



Bass Amp REVIEW

Price: £695



From light, compact Class D powerhouses to old-school valve-crammed heavyweights, Ampeg has the solution for all your onstage bass needs. Review by Gareth Morgan

Ampeg

SVT-7PRO & Heritage SVT-CL

Okay, bass amp fans: what does SVT stand for? The answer is Super Vacuum Tube – a pleasing name for the monolithic 300W head crammed with a terrifying 14 valves that Ampeg unleashed onto the public in 1969. The SVT came with a warning label which read 'this amp is capable of delivering sound pressure levels that may cause permanent hearing damage.' They weren't joking. The SVT was the great bass powerhouse of its time.

Subsequent SVT's haven't shirked on power, but they have morphed in appearance, components and features to reflect the changing needs and desires of successive generations. The new SVT-7PRO is the latest example of this philosophy, whereas the re-vamped Heritage SVT-CL is a response to those who crave classic Ampeg tone and styling.

SVT-7PRO

Less than £700 is pretty sensational for a 1000W amp. The SVT-7 is made in China and comes in a steel/aluminium box 396mm wide, 102mm high and 292mm deep and weighing just 7kg/15.5lbs. The power amp is Class D; a single 12AX7 in the preamp maintains the SVT-7's contact with its forebears.

There's an onboard optical compressor with a handy Level control on the front panel. You'll also find Mute and -15dB switches and Gain, FX Mix and Master volume controls. In addition to two switchable features, Ultra Hi (+9dB @8kHz) and Ultra Lo (+2dB @40Hz/-10 @500Hz), there's a three-band EQ with Bass providing 12dB cut/boost @40Hz and Treble offering +15/-20dB @4kHz. In the Midrange section you'll find two controls, one accessing +10/-20dB cut/boost and a Frequency dial which allows you to select from five numbered points

The heart of the SVT-7's EQ is the five-way midrange frequency dial



The SVT-7 may be the cheaper of the two but the tone is top-notch, with power, warmth and a pleasing growl in the bass

in the midrange spectrum. These are, from 1 to 5, 220Hz, 450Hz, 800Hz, 1.6kHz and 3kHz. On the rear panel there are two Speakon outputs, and an XLR Tube Direct Output (aka DI Out) with Pre/Post, 0dB/-40dB Pad and Ground/Lift switches, stereo mini jack Aux Inputs for plugging in a CD or Mp3 player, and various jack sockets that include an FX loop and Footswitch for the Mute function and FX On/Off (sadly, not supplied).

SOUNDS

The SVT-7 may be the cheaper of the two, but the tone is top-notch. It's got both power and warmth; definition is excellent from low B upwards and there's a pleasing growl in the bass while higher pitches have plenty of body. Adding extra bottom creates an impressive rumble with pleasing clarity right up to the very extremes of boost, and increasing treble ups the cut and bite with a snappy edge and rewarding aggression. With the midrange frequency dial, the 220Hz

Position 1 supplies extra darkness while Position 2 controls 450Hz to add a fraction more brightness. This one works really well in helping the bass stand out amongst multiple guitars. The remaining frequency settings are successively brighter without ever sounding burpy in a high-mid way, and there's nothing unpleasant or unuseable about any of them. Boosting 800Hz (3) gives a barky tone with excellent body, and settings 4 and 5 offer tighter sounds with enough high mids for good full-range clarity. ➔

FINAL SCORE

Build Quality	19/20
Playability	17/20
Sound	17/20
Value for money	19/20
vibe	16/20
TOTAL	88%
Good for... Genuine power and a good selection of solid tones at a bargain price	
Look elsewhere... For more radical tonal variations or the pure valve experience	

FACTFILE

SVT-7

Description: Single channel 1000W transistor head with class D power amp and 12AX7A tube preamp in a sheet metal and aluminium case. Made in China

Price: £695

Controls: Compression, Gain, Bass, Midrange, Mid Frequency, Treble, FX Mix and Master controls, -15dB, Mute, Ultra Hi & Lo switches. Various jack sockets including FX loop and Tuner Out, twin Speakon Speaker Outs, Tube Direct DI Out with Pre/Post EQ, 40dB pad and Ground/Lift switches, two Aux Input mini jack sockets

Range Options: Four SVT-PRO heads offering various specs, 300W-2500W of power, prices from £869-£1999

Contact: Loud Technology 01494 557398 www.ampeg.com

THE COMPETITION

MARKBASS

RS00 500W hybrid head

A more conservative-looking offering from Markbass. High quality, high-power and lightweight too

RRP: £799

LANEY

NEXUS NXF 650W Head

Power to burn and tonally top-notch but a fraction on the heavy side

RRP: £999

EUPHONIC

Audio IAMP Micro head 550W

At 1kg, an incredible power-to-weight ratio, easy to use and sounds fantastic

RRP: £649

Bass Amp REVIEW

Price: £2173

FACTFILE

HERITAGE SVT-CL 300W ALL-VALVE HEAD

Description: Single channel 300W all-valve head with two 12AX7 preamp valves, six 6550 power amp valves, one 12AX7 and two 12AU7 driver valves. Made in USA

Price: £2173

Controls: Bass, Midrange, Mid Frequency, Treble and Master controls. Ultra Hi, Ultra Lo, Impedance Selector and Polarity switches. Two jack and one Speakon Speaker Outs, Power Amp In, Preamp Out and Slave Out jack sockets, Balanced DI Out XLR socket

Range Options: None

Contact: Loud Technology 01494 557398 www.ampeg.com



Again there's little to complicate matters aside from the midrange EQ – but it's hard to go far wrong

HERITAGE SVT-CL

With the Heritage, the focus is on doing what Ampeg does best: big sound from big gear. As a piece of design it's a throw-back to the SVT of the late '60s, but the components are upgraded to produce a more reliable version of the original.

The unit is handmade in USA in the Ampeg facility at Loud Technologies' Woodinville, WA factory. It stands 610mm wide, 292mm high and 330mm and weighs a massive, hernia-inducing 36.3kg/80lbs. Be thankful: the original SVT was 15lbs more. The solid birch plywood cab contains 11 valves: two 12AX7s in the preamp, one 12AX7 in the driver section, two 12AU7 valves, and six massive 6550 valves in the power amp section, all mounted on a thick steel chassis. The black vinyl covering, steel corner protectors and steel spring-loaded handles are businesslike features.

The front is dominated by a logo-decorated cloth face and a neat single line of controls. As well as Gain and Master volume, there's an EQ section that's identical to the SVT-7, including the five-position Midrange Frequency selector. There's no compression and no FX facility, but there are three speaker outs (two jack, one Speakon), a preamp out, a power amp in, slave out jack sockets and an XLR DI out on the rear panel. You can also properly bias the power amp via two rear panel-located controls using a flathead screwdriver.

The Heritage's sound is all substance: fat, rich lows, a chunky midrange and highs that are clean, rich and musical

SOUNDS

Sometimes, just sometimes, when we first plug in to an amplifier, switch it on and turn it up we go 'Wow!' and the SVT-CL provides one of those moments. The sound is all substance; fat, rich lows, a chunky, barking midrange and highs that are clean and well-defined in a rich, musical way, making thinner strings just as open for business as the bottom strings when you're laying down a groove. Oh, that this head was a grand cheaper and 20kg lighter... but, then again, it wouldn't be the same product, would it?

EQ-wise, dialling in some bass joyously shakes the room and there's wonderful punch and impact from the various mid frequencies – and, just as with the SVT-7, none of them are overbearing or impractical. Both heads offer sensible variations... it's just that with the SVT-CL, they're all that little bit classier. The higher mid offerings add a pleasing sheen to proceedings and notes have plenty of body. Again, we're not talking seriously burpy but, to be honest, who cares? Upping the level in the Treble department illuminates your tone before merging into a hard cutting edge for those times when nothing short of nasty will do.

VERDICT

Even though the features and functions are largely the same, these are two very different heads. The SVT-7PRO is all about providing a selection of practical sounds in a modern package at the sort of price that anyone requiring serious power can afford. With the Heritage SVT-CL, you're talking top quality in all areas and just that little bit more class. It's both prohibitively expensive and ridiculously heavy, but that's the nature of the beast, and these trade-offs are well worth it. Let's face it, you're unlikely to own one unless you're going on tour – and in that case you'll never have to lift it. You'll just be basking in how good it sounds. ➔

FINAL SCORE

Build Quality	19/20
Playability	17/20
Sound	19/20
Value for money	18/20
Vibe	19/20
TOTAL	92%
Good for... A no-nonsense top-notch valve head that comfortably delivers a world class tone	
Look elsewhere... For a wallet-friendly option, easy carrying or you're just not into valves	