

Ampeg

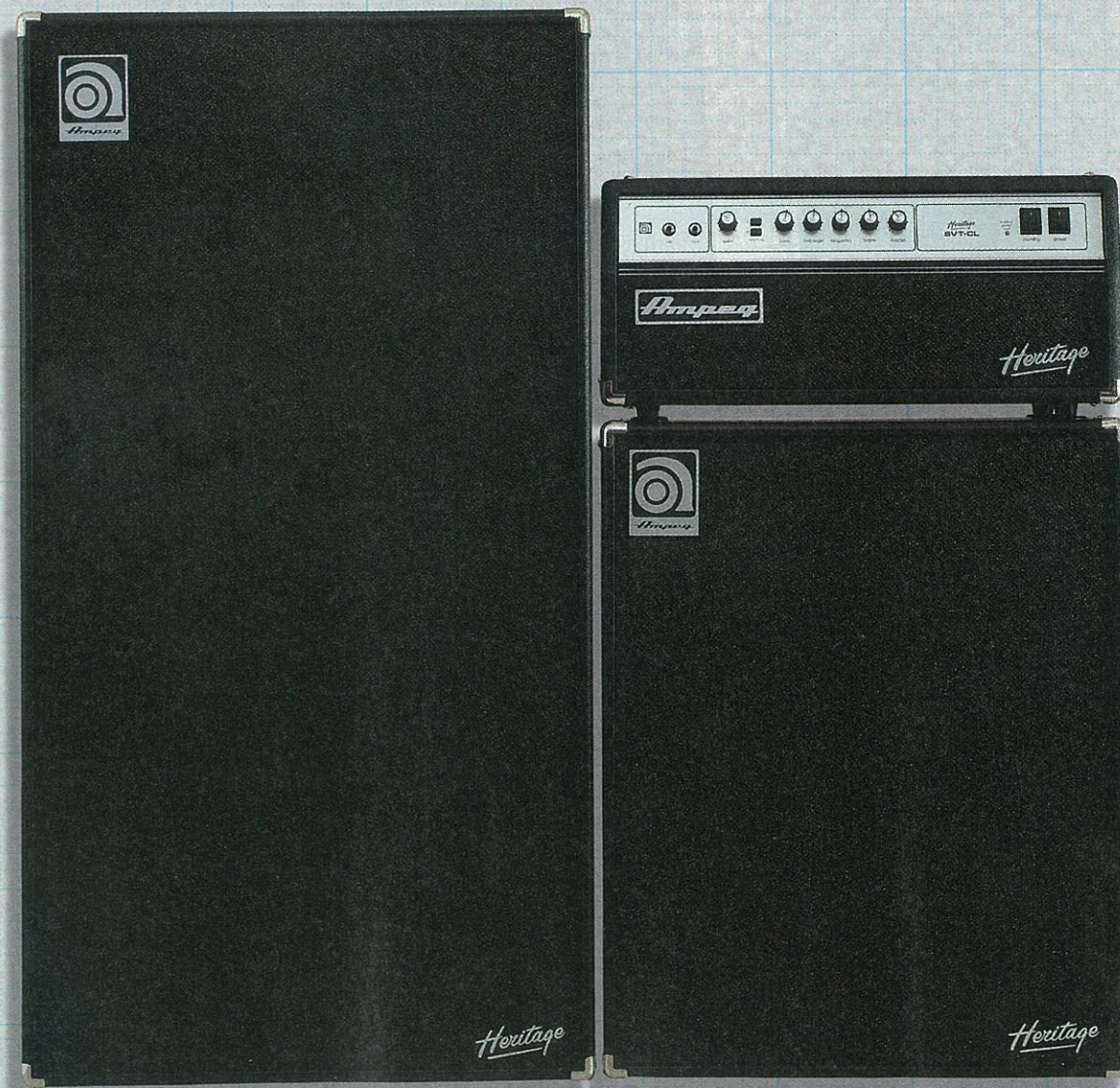
Heritage SVT-CL, SVT-810E, & SVT-410HLF

BY JONATHAN HERRERA

THE AMPEG SVT HEAD IS A STALWART. Paired with an SVT 8x10 cabinet, it occupies a singular space in the bass-rig hierarchy.

Players who crave massive volume and projection into a room with unparalleled punchiness and tube-y texture know

that the SVT is the automatic go-to—just look at the average pro-level backline: SVTs are everywhere. The SVT achieved



this status thanks in part to remarkable longevity; it's been in constant production in one form or another since 1969. One substantial change, though, was the shift away from U.S. production that accompanied Loud Technologies' purchase of the brand from St. Louis Music several years ago. While Ampeg has touted the quality and reliability of its Asian-manufactured gear, the clamor for a return to U.S. manufacturing was loud enough to precipitate the Heritage Series, Ampeg's new high-end line that's exclusively made in the U.S.A. at Loud Technologies' Woodinville, WA facility.

The three products reviewed here currently constitute the whole Heritage line, but look for more additions in the future. All of the Heritage gear has antecedents in the Ampeg line, but each also features a variety of upgrades and evolutionary changes from its predecessors. The Heritage

SVT-CL head offers upgraded tubes, including JJ-branded preamp and driver tubes and "Winged C" 6550 power amp tubes (so-called for these Russian tubes' distinctive logo). Each tube is tested and matched at Ruby Tubes in California. Ampeg has increased the printed circuit board (PCB) quality, including increasing its thickness to 1.6mm, using a two-layer board with through-hole plating, and increasing the copper weight. The cabinets also underwent some revisions, including new custom-designed Eminence drivers (including the HLF's horn), more robust PCB construction, improved routing of the thicker-gauge 16AWG wires, and mounting the speakers with threaded screws and T-nuts.

After construction and extensive sub-assembly tests, each product in the Heritage line undergoes an extensive QC process at Ampeg's U.S. factory, includ-

AMPEG SVT-CL

Street \$2,399

Pros Classic all-tube tone with volume, punch, and authority for days

Cons Expensive

AMPEG SVT-810E

Street \$1,299

Pros A must-have for the full-on SVT experience

Cons None

AMPEG SVT-410HLF

Street \$899

Pros Solid-sounding treble-tickle from an SVT

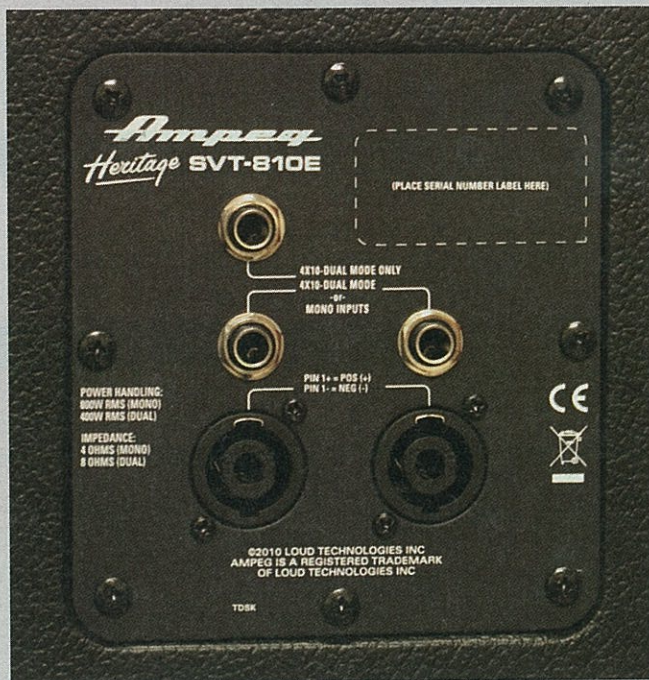
Cons Tilt-back transport doesn't work well at this size

ing thorough tests of each amp stage, a four-hour burn-in, and a final play test with one of the staff's experienced bassists, who signs a handsome hang-tag when the amp meets his or her satisfaction. This final stage marks a unique feature of the Heritage series, as the final tester could be one of Ampeg's many renowned artists. To wit: Tony Levin was the final tester on our review gear.

All of our test gear was solidly constructed. Should you, for some masochis-

The SVT-CL's rear panel offers power tube bias test points and adjustment, a balanced XLR jack, and Speakon and 1/4" speaker jacks.





The eight 10" speakers in the SVT-810E can be used together with one input signal or split into two separate 4x10s for bi-amping or stereo use.

tic reason, decide to disassemble the SVT-CL (SVTs are no fun to take apart and put back together), you'll at least be rewarded with solid and rugged interior construction. Same goes for the well-braced and insulated cabinets with rugged plastic skid rails. My only construction gripe with the gear was with the SVT-410HLF cabinet. Like its big brother, the HLF has a tilt-back handle and back-baffle mounted casters. This makes sense with the man-sized 8x10, but it's an awkward maneuvering method on the much shorter 4x10, especially if there's a head on top. Conventional casters at each bottom corner would have been a lot more useful.

SOUND

I'm happy to report that when it came to the SVT's sound there were no surprises, especially when I paired the head with the 8x10. What more can be said about the familiar SVT tone? It was all the rig is cracked up to be: huge sounding, with thick and aggressive low-mids,

an enormous and pillowy bottom, and lock-step punchiness, especially with back-pickup fingerstyle. I A/B'd it against an older U.S.-made SVT-CL and a newer SVT-VR, and it sounded nearly identical to each. The VR, perhaps, was a bit smoother and more lusciously textured, but this was subtle at best. One area that did seem to improve with the Heritage SVT is the potency of its familiar EQ. For some reason the tone controls seemed more precise and effective in the Heritage line.

Pairing the SVT-CL with the HLF 4x10 is an entirely different ballgame. Whereas the sealed 8x10 is an integral part of the SVT sound, a ported, horn-loaded 4x10 reveals a slightly crispier, more contemporary side of the SVT's personality. The HLF was full-bodied and authoritative, with a smooth sounding horn and relatively even frequency response. The power handling was more than adequate for the SVT head, although it's on the low side for a 4x10 in this format.

The Heritage line is a good example of

TECH SPECS

SVT-CL

Power output 300 watts @ 2Ω or 4Ω load
Tone controls bass: 312dB @ 40Hz; midrange: +10/-20dB @ 220Hz, 450Hz, 800Hz, 1.6kHz, or 3kHz; treble: +15/-20dB @ 4kHz; ultra lo: +2dB @ 40Hz, -10dB @ 500Hz; ultra hi: +9dB @ 8kHz
Power amp topology Class AB
Power supply Linear
Tube complement 3 x 12AX7; 2 x 12AU7; 6 x 6550
DI output Transformer-driven
Weight 80 lbs

SVT-810E

Drivers 8x10" custom-designed Eminence 100-watt
Impedance Combined/mono mode, 4Ω; split/dual mode, 8Ω
Power handling 800 watts RMS, 1,600 watts peak
Frequency Response 58Hz-5kHz
Weight 137 lbs

SVT-410HLF

Woofers 4x10" custom-designed Eminence 125-watt
Horn Eminence high-frequency driver
Impedance 4Ω
Power handling 500 watts RMS
Frequency Response 48Hz-18kHz
Weight 76 lbs

Made in U.S.A.

Warranty 5 years, electronics; 2 years, speakers; 180 days, tubes
Contact www.ameg.com

a manufacturer that listens to its clientele. It's heartening to see the apple pie of bass rigs return to America for manufacture. The head is not cheap at all, especially considering that the Asian-manufactured SVT-CL retails for about \$1,700, but there's no arguing the quality and attention to detail in the Heritage line. **BP**