

ZILLA FATBOY & MODERN 2X12

CUSTOM BUILT IN THE UK, ZILLA GUITAR CABS ARE MAKING BIG NOISES. **DAVID GREEVES** GOES IN SEARCH OF MONSTER TONE

When looking to improve your guitar tone, it's all too easy to lose sight of the big picture. The manufacturers of guitars, strings, pickups, cables, pedals and amps are always keen to emphasise the vital importance of their particular product, and, with so many disparate elements involved in what starts with your fingers and ends up in the ears of your audience, is it any wonder that so many of us end up obsessing over one element when we should be considering the whole lot?

Oddly, it's one of the most important of these elements that often seems to get the least attention. Your speakers, and the cabinet they're housed in, are about as fundamental as it gets, this being the bit that takes a small electrical signal and turns it into an audible sound. Your signal chain is only ever as strong as its weakest link, and your vintage axe, boutique pedals and hand-wired head will be of little use if your speaker cab isn't up to the job.

Zilla Music is a relatively new company based in West London. In addition to re-covering head, combo and speaker cabinets, Zilla offers a range of bespoke speaker cabs with a dizzying array of speaker and finish options. Here we're testing out a pair of 2x12 cabs: the Modern and the Fatboy.



GBINFO

ZILLA MODERN 2X12

PRICE: £360 as reviewed

BUILT IN: UK

TYPE: Closed-back 2x12 cab

POWER: 120 watts @ 8 ohms

SPEAKERS: 2 x 12-inch Tayden Brit 60

DIMENSIONS: 490(h) x 750(w) x 280(d) mm

WEIGHT: 24kg (53lb)

OPTIONS: Standard unloaded cab £220, see website for full list of speaker, grille & covering options

ZILLA FATBOY 2X12

PRICE: £395 as reviewed

BUILT IN: UK

TYPE: Closed-back 2x12 cab

POWER: 120 watts @ 16 ohms

SPEAKERS: 1 x 12-inch Celestion Vintage 30, 1 x 12-inch Celestion G12H

DIMENSIONS: 470(h) x 765(w) x 360(d) mm

WEIGHT: 27.5kg (61lb)

OPTIONS: Standard unloaded cab £240, see website for full list of speaker, grille & covering options

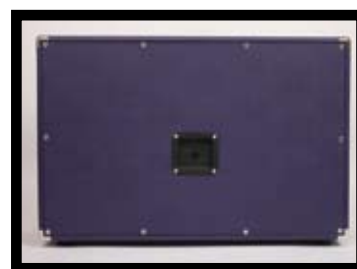
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equipped for road use. Both also feature large recessed handles on either side, plus a handle on top, and heavy-duty rubber feet.

While the Modern 2x12 has a narrow solid panel across the front, neatly outlined with white piping above black grille cloth, the Fatboy has a plain front with a straw-coloured grille. It must be said that both look very smart indeed, and we'd be hard pushed to pick a favourite looks-wise.



and compactness that's absent from the Modern 2x12.

However, while you might think that you can never have too much low-end thump, that's not always the case. While the Fatboy would be the automatic pick if we wanted to dole out some down-tuned riffs, the Modern is perhaps better suited for blues, country and classic rock. Don't forget that, if there's a bass player and a drummer in the band too, there's no shortage of oomph in the low end. If you want to give the rest of the band space, and cut through the mix yourself, a little less bass and a little more bite in the upper mid-range are no bad thing.

CONSTRUCTION & FEATURES

As its name suggests, the Fatboy (pictured above) is an oversized 2x12 cab that, according to Zilla, is designed to deliver the big, solid low end of a 4x12 cab, but without the latter's size and weight. Still, this is a pretty heavy cab in itself, built from finger-jointed 15mm birch ply.

In contrast, the Modern is 3.5kg lighter and 80mm shallower, front to back. Built with 12mm-thick birch ply, this cab is an easier lift and is billed as a compromise between the oversized Fatboy and Zilla's Vintage 2x12.

In both cabs, the speakers are mounted on a 15mm baffle. You can buy these cabs without speakers fitted, or you can specify any combination of Celestion or Tayden drivers you like. For this review, the Modern is equipped with a pair of UK-made Tayden Brit 60 speakers, while the Fatboy is fitted with one Celestion Vintage 30 and one G12H.

You can also specify whether you want an open or closed back for no extra charge, while a three-piece back with a removable panel, allowing both configurations, costs an extra £10. Generally speaking, an open back will give you a more ambient, room-filling sound, while a closed back – as is found on both of the review models – will give you more directional projection and a tighter low end.

The cabs are neatly covered in hard-wearing Tolex, with many options available besides the red of the Fatboy and purple of the Modern on show here. Metal corner protectors are also a welcome sight, and both of these cabs feel really solid and well

SOUNDS

In terms of tone, it should be much easier to pick one over the other, but which one you prefer will very much depend on the sound you're going for. It's not often that we find ourselves testing two cabs with differing dimensions head-to-head, but it's a timely reminder of just how much of a difference the size and design of a cabinet can make to its sound.

Granted, the Modern and Fatboy we have here are fitted with different speakers, but there are some much more fundamental principles at work here. It must be said that both cabs perform very well, offering the robust response and full, vibrant tone that you only get from a solidly made cab and good-quality speakers. However, while the Modern offers a brighter, more open tone, it's striking how much more bass the Fatboy delivers.

The low end is big and solid and there's more emphasis on the low mid-range. This is partly to do with the choice of drivers: by combining the clarity and cut of a Vintage 30 with the darker, meaty mid-range of the G12H, a thicker, more complex tone results. However, the whole sound has a feeling of beefy punch

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, neither of these cabs is going to disappoint. They sound very good, especially overdriven, where the Modern serves up plenty of jangle and snarl, in contrast to the Fatboy's darker, smoother and altogether heavier tone, which is indeed, as Zilla suggests, not unlike a full-sized 4x12. The standard of construction is high and the pricing competitive, especially when you consider that these cabs are hand-built in the UK, with many custom options coming at no extra charge. We have no hesitation in recommending these Zilla cabs, though which one will very much be up to you. **GB**



GBVERDICT

ZILLA FATBOY & MODERN 2X12

GOLD STARS

- ★ Solidly built
- ★ Great tones
- ★ Loads of custom options

BLACK MARKS

- None

IDEAL FOR...

Anyone seeking a quality cab tailored to their tone

GBRATING

★★★★★