

LEHNERT RAMBLER

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Quick lightweight with a heavy right

In the south part of Stockholm, "Söder", You can find the music store City Music, where the amp-manufacturer Ola Lehnert dwells. After first starting out as the resident "soldering-help" at Musikbörsen back in 1978, the thoughts of creating his own amplifier design has been prevalent. After spending years listening at the requests of guitarists of how a good amplifier should sound and work, Ola pulled himself together and built his first own prototype of what was later to become the Lehnert Rambler.



Requests for a small, light amp that was loud enough, and with a singing power-amp distortion put conventional amplifier design on its head, and new solutions had to be explored. It all came to fruition with a 1x12" tube combo with a master volume, enclosed in a lightweight cabinet that we are now about to try out.

Construction

The Rambler is a 25W "Class-A" amplifier sporting 6V6 tubes in the power amp section, and 12AX7 in the preamp. The model in this test is equipped with a Celestion 12" Century Vintage speaker, mounted in a resonant open front wood cabinet. The tone controls are of Baxandall-type and the preamp has the following layout: Drive (with a push/pull function for the Boost), Treble, Bass and Master Volume.

The amplifier is all point-point hand made with top of the line components, and comes standard with black or brown Tolex and matching front grill cloth. You can also, at an additional cost, have extra features installed such as bright switch, effects loop, reverb and Power Scaling™.

FACT SHEET

Lehnert Rambler

- Hand-built Swedish all-tube combo.
- Output Power 25W.
- "Class A" – circuit.
- Preamp tube 12AX7.
- Power amp Tubes – Two 6v6GT or EL34, fan-cooled.
- 1x12" Celestion speaker in open front cab.
- Low weight, resonant wood cabinet.
- Controls: Drive, Treble, Bass, Master
- 1 input
- Price: 10.000SEK standard equipped.
- www.citymusic.info

Sound and playability

The first thing that hits me as I carry the Rambler into the rehearsal studio is how light it is. I haven't put it on a scale, but it can't weigh many kilos. It almost feels like there is no speaker inside.

The Rambler looks simple in design, and is not a "flashy" amp in terms of looks, but looks rather timeless in its simplicity. Its exterior does not really remind me of anything I have encountered before, but still manages to seem familiar somehow. The test model is equipped with reverb, effects loop and Power Scaling™.

We will, however, focus on the amp's basic tonal characteristics.

The Rambler is very easy to tweak, Drive determines the amount of gain, and the Master how loud it gets.

In the manual, Mr. Lehnert writes that when Drive is at "0", the amp is voiced for jazz guitars or electric-acoustic guitars with on-board active electronics. From there, the amp will go seamlessly from clean to slightly smudged, up to a classic spanking.

Plugged in with a Telecaster I got a pleasant jazz tone, and when I "creamed" it a bit further, I was rewarded with a sweetly compressed funky sound. The amp sports enough headroom for my playing needs, but should you require a completely clean amp on loud volumes, you should probably voice these concerns when ordering, and the amp will be setup accordingly.

When you turn up the Drive even further and adjust the Master to a reasonable level, the amp will break up in the most glorious way you can possibly imagine. One Stones-lick after the other flooded out of the small Rambler, and I just stood there enjoying myself. These were the regions where I found my personal sweet spot.

I could tweak the tone entirely through my guitar. If I backed off on the volume, I got a beautiful clean tone, and then dialing it back up I got that sweet, full tone that all guitarists yearn for. And all this at a reasonable volume I might add.

The amp has a very sweet top end and the sound is very dynamic, in true "Class-A" spirit. The Rambler is very touch sensitive and has a nice compression when you dig in to the strings. When opening up the Drive full throttle, you get a really heavy, singing distortion. But, this is also where the lightweight construction makes itself known. The tone gets a little wobbly, and the bass flutters away as the thin walls of the cabinet can't quite handle the pressure. However, by now the volume is already way to loud, and your band members will have thrown you out of the studio.

With the Ramblers boost engaged, rowdiness is transformed into a blowtorch and you get a really fat lead-tone. Personally, I found the distortion of the basic tone with the Boost enough, as I just dialed up the volume on the guitar when I wanted to take off with a thunderous roar.

The Rambler sounded just as good with a Humbucker-equipped Les Paul, and one classic rock tone after another was easily coaxed out of the amp. The Rambler has a little bit of everything inside, Fender, Marshall, Vox, but with a distinct personal sound. Another plus is that it worked great with pedals, especially with a Hot Cake that added an extra dimension to the sound. With the Hot cake on, I got an

Additional Features

Lehnert Rambler

- Reverb and effects loop, and additional 2000SEK.
- 2 spring Accutronics and buffered loop, not tube-powered but sounds just as good at half the cost.
- Power Scaling™ 1500SEK
- Power-amp dimmer with attack control to regulate nod and compression continuously in the power section (instead of rectifiers).
- www.lehnert-amps.com

incredibly nice clean tone as I backed off on the neck volume. The Master volume works great and down at bedroom levels, is still sound vibrant and alive, and not at all flat and lifeless as is usually the case.

The Celestion Century speaker, which is very efficient, can at times sound a little too hi-fi and sharp in the high-end. But, you can of course decide what speakers you want when you order your Lehnert Rambler. I also tried out the additional features on the amp, and the Reverb and Loop worked well, and in harmony with the basic tone of the amp. The Power Scaling™, also worked fine even though I preferred the great sounding master volume of the Rambler to keep the volume down.

The Final Verdict

If you're looking for a portable, tweakable, great sounding, all-round amplifier, your quest is at an end. The Lehnert Rambler is a really good tube amp without any compromises. Utilizing the modern materials available on the market today, Ola Lehnert has managed to build a lightweight combo with a classic tone. With the negligible price tag of 10.000SEK, there aren't many products that can compete with this sound quality.

At the time of the test, I was also presented with a Lehnert equipped with VOX tone controls and a Celestion Blue speaker, which in this configuration sounded heavenly. It is most definitely a viable alternative for those who worship the classic VOX-sound. Take a trip past City Music at Ringvägen in Stockholm and try on a Lehnert Rambler. I can promise you it's worth the trip.