

ZILLA MINI MODERN 1x12 & STUDIO PRO 2x12



These new cabinets from British maker Zilla Music aim to offer both quality and versatility. Daniel Hodgson checks them out

Any decent amp is only as good as the speaker cabinet it's hooked up to. Even a boutique, hand-wired masterpiece can end up sounding thin, flabby or one-dimensional if it's paired with a hastily glued together chipboard box and low-quality speakers. Most amp manufacturers offer a range of properly built matching cabinets loaded with speakers specifically chosen to complement their amps' tones. However, you could well end up paying that bit extra for a matching cabinet that has only been tuned for one particular sound.

Here, we're taking a look at a pair of new cabinet designs that aim to offer more versatility. Zilla Music has been building top-quality custom speaker cabinets for a few years now, and we were very impressed with the two examples we tested back in issue 98. Besides a wide range of sizes and speaker configurations, customers can specify what kind of speakers, grille cloth and Tolex covering they want, or even order a completely custom cabinet.

Construction & Features

While both the Mini Modern 1x12 and Studio Pro 2x12 might look like your average speaker cab, they are, in fact, designed to cover a variety of roles. Both are constructed from 15mm birch ply and feel more than solid enough for heavy gigging. The dimensions of both cabinets are a little

oversized – which should translate into a fuller low end for the 1x12 in particular – but on the whole, both are light enough not to cause too many back problems. Heavy-duty grab handles set into the sides make them easy to lift, while portability is further increased on the Studio Pro by a set of removable castors.

Each cabinet has been finished to a high standard. This Mini Modern 1x12 is a good example of the company's ability to match any style of amplifier you might have – the classic orange Tolex, basket weave grille cloth and white piping are as close to our trusty Orange Thunderverb head as males no differences. The Studio Pro 2x12, on the other hand, has a classy green-on-black Tolex covering, tan basket weave grille cloth and gold piping. Of course, since every Zilla cabinet is made to order, you can choose a style to match your head of choice.

The front baffles are angled back slightly, while the rear of each box features a removable centre panel. This offers players the choice between an open- or closed-back cabinet, greatly increasing the range of tones both are capable of. While an open back can provide a more ambient, room-filling sound, a closed back will generally offer better projection and a tighter, more controlled sound, sometimes preferable when miking the cab up.

With the screws unscrewed, removing the back panels is a little



trickily as they are wedged firmly in place, but then a tight seal is important for the cab to behave like a true closed-back design. Looking inside, the cabinets are sturdily built, with a good standard of internal fit and finish.

Inside this Mini Modern 1x12 we find a Celestion Vintage 30 speaker mounted off-centre. The Studio Pro 2x12 is fitted with mismatched speakers – an old trick that should further increase the range of tones this cabinet can offer. Here, we get the classic pairing of the clear, biting Vintage 30 with the millishale-thick Celestion G12H30. Do note, however, that due to the G12H30's 30-watt power rating, this cab is limited to amps outputting 60 watts or less. Of course, a wide range of other speakers is available.

A single speaker jack is fitted to a recessed black metal panel on the back of each cabinet, though a stereo configuration is also available for the 2x12 if desired.

Sounds

With solid construction, oversized dimensions and quality speakers, it's no wonder that both of these Zilla cabinets put in an impressive performance. The Mini Modern is slightly larger than standard 1x12 dimensions certainly help it along in terms of bass response. With the back panel in place, essentially giving us a closed-back configuration, we find plenty of low end, though perhaps not quite enough to handle hard rock and metal down-tuned riffing on its own. Blues, indie and classic rock musicians will certainly find plenty to get their teeth into here – the sound coming from the single Vintage 30 is crisp, clear and tight, not to mention very big indeed. With the back panel removed we get a quintessential 'combo' sound, with a more breathy, room-filling quality which is particularly good with clean tones, though there is still a nice firmness to the bass frequencies.

The Studio Pro 2x12's size, while not quite as portly as Zilla's own Fatboy cab, still manages to serve up plenty of low end and lower-mid-range girth. We'd be happy to gig with one of these in a heavy rock band context where a 4x12 would be the natural choice, albeit a much more unwieldy one. There is plenty of poke and focus with the rear panel in place, just like a good 4x12, but removing this panel showcases this amp's chameleon nature, revealing a more balanced tone, with more top end and upper mid-range content. This gives clean and slightly dirty tones some room to breathe. The mismatched speakers combine to offer a complex, articulate tone, and whether on stage or in the studio, you can emphasise the sound of one or the other by choosing where you put the mic.

As a footnote, we notice that the slightly upwards-slanted baffles do help us hear the ourselves a little better when the cabs are placed on the floor – in the tight confines of a rehearsal room, studio or pub stage, every little helps.

Conclusion

As with the other examples of Zilla's cabinets we've seen, both the Mini Modern 1x12 and Studio Pro 2x12 are very impressive indeed. The Mini Modern could be just the bit of lid to complete a compact rig – pair it with an Orange Tiny Terror or Marshall style 18-watter and you have a hugely portable classic rock or blues rig, all without compromising on your tone. The Studio Pro is a great jack of all trades, capable of taking just about any musical style or setting in its stride – it would be a huge shame if it were merely confined to the studio! The standard of construction is high

WE'D HAPPILY DO A ROCK GIG WITH THE STUDIO PRO 2x12 WHERE A 4x12 WOULD BE THE MORE NATURAL CHOICE



ZILLA MINI MODERN 1x12

Price: £305 as reviewed
Built in: UK
Type: Closed/open-back 1x12 cab
Power: 60 watts @ 16 ohms
Speaker: 1 x 12-inch Celestion Vintage 30
Dimensions: 470 (h) x 765 (w) x 360 (d) mm
Weight: 17kg (37.5lb)
Options: Standard unloaded cab £225; removable rear panel £10 extra; see website for full list of speaker grille & covering options

ZILLA STUDIO PRO 2x12

Price: £420 as reviewed
Built in: UK
Type: Closed/open-back 2x12 cab
Power: 60 watts @ 16 ohms
Speakers: 1 x 12-inch Celestion Vintage 30, 1 x 12-inch Celestion G12H30
Dimensions: 530 (h) x 750 (w) x 295 (d) mm
Weight: 27kg (59.5lb)
Options: Standard unloaded cab £240; see website for full list of speaker grille & covering options

CONTACT DETAILS

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GB VERDICT

GOLD STARS
 ★ Great build
 ★ Removable panels add versatility
 ★ Wide range of tones from the Studio Pro in particular

BLACK MARKS
 ★ None

IDEAL FOR...
 Custom cabinets for studio or stage

GERATING
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and both cabs really look the part. While not as keenly priced as some of the products lower down the Zilla range, the extra features here are certainly worth the additional outlay. If you're struggling to find the cab to handle both studio and live work, we're happy to recommend either of these speaker cabinets. **GB**