

# ACOUSTIC.

THE UK'S ONLY MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO THE ACOUSTIC WORLD

INTERVIEW

## MARTIN SIMPSON

"I'm not the kind of person that ever gives up"

SPECIAL FEATURE

## INSIDE THE WORLD OF FLAMENCO

"500 years and still going strong!"



GEAR

MOON PF003  
KINKADE WESTBURY  
PJB ACOUSTIC AMP  
YAIRI PARLOUR



JUAN MARTIN



RAFAEL



TOMATITO

www.acousticmagazine.com

AUG/SEP 2007 UK £3.95 Issue 17



9 771745 446019



OYSTER HOUSE MEDIA

ACOUSTIC GIVES YOU MORE COLUMNISTS, MORE MUSIC, MORE FEATURES, MORE REVIEWS!

**JULIE ELLISON**

PRO-TIPS ON PRACTISING

**GORDON GILTRAP**

PLAY LIKE GORDON

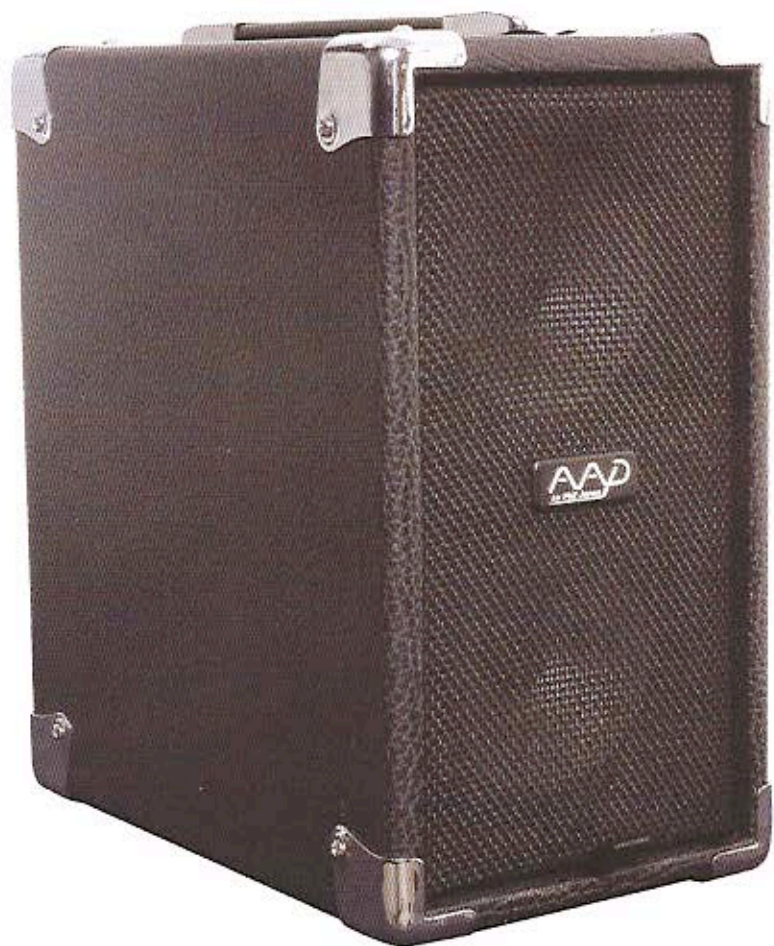
**MARTIN TAYLOR**

ENTER HIS JAZZ WORLD

**DOYLE DYKES**

TOP PRO TIPS

PLUS: LOADS MORE LESSONS FROM OUR EXCLUSIVE COLUMNISTS HELPING YOU TO BECOME A BETTER PLAYER!



# AAD Cub AG-100

Phil Jones Bass have already established themselves as innovators in the world of bass amplification, but they now turn their attention to acoustic amps. Sam Wise reports on whether small is really beautiful.

**P**hil Jones has a long history of designing iconic speakers, first with Acoustic Energy, then Boston Acoustics, and Platinum Audio. Though a former bass player, Phil's main successes came designing nearfield monitors for studios, where the critical factor is retaining absolute transparency whilst providing clarity and punch at all volume levels. In the studio it's vital that the studio monitors don't colour the sound at all, or the producer will not hear the real results of his mixing. Likewise, studio monitors must be compact, since control rooms are often cramped, and packed with equipment. Acoustic musicians have many of the same challenges, requiring a clean, uncoloured sound at high volumes, and in the most compact package possible. Small wonder then that, after joining American Acoustic Designs, Phil took all of this highly relevant knowledge and set about designing an acoustic guitar amp.

The Cub is an amp which gives you lots of reasons to like it. As I unpacked it from the shipping box, my first thought was "this is really light, I like that". Lifting it out, I found it had arrived packed into a padded gig bag, with a separate pocket for leads etc, and I certainly liked that too. By the time it hit the floor, I was already feeling positively disposed towards this pocket wonder, just

imagining how handy it would be to tote that little bag into a pub, without my shoulder ligaments being stretched to simian proportions, and be ready to play.

This amp is amazingly tiny; at 320mm x 300mm x 170mm, it makes my briefcase look bulky. The vinyl covered plywood casing feels all the sturdier for this small size, and is protected on all 8 corners by metal bashplates.

At the front, the two speakers are visible through the translucent woven black cover, and are protected by a surround which extends between them, reducing the chance of speaker damage if the front of the amp should hit something. On top of the amp is a carry handle, and for once, you'll find it attached to an amp which is light enough at 11.5 pounds to carry with ease.

All the controls are on the backplate of the amp, probably because of the space limitations caused by such a tiny case, but I have to say I'm not a fan of this arrangement. Controls at the back

are tricky on any amp, but when the combo in question is so tiny that the controls are less than a foot off the floor, they become near impossible. If I was continually having to lean the amp around to check the controls in my front room, heaven knows what it would be like on a darkened stage! At the top of the backplate, protected by a small bashguard, are

*"By the time it hit the floor, I was already feeling positively disposed towards this pocket wonder"*

## SPECIFICATIONS

**Price:** £329  
**Speaker:** Computer Optimized Enclosure  
**Speaker Frequency Response:** 80Hz - 15KHz  
**Speaker Compliment:** 2x 5inch proprietary NEO-POWER, extended-range drivers  
**Internal Speaker Impedance:** 4 Ohms  
**Sensitivity:** 95dB/W/M  
**Dimensions (HxWxD):** 170x300x320mm  
 6.5x11.8x12.5inch  
**Weight:** 5.2 Kg / 11.5 Lbs  
**Amplifier:** PJB 100watt Solid State class AB amplifier with soft clip feature  
**Signal to Noise Ratio:** Better than 95 dB  
 Phil Jones Bass  
 c/o Synergy Distribution  
[www.synergydistribution.co.uk](http://www.synergydistribution.co.uk)  
 0121 270 5485

## Review.

a 1/4" jack input, with an input level switch for 0 db (for passive pickups) and -10 db (for active guitars, or preamps). Then we have a volume control and a 3-band equalizer, all sturdy anodized metal knobs, and the sockets for an FX loop. The middle of the backpanel is taken up by a large heatsink, and at the bottom are the powerlead socket, the on/off switch, outputs for tuner and line out, plus an XLR DI out, allowing you to go from the amp straight into mixers or recording equipment. Finally, there is a ground lift switch, allowing you to dial your amp out of hum causing earth loop problems.

The Cub has very much the features you would expect from a small amplifier, and few frills, but it's when you plug it in that the surprises start. As promised in the promotional literature, this does not sound like a small amp at all! Plugging in my Washburn,

I was immediately taken with just how loud the little AAD is; theoretically I knew it was 100 watts, but with such a tiny package, you just don't expect that sort of volume. Having established that it was more than loud enough, I set about trying to find a good sound, which again, was surprisingly easy. My jaded mind had told me to expect something that sounded like a practise amp, but in reality, the Cub's sound quality was not far off the Shire King reviewed in Issue 16. The voicing is sensible, so that with the EQ set flat you get a pretty

decent sound, and it doesn't take much tweaking to get exactly what you want. The tone controls don't allow you to make really drastic alterations to the sound; after all, this is an acoustic amp, and making your guitar sound like it does acoustically, only louder, is the order of the day! There's plenty of punch and sparkle to the tone, even with a rather elderly set

of strings on my guitar, and I was able to turn it up very loud with no feedback problems, even when sat right in front of it.

The Cub's sound is more than up to the demands of playing small venues, and the DI output means it'll make a fine preamp if plugging into the PA in larger venues. Indeed, if it weren't for the fact that I need to amplify my voice as well, this amp would be at the top of my shopping list. It's sturdily built, looks pretty good, and sounds loud, punchy and flexible. It'll fit in the boot of your mini, it'll fit

behind the couch, it'll fit on your lap in the tube, and it won't bring on your sciatica when you have to carry it around. All round, it's a lot of amp in a small package. If I have one niggle with it, it's the positioning of the controls. If they were on the top plate, or even on an angled plate at the back, I'd be much happier. That said, for £329.00, and about the size of a lunchbox (albeit, a Texan lunchbox), it's hard to think of an amp that rivals it.

**Sam Wise**

*"I knew it was 100 watts, but with such a tiny package, you just don't expect that sort of volume"*

### Acoustic Ratings

- ★★★★★ Exceptional
- ★★★★☆ Excellent
- ★★★☆☆ Good
- ★★☆☆☆ Average
- ★☆☆☆☆ Poor

### Build Quality ★★★★★

I have the impression that this could survive a lot of kicks, and a good thing too; an amp this small is going to get tripped over from time to time.

### Sound ★★★★★

Very good, especially for the size. Only 3-bands on the EQ, and the lack of a separate gain control to warm the sound cost it the 5th star.

### Functionality ★★★★★

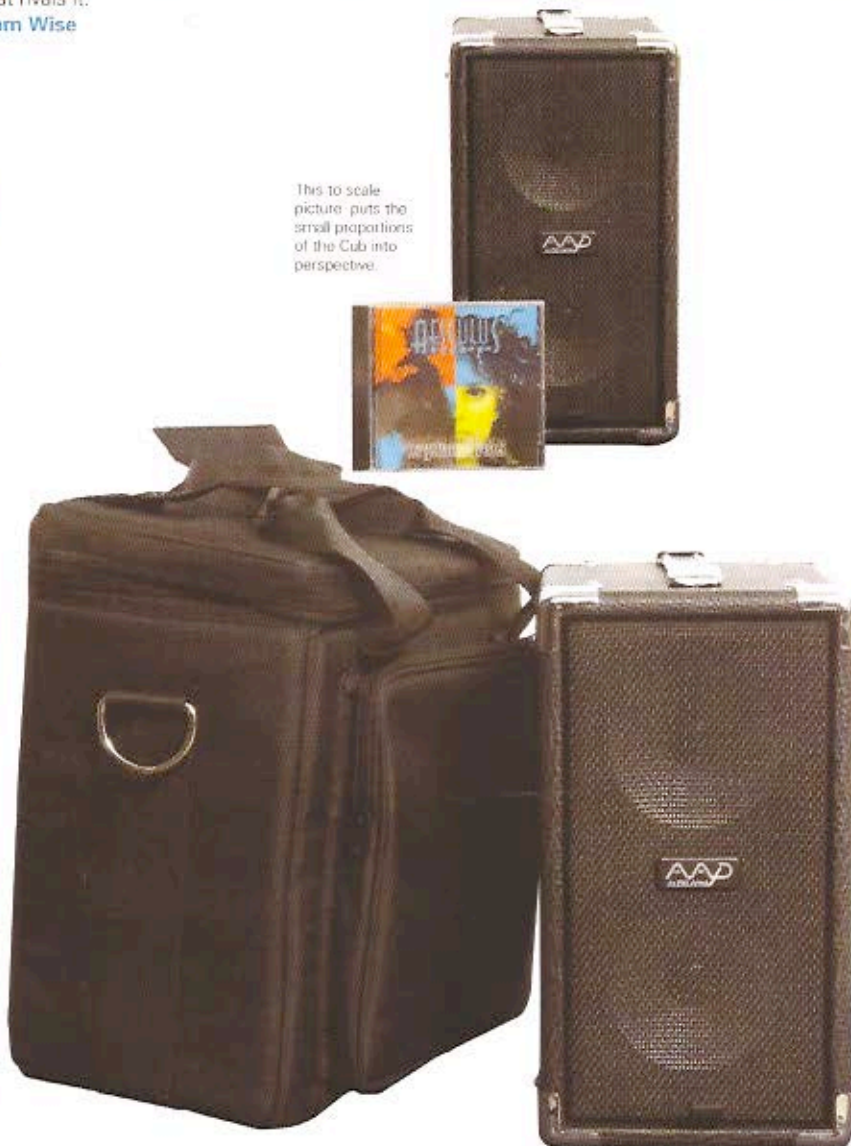
All the basics are there, and little extras like the ground lift and the balanced DI out make it a bit special.

### Value ★★★★★

£269 is pretty reasonable for an amp you could gig every night. When it comes in a package you can put on the back of your bicycle, it becomes an absolute bargain.

### Wow Factor ★★★★★

The sound is not the wow factor – it's a good, basic amp that does the job. It's the fact that it does it all in such a small space that makes you go "ooh!"



This to scale picture puts the small proportions of the Cub into perspective.