

PJB Super Flightcase BG-300

Bass combo

PJB have garnered a reputation of late for making high-quality, rugged and, above all, compact bass amplifiers. We take a look at the latest innovation from the ever-fertile brain of Phil Jones, the new Super Flightcase.

David Etheridge

The Super Flightcase up for review this month is a development of the original Flightcase that I looked at in 2007. This new model follows on from the groundbreaking step of its stablemate in offering a more powerful amp — 250W against the Flightcase's 150W — and six speakers, but apart from that the whole format is the familiar and enticing Phil Jones one of dedicated active or passive inputs, a five-band EQ, a balanced line out with ground lift, 100V to 240V operation, sophisticated protection circuitry, a soft-clipping amplifier and an ultra-low-noise preamp circuit.

Six pack

Once again, the formidable five-inch Neo-Power drivers provide the power and projection on the Super Flightcase, working in multiple for super efficiency and accuracy in reproduction of frequencies down to low B and beyond. For newcomers to PJB technology, this is a lightweight but extremely powerful unit that uses an advanced Neodymium iron boron (NeFeB for all you physicists) magnet motor structure to drive a proprietary PJB transducer. These are currently the most powerful magnets available, being nearly 20 times more powerful than conventional magnets of the same mass. The six drivers are arranged in the Super Flightcase in a four-plus-two format, with four drivers facing forward and two facing upwards, which is essential to

help you hear your sound — normally much of the sound is travelling away from you, either through your legs or body. The four front-facing drivers are mounted in a computer-optimised, vented enclosure, with three circular vents at the bottom to extend the low-end response. Once again, this is an amp that sounds the same from all directions; whether sitting, standing, close to or far away, the sound is the same. This is very useful on a combo amp if you haven't tried it before — in fact, just the night before writing this review I was asked to turn down the amp I was using because I was deafening the guys on the other side of the room during rehearsal with a big band. The (borrowed) amp I was using gave me a totally erroneous idea of the sound level, directing the sound around my feet and away across the room.

Queen's flight

The Super Flightcase is built up to PJB's usual bombproof standards, with all the attention to detail that I've come to expect from this marque. It's slightly larger than a Roland Bass Cube, and slightly heavier (although still perfectly manageable) at 15kg. The substantial cabinet has protective steel corner plates and a recessed control panel at the top, while underneath are four chunky, non-slip feet that protect the base of the amp and stop it moving on smooth surfaces. The control panel will be familiar to PJB watchers, and comparing new models to existing ones can be revealing to see how things change in the light of development. The Input level pot, with clip LED and Active/Passive switch, now offers



±15dB of control, compared to the 10dB of the original Flightcase. The input jack, effects send/return jacks, headphone jack (which mutes the sound to the speakers when plugged in), five-band EQ (±18dB at 50Hz, 160Hz, 630Hz, 2.5kHz and 12kHz — better than many studio desks!), Limiter on/off switch, (with its LED and control pot, preset to a 3:1 ratio) and master Volume pot will all be familiar fare. On the back panel, next to a substantial-looking heatsink (which didn't even begin to get warm over the several hours I was testing it), are the balanced

Performing Musician

PJB Super Flightcase
BG-300 £949

This handy amp features all the quality and power you'd expect from PJB, offering all the advantages we've come to expect from this most innovative of manufacturers. Designed for the session and club gig market (I'm guessing), it sits in the perfect niche for players who want the PJB class without the size and weight of the bigger models, and find that the smaller guys don't quite fit the bill. As always, peerless in its class.

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Tech Spec

Super Flightcase BG-300

- **Frequency response:** 30Hz - 100kHz.
- **Input sensitivity:** 450mV @ 10dB, 1.5V @ 0dB.
- **Input level control:** ±15dB.
- **Power output:** 250W RMS.
- **Six PJB Neo-Power speakers.**
- **SNR:** 100dB.
- **THD:** 0.04% @ 250W.
- **Active/Passive input switch, optical limiter (preset at 3:1), effects loop, XLR DI output, headphone output, tuner output.**
- **Five-band EQ** (±18dB @ 50Hz, 160Hz, 630Hz, 2.5kHz, 12kHz).
- **Dimensions (WDH):** 320 x 400 x 525mm.
- **Weight:** 15kg.

I've used muffle the high tones to the point where even trying harmonics is a dead loss, some make you sound as though the cabinet's stuffed with a blanket, and others lose all their oomph below the A string (no, I'm not mentioning any names at present!)

Once again, the EQ is nigh on perfect for bass, with each pot's frequency bringing out the best tones for your instrument, from room-juddering tones in the bass end to a pure and crystal-clear airy quality on harmonics from the 12kHz pot. In fact, harmonics on the PJB range simply sound better and more pure than on any other amp I've tried. Experimenting with tone settings will give any number of tones that will, as ever, surprise and delight you. Once again I found that the optical limiter works perfectly, providing highly musical results without unduly squashing the sound, when switched in, although I had to work quite hard to get it to start operating. I guess I'm just not that aggressive a player, compared to some.

Conclusion

If you are already familiar with any part of the PJB range, you'll need no further convincing from me as to the build quality, unrivaled performance and sheer flexibility and scope of these amps. If you are not, then you are in for a very pleasant surprise when you try one.

With a healthy 250W of super-clean power on board and those revolutionary drivers, you're likely to raise a lot of eyebrows on gigs and in the studio. The Super Flightcase makes an excellent partner for the rest of the range, and perceptively fills the need players might have for a powerful but portable combo amp that sits in between the convenience of the smaller models and the sheer power of the stage rigs. For the session player as well as the club bassist, this is probably the perfect package. While the price may initially seem forbidding, the sheer quality, longevity and reliability of the range make it a very affordable and attractive proposition. ■ **PM**



The rear panel features an XLR DI output, plus line out and dedicated tuner output on quarter-inch jack sockets.

DI XLR output (with ground lift switch), Line Out jack and Tuner Out jack (which can also be used as a second line out if desired) and the power switch, which has a two-second delay for speaker protection. As usual, the Super Flightcase has the full range of protection circuits provided for decades of trouble-free use.

Performance

The Super Flightcase displays all of the attributes of other models I've reviewed in the past, including super-silent usage when switched on. Any hiss, hum or crackling coming out of the speakers will invariably, in my experience, be a result of a dodgy lead or electrics in your instrument. Selecting active

or passive on the input switch matches sounds excellently to different basses — I tried my Ricky and Yamaha passives and Indie and Shine active six-strings through the Super Flightcase and got superbly consistent, clean and faithful results. While a 0dB setting will be fine for most purposes, the increased input range of ±15dB offers even more subtleties on treating your sound, from subtle (and not so subtle) overdrive to cutting an overly hot signal from a custom instrument. Basically you're assured of quality results here.

One thing that continues to fascinate me is the sound from those five-inch speakers, which provide bags of clean and controllable tone all the way down to low B and more, and with unrivaled accuracy of sound. Some amps