

# BELCAT TUBE-20R

PRICE  
£229.95



An affordable valve combo from a Far-Eastern manufacturer piques Daniel Hodgson's curiosity...

**B**elcat might not be a brand you're familiar with, but this Far Eastern manufacturer of amps, effects, pickups and accessories offers some of the best deals around in terms of bang-for-buck. You won't find many, if any, bells and whistles on any of the company's products and you could argue that this bodes well – if you're building something to a budget, it's best to spend what you have on getting the essentials right. But for such a modest outlay, it will be interesting to see if the Tube-20R can provide more than just a bargain.

## Pre & Power Amp

When coming to review a valve amp that has been priced as low as this, it's difficult to dispense with your preconceptions. The first blows to our luke-warm expectations come with a quick peek around the back of the amp. Visible through the rear ventilation grilles and semi-open cabinet are a real – albeit small – spring reverb tank, a Celestion Super 65 12-inch speaker and a set of branded Electro-Harmonix valves, namely three 12AX7s for the preamp section and a pair of 6BQ5s (the US name for the EL84) for the power amp.

The controls are a relatively simple affair. Arranged on a chrome panel are chickenhead knobs for gain, treble, middle, bass, master volume and reverb, with a small push button to activate a gain boost. Besides these, the Tube-20R has power and standby switches and, hidden from view at the rear,

a footswitch jack for activating the gain boost. There is a single 8-ohm speaker output – should you wish to use an external speaker cabinet, you'll have to disconnect the internal speaker.

## Cabinet & Speaker

The cabinet is solidly constructed, again defying our preconceptions, and is covered to a decent standard in black textured Tolex. The 'vintage amp' look is augmented by the salt and pepper grille cloth and chrome corner protectors and the single carry handle is more than capable of coping with the amp's weight. As we said before, it's good to see a real Celestion in the back of this combo, but what can we expect in terms of tone?

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## Sounds

With all the controls set at 12 o'clock and the gain boost deactivated, the Tube-20R puts out a likeable clean chime which reacts nicely to stompbox dirt. While the tone controls are fairly limited – just seasoning rather than changing you tone completely – there is

plenty of scope in the gain department, from clean sounds to tweedy crunch, and the boost switch takes the whole thing 'over the top' in the same way a decent overdrive pedal would. There's a nice balance of frequencies overall, with a firm low end and nicely pronounced mids, though some might find the top end detail a bit lifeless when compared to higher-priced opposition.

There's plenty of volume on tap for home practice, smaller rehearsals and low-key gigs, and with the volume control turned right up, there's quite a bit of dynamic 'give' when rolling off the guitar's volume control or varying pick attack. Noise levels are pretty good, but hiss does start to creep in at higher gain levels. The reverb is a little more tricky. With such a small tank it's no wonder it sounds a bit, well, claustrophobic. It's best used in very small doses, if at all.

## Conclusion

So it's cheap, with no-nonsense features, a solid cabinet and it even sounds pretty good too. Reliability is always a concern with cheaper amps, but this one feels relatively well-made. Has Belcat worked some kind of magic here? We think they have – the Tube-20R is a pretty good performer in its own right, but at this price it's difficult not to be impressed. If you've already bagged yourself a decent valve amp you'll find nothing new here, but if you're looking for a small combo with plenty of poke, we're happy to report that the Belcat Tube-20R punches well above its weight. **GB**



**BELCAT**  
TUBE-20R

Price: £229.95

Built in: China

Type: Valve combo

Power: 20 watts

Valves: 3 x 12AX7, 2 x 6BQ5 (EL84)

Features: Single channel with gain, treble, middle, bass, master volume & reverb controls, gain boost switch, footswitch input; speaker output (8 ohms, connects to internal speaker)

Speaker: 1 x 12-inch Celestion Super 65

Dimensions: 640(w)x420(h)x270(d) mm

Weight: 16kg (35lb)

## CONTACT DETAILS

Gear4Music

Tel: 0843 155 0800

www.gear4music.com

## GB VERDICT

### GOLD STARS

- ★ Range of clean and dirty tones
- ★ Solidly built cabinet
- ★ Impressively low price

### BLACK MARKS

- Reverb isn't great

### BEST FOR...

Anyone looking for their first valve amp

### GB RATING

