

Audio Jones

AMERICAN ACOUSTIC DEVELOPMENT CUB AG-100 AMPLIFIER BY MICHAEL ROSS

PHIL JONES WAS a bass player when he started his own company to manufacture amps that would meet his critical specs. He also designed near-field monitors—for Acoustic Energy AE-1s—and Boston Acoustic's Lynnfield speaker line. Jones then formed Platinum Audio and produced a line of speakers that sell for \$175,000 per pair. And now, the British-born Jones has introduced the AAD CUB AG-100, an acoustic guitar amplifier that is further evidence of his single-minded commitment to audio excellence.

The most striking thing about this AAD amp is its size; measuring 6 1/2 inches x 11.8 inches x 12 1/2 inches and weighing 11 1/2 pounds, the CUB is smaller than a lady's handbag, and lighter too. This tiny package contains two five-inch neo-power, extended-range drivers, miniscule speakers that put out frequencies ranging from 80Hz to 15KHz, and are driven at four ohms by a 100-watt solid-state class A/B amplifier with a soft clip feature. Inputs and controls, all located on the back, have a switchable level input of either 0 or -10dB, making the amp compatible with a wide range of instrument preamps. Also included are three tone controls offering 15dB cut and boost at 100Hz (bass), 1KHz (mid) and 10KHz (treble); FX send (which can be used as an additional line out) and return sockets. In addition, there is a tuner out, pre-amp output and ultra-low impedance (2000ohm) balanced line out with ground lift, all of which can be used with recording or PA mixing consoles; AC Power On/Off Switch, AC Power input and AC fuse holder. The amp comes with a generous-sized power cord and a sturdy, padded carrying bag. The CUB is designed to work on any AC worldwide without requiring a switch to change power.

AAD recommends that the CUB be placed on a solid object or dedicated stand for optimal sound and projection. I did as recommended and tested the amp with a Taylor 310 equipped with an aftermarket-powered piezo pickup, an Eastman

AR905CE archtop with a Kent Armstrong floating pickup, and a new Ovation VXT chambered solidbody sporting a Fishman Power Bridge and VIP Microphone Imaging system. The Taylor and the Ovation have no EQ or tone controls, so all sonic sculpting was done with the CUB's controls.

With the amp's tone controls set neither for gain nor boost, the Eastman sounded gorgeous, with all its warm, woody tone shining through. The diminutive combo admirably handled the low end, and chords came through clearly with excellent articulation. The CUB proved to be an ideal amp for a solo or duo restaurant jazz gig.

The Taylor, on the other hand, sounded present and warm, though not quite as "acoustic." I thought that a better preamp and/or additional guitar EQ would optimize the tone. This was borne out when I plugged in the Ovation. With its Aura-like imaging, the guitar demonstrated that the AAD has all the tools to reproduce realistic "acoustic" sound. It was a joy to play it through the CUB, strummed, flatpicked, fingerpicked, and all other approaches I could think of.

While the CUB offers truly clean power and presence, its 100 watts are apparently there more in the service of headroom than volume. The CUB remains clean all the way to "10," but on its own it would be hard-

pressed to fill anything more than a medium-sized club. It seems best suited as a personal monitor, or side fill, with the main sound sent to the house, via the XLR output, to be further amplified. As such

it should immensely increase the performing experience, affording pickers control over the sound that they hear as well as the sound they send to the audience.

Not long before examining the AAD CUB AG-100, I had occasion to borrow a well-known manufacturer's acoustic amp. I must say that the CUB sounded better (if not as loud). Considering that it costs half as much and weighs eight times less than the other unit, I'd have to say it's an absolutely terrific option. If you're looking for an amp for particularly acoustic endeavors and small rooms, or a guitar monitor for lower volume gigs, you're unlikely to find anything that sounds better at any size or price. ■

List Price \$608
(gig bag included)
Manufacturer American
Acoustic Development
LLC, aadsound.com

