

White Horse GT260H & GT12s

Guitar amp and cabinets

White Horse may be a budget amplification brand, but this compact mini-stack manages to offer some surprising features for comparatively little money.

Roger Cooper

The White Horse logo appears on a range of imported amplification unerringly aimed at the guitarist on a limited budget. The line spans solid-state and valve-equipped examples, all very competitively priced courtesy of Chinese manufacture. The solid-state side includes the GT260H amp and partner pair of GT12 speaker cabs, a package that is the subject of this month's review.

The GT260H head incorporates modelling technology employed on a selection of amp models and digital effects. As its designation suggests, this amp delivers 60 Watts into each of the accompanying enclosures. This is a pretty flexible format, as the cabs can be used in a variety of ways: singly, side by side, split as required, or stood on each other to create a compact stack.

Amp head construction

Initial impressions of the GT260H are favourable, because this White Horse manages to look something of a black beauty. The next aspect literally makes itself felt, as it concerns weight, or rather lack of. The meagre kilo count belies a somewhat beefy appearance and leaves you in no doubt as to this amp's solid-state innards. Not that there's anything wrong with an easy lift, of course, as this makes a pleasant change from having to haul around what feels like the usual half-a-hundredweight of over-endowed valve amp.

The compact casing contributes to this minimal mass, being narrow and

quite low profile. Particle board construction is neatly covered in smooth, but slightly textured black vinyl, while rounded and beefy black plastic protectors adorn all corners. A large strap handle makes easy work of its lightweight load, and the amp sits on four suitably non-slip rubber feet. The low-level measurements mean the upper fascia on the front occupies almost half of overall height, with the remainder

sporting the same grey/black cloth as the speakers to ensure a cohesive cosmetic match, likewise the central location of the appropriate nag's head badge.

Controls and connections

The slightly curving control panel is finished in brushed-effect silver-grey, contrasting the usefully large white legends, which accordingly show up well. Unfortunately, the same can't be said about the super-smooth, polished chrome control knobs. These are shiny and stylish, but their all-important position indicators prove almost impossible to spot under any lighting conditions and something more prominent is a must.

A single input is followed by the rotary selector for the amp model menu. This comprises Clean, Tweed, Fuzz and Metal, with each designation accompanied by an LED.

There are two variations per amp model, and the relevant indicator changes colour from

blue to green to confirm choice. These options can be tweaked to taste by the accompanying analogue control section, consisting of Gain and Level controls, plus a three-band EQ section, while overall output is governed by a Master pot sited over on the far left.

The latter is located after a digital effects department equipped with three controls. The first of these is another rotary selector labelled Modulation, and this supplies the choice of Chorus, Flanger, Phase or Wah-Wah, again with appropriate confirmatory LEDs. An adjacent touch-button allows modulation rate to be set via manual tapping. A similar partner is provided for the Delay pot and here it establishes the appropriate echo speed. The final member of the effects trio is Reverb, with a single pot regulating the required amount.

Up to five different user-customised control settings can be committed to memory via a quintet of illuminated touch-buttons arrayed above the conventional controls, while a sixth example labelled Set/Manual engages the sound storage process.

A headphones output jack bookends the control section, followed by a rocker-type on/off switch. Somewhat surprisingly, there's no mains indicator, with the presence of power being confirmed by illumination of the various LEDs. The two rotary selectors are also unusual, as these aren't the detented type, which means they move as freely as their conventional control companions, so settings are easily altered inadvertently.

Much of the back panel is occupied by sizeable heat sinks, but



there's enough room above for two speaker connections and Line Out, all on standard jacks. An Auxiliary input accommodates a CD player or similar via twin phono sockets. A specific-style input is included for the FS-D2 footswitch, which uses dual stomp buttons to remotely select the

creditably punchy. The second Clean setting is noticeably different, being warmer and fuller with a scooped mid-range, and again any dirt is dutifully absent.

Turning to the Tweed models roughs things up a little via coarser-grained equivalents of

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five stored user sounds. This item is an extra cost option, as indeed are any speaker connecting cables, which need to be long enough to suit all cab siting requirements.

GT12 cabinets

Talking of which, the GT12 enclosure is a good match for the GT260H amp in terms of components and cosmetics. The open-backed cab is the same width, but slightly deeper, while overall measurements are more than minimal for a single 12-inch speaker, although still provide a reasonably compact and easily transported package.

Construction matches that of the amp case, but for some reason the rear panels aren't covered in the same vinyl. The upper example incorporates a single jack socket connected to the unbranded 12-inch speaker rated at 60W. Apart from the latter, the front baffle also incorporates two ports, which seem somewhat superfluous in view of the lack of a closed back.

Trying it out

Turning on results in a brief flash of all LEDs, before the amp settles down in manual mode. With Level and Master volume controls up and EQ out of action, it's time to investigate the various amp models in their basic state. The smoothly moving selector feels slightly strange and engaging each choice seems somewhat imprecise, although the actual aural changes are positive enough.

The first Clean option comes across as a bit bland and slightly honky. It stays distortion-free all the way up and flat-out performance is

their Clean companions, featuring slightly extra inherent gain, although tonal content stays essentially similar. The same becomes apparent when selecting Fuzz. Output increases due to a further injection of gain, but the sonic characters are still audible underneath the appreciably dirtier delivery, maintaining the basic differences between the two options.

The Metal models are endowed with correspondingly greater quantities of filth and an equal upsurge in volume. The latter turns this setup into quite a fire-breather, but beneath the mayhem those original tonal qualities still make their presence felt.

These underlying similarities indicate that the GT260H's amp-modelling abilities are essentially limited to two tonal configurations plus differing levels of gain, rather than anything more exotic, although this is hardly surprising in view of the very affordable asking figure.

But, of course, the amp is capable of much more variation, courtesy of other controls spicing up the basic tones and textures accordingly. The EQ section proves very effective via well-chosen frequencies, while

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Gain gradually dials in additional dirt and the combination delivers a wide range of sounds that should suit most playing styles. The ability to easily store and recall the five best of the bunch in relevant user memories is quite a bonus at this price point.

The effects offer another plus point, although the minimal control format limits the application of some options. Chorus is quite effective, thanks to a nice choice of preset depth, while the Tap button allows quick changes across a fair range of speeds. Flanger and Phase fare equally well, while Wah-Wah offers a less obvious method of manipulating modulation.

Like the rest, Delay is digital and accordingly stays clean and accurate. However, the single control governing feedback and level doesn't really do the effect justice, while altering echo speed via the Tap button isn't exactly intuitive and the available range seems somewhat restricted. Reverb suffers no such problems, going from subtle hint to quite expansive, although it lacks real depth and can't do the

Tech Spec

GT260H

- Solid-state modelling guitar amp.
- 2 x 60W / 120W RMS (into 4Ω) power rating.
- One input.
- Amp models: Clean, Tweed, Fuzz and Metal (two variations each).
- Controls: Amp Models select, Gain, Level, Bass, Middle, Treble, Modulation, Delay, Reverb and Master.
- DSP effects: Chorus, Flanger, Phase, Wah-Wah, Delay and Reverb.
- Tap tempo dedicated buttons for modulation effects and delay.
- Five user programmable memories.
- Auxiliary input.
- Line output, two speaker outputs and headphones output.
- FS-D2 two-way footswitch (optional).
- Dimensions (WDH): 540 x 235 x 205mm.
- Weight: 9kg.

GT12

- High-sensitivity, custom-designed and voiced 12-inch speaker.
- 60W RMS 4Ω (100W peak) power rating.
- Robust closed-back design.
- Dimensions (WDH): 533 x 254 x 431mm.

surf-style spring thing, but gentle enhancement abilities are perfectly adequate.

A certain number of extraneous noises are apparent, some seemingly static-generated, while others appear earth-related. These could be quirks of the review example and it's unreasonable to expect brick-outhouse build

standards at this price level, but consistent quality is a factor that should be considered.

The two GT12 cabs are ideal companions in terms of sound as well as looks. Speakers cope without complaint, regardless of any aural abuse that the amp cares to dish out.

Conclusion

Offering a lot of features in a compact, lightweight and good-looking package, the GT260H setup makes an impressive and more versatile alternative to a conventional equivalent combo.

For this sort of money, the amp models aren't going to fool anyone into thinking there's a bunch of boutique valve jobs at work within, but they supply a usable sonic foundation. Although these basic sounds aren't overly impressive, they can be made more so by the various controls on hand, while built-in effects and memory facilities are further plus points, all ensuring this particular White Horse is no one-trick pony. ■ PM

Performing Musician

White Horse GT260H & two GT12 speakers £239

This compact package's combination of amp plus twin speakers offers appealing versatility over the all-in-one alternative. Features such as eight amp models, six digital effects and five easily programmed memories make this mini-stack even more attractive to the player with shallow pockets, as does the value-for-money asking price.

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