" x 17¼"

Weight: 40 lbs

Input impedance: 1MΩ

Channel 1 EQ: BASS: ±12dB; TREBLE: ±12dB (mid for channel 1 is fixed at 750Hz, meaning that boosting BASS and TREBLE produces an EQ curve similar to cutting mids at 750Hz. Likewise, cutting BASS and TREBLE is like boosting mids at 750Hz.)

CHANNEL 2 EQ: BASS: ±12dB; TREBLE: ±12dB; semi-parametric MID: ±16dB @ 170Hz–3kHz (Tech 21 doesn't provide frequency specs for BASS and TREBLE, explaining that these controls are interactive and therefore don't have fixed frequency points.)

Made in: USA

List price: \$1,595

Warranty: One year limited
Options: BSFW footswitch, \$95

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The optional footswitch lets you run both channels simultaneously. It also has a MUTE button for silent tuning. These features are accessible only via the footswitch.