



Phil Jones Bass BG-300 Super Flightcase Combo

Technological improvements now mean that a combo's size is no longer a fair indication of its performance. So can this latest offering from Phil Jones Bass see off its larger competitors despite **its modest dimensions?**

The Phil Jones Bass range of amplification is renowned for its use of 'state of the art' technology and its incorporation of 5-inch drivers in its cabinets and combos rather than the usual 10, 12 and 15-inch speakers. Over the past three years, the company has developed a proprietary neodymium speaker system called 'Neo-Power', which, in theory, offers improved power and tone to weight ratios. The BG-300 Super Flightcase Combo that we have here is one of the first products featuring this system to be brought to market. Here at BGM, we've reviewed many speaker enclosures and combos that have incorporated neodymium

technology and the obvious weight benefits won't be lost on any bass player that has to carry their own gear. But will this new design coupled with the 250-watt solid-state amplifier offer a unique listening experience too?

Features

The BG-300 is covered with a black tolex material and benefits from metal corner protectors that lend themselves well to the overall understated appearance. Eye-catching it may not be but in the same way that a Jaguar is no Ferrari, this combo hints that there is quality and craftsmanship beneath its bodywork

The amp section looks relatively

straightforward based on its minimal control layout. The Input Level has a range of ± 10 dB and to ensure it doesn't get excessively hot, a passive/active switch and clip LED are also provided. The 5-band EQ offers a fair spread of centre frequencies (50Hz, 160Hz, 630Hz, 2.5kHz, 12kHz) with a cut or boost of ± 18 dB available. Given the nature of the speaker design we would highly recommend familiarising yourself with the tonal options available from the EQ in order to maximise the BG-300's live performance.

A unit with these kind of dimensions is unlikely to produce excessive trouser shaking low-end so knowing how to use the EQ

in different rooms is a must. The Compressor/Limiter has a 3:1 ratio and can be employed to smooth out the bass signal, reducing the potentially harsh qualities that are common in small speakers, along with the dynamic range of the signal, which may help prolong speaker life in the long term.

The control panel, FX loop and headphone sockets are located on the top of the combo while a peak around the back reveals the XLR DI output, ground lift switch and tuner and line outputs. There is no facility for linking up an extra cabinet, but the Line Out option can be used to power an active speaker cabinet. However this kind of set up may compromise the quality of your overall sound.

The speakers are laid out with four pointing outwards from the front with an additional two directed upwards towards the player. To reinforce the sound reproduction and bottom end response, three ports are positioned underneath the front-facing speakers. Both sets of speakers are protected by cloth grilles, which may not offer the same kind of protection as metal grilles, but work well and coincide with the refined overall appearance. Its compact design makes transporting a doddle, though an additional carrying handle wouldn't go amiss.



The feature packed control panel includes a sensibly designed EQ section



Sounds

To see if the BG-300 had an obvious bias, we used a selection of different basses for this review, including a fretless, a 5-string, an electro-acoustic and both active and passive instruments. With the EQ set flat we were hoping for a high degree of tonal clarity and punch with a suitably hard-edged tone and we weren't disappointed. The fundamental tone of each instrument came through loud and clear and the absence of any valves ensured the signal remained uncoloured. Boosting the Hi and Lo Bass EQ's certainly filled out the frequency range and produced a 'bigger' sound, making the signal more powerful, but the BG-300 retained a focussed presence throughout and lost none of its punch. The Hi-Bass EQ was also useful in keeping the bottom end boosted without incurring too much low end 'boom'.

The amp handled the low-B of a 5-string very well, producing a clean response and keeping those low notes sounding articulate and punchy. Basses that had a natural 'growl' to their tone suffered slightly perhaps due to the smaller speaker size, but the BG-300 performed admirably when matched with several fretless and acoustic basses allowing the resonant, throaty qualities of these instruments to come across extremely well.

Using the EQ to accommodate such an array of test instruments highlighted how sensibly designed the EQ section is. Serious forethought has gone into the frequency selection and no matter how excessive we were being with the EQ, the resulting bass sounds didn't once come across as sounding 'flat-out' or 'over the top'. At no point did the unit come across as though it was being pushed to its limit, as even in a

rehearsal situation, when pushed, the signal didn't break up. Whether cranking the mids to boost projection or the treble control to add some 'sizzle' to proceedings, the resulting tone came across as being well within the combos abilities. The BG-300 is very easy to use and doesn't come over-burdened with excessive features, but given the slightly unusual projection of its speakers, we would recommend experimenting with its positioning in order to achieve the best results.

Conclusion

The PJB BG-300 Super Flight Case Combo has many plus-points and its physical dimensions and relative lightweight will certainly win it many plaudits. The sound reproduction is of the highest quality and this comes as no surprise when you read of Phil Jones' background in speaker design and hi-fi technology. The BG-300 hasn't been designed to compete with larger rigs and setups and in a live band situation with drums and guitars; this combo has limited capabilities and will naturally fall short, but for bassists in a smaller band context, this is a very useful piece of kit. Upright players will simply fall in love with it and for the working pro that regularly undertakes recording work, it will certainly be worth investigating. The price is a little prohibitive and may put some players off, especially with the extension cab limitation, so don't get rid of your rig or gigging combo just yet. For players looking for a combo that is portable, articulate in its delivery and reeks of 'high-quality', need look no further.

Mike Brooks

PJB Super Flightcase Combo

Price: £949

Made in: Hong Kong

Power Output: 250 watts

Controls: Input level, passive/active switch, lo-bass, hi-bass, lo-mid, hi-mid, treble, limiter/compressor with on/off switch, master volume, ground/lift switch, AC input voltage selector

Inputs: ¼-inch instrument input (passive/active)

Outputs: ¼-inch headphone output, ¼-inch FX send & return sockets, XLR DI output, ¼-inch tuner output, ¼-inch line output

Speakers: 6 x 5-inch neo-power speakers (internal speaker impedance 6 Ohm)

Dimensions: 52.5cm(h) x 32cm(w) x 40cm(d)

Weight: 15 kg (33.3 lbs)

What We Think

Plus: A feature packed combo that's extremely portable boasting articulate and versatile bass sounds.

Minus: Some may prefer to have the option of adding an extra cabinet rather than running a line to an active speaker cabinet.

Overall: The price tag may be high, but its performance and overall quality make the BG-300 a worthwhile purchase.

Contact Details

Synergy Distribution

T: 0121 270 6485

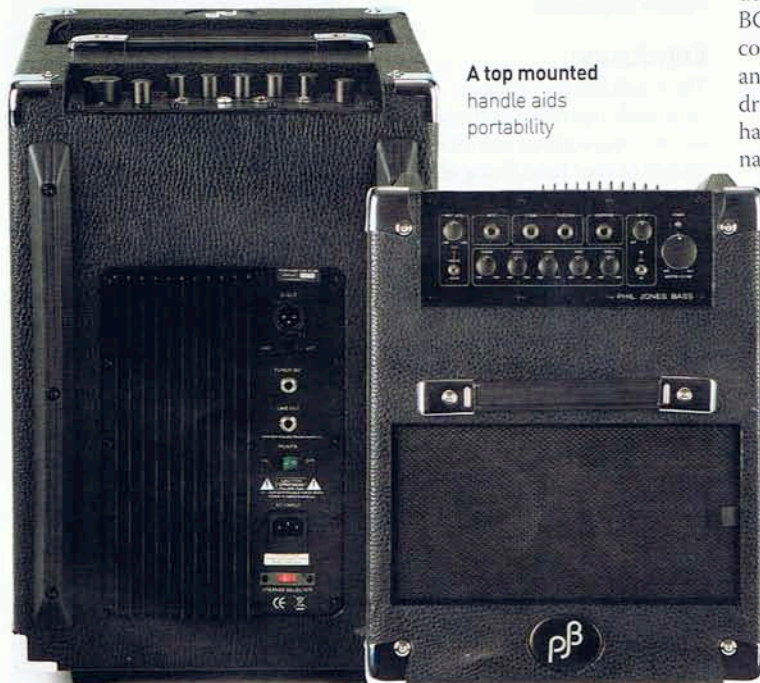
E: info@synergymusic.co.uk
www.synergymusic.co.uk

BGM RATING OUT OF FIVE

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★



A top mounted handle aids portability