

WARWICK

BC150 Combo

Combos address many issues facing the modern bassist.

Mike Brooks assesses how this Chinese-made unit from Warwick stands up against the competition

KMC Music
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There was a time when Warwick amps were everywhere. They never went away, but trends can affect a brand, and low visibility can lead players to assume that a product is no longer being manufactured. We know better, of course, and we've always covered the amps and cabinets on offer from Warwick. Case in point—here we have their BC150 bass combo. Its reasonable dimensions, clean front panel and simple but effective design suggest a functional combo—but does it give the player what they need from an all-in-one amplification solution? Read on to find out.

Build Quality

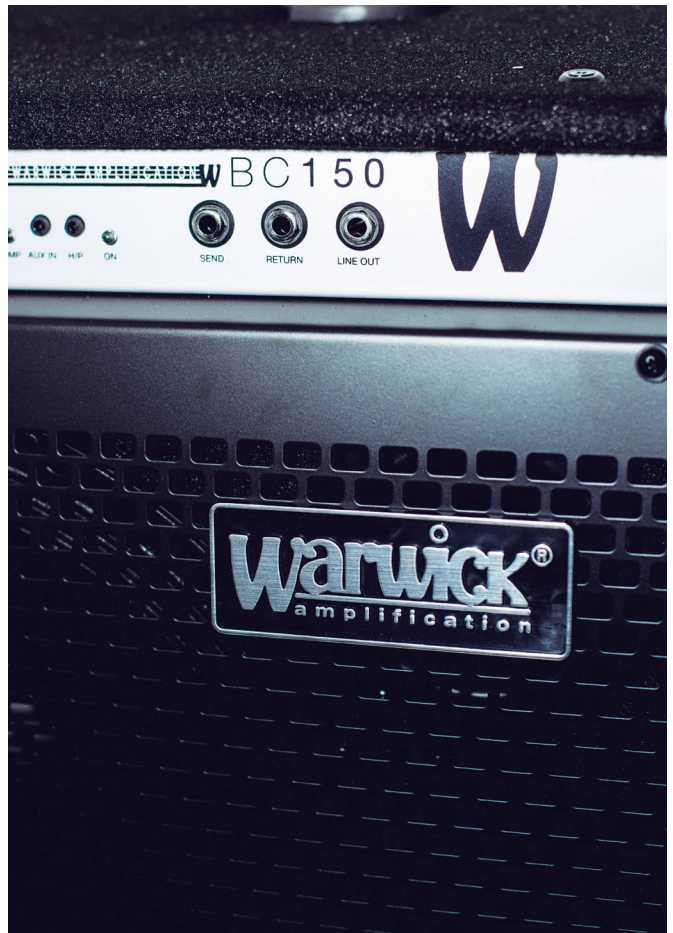
Portability is a major consideration for any combo and although this unit is hardly a lightweight, it's no backbreaker either, coming in at 25 pounds. The combo is fitted with a metal grill, corner protectors and a hard-wearing fabric covering, giving the overall impression that it's nice and rugged and will easily withstand home use, rehearsals and live gigs. The carry handle is sensibly located on top of the unit and makes moving the BC 150 effortless.

The package looks simple and clean. Everything the player needs is located on the front panel; only the on/off switch resides on the back of the unit. A pair of 1/4-inch input jacks (for active and passive instruments) can be used by two instruments simultaneously, should you wish to do so. Other ins and outs facilitate connection of an external musical source for practice; there's a 3.5mm input, 3.5mm headphone output, 1/4-inch Send/Return FX loop, and a 1/4-inch jack Line Out output. Two LED indicators show when the unit is turned on and when the compressor is activated by the level of the bass signal.

The EQ section is clear and uncluttered, comprising Bass, Low Mid, High Mid, and Treble, with a Volume control and separate Aux Volume control for any external music source. Being a Class A amp, the BC150 boasts reasonable volume levels of 150 watts at 8 ohms. You won't be leveling any buildings with it, but it has more than enough headroom to cope with most reasonable applications. The inbuilt Dynamic Distortion Limiter smoothly limits the peaks in the signal as you play harder, which should help to prevent transient peak damage to the speaker.

Sounds

As the combo is fitted with a 15-inch Warwick speaker and 4-inch horn, we'd expect to hear a favorable performance in the low-frequency range. The unit also features Low-Z circuitry for minimum thermal background noise from the solid-state electronics, and in practice, there is certainly a noticeable clarity to the output. The bass reflex housing gives the delivery extra body and projection



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so that the fundamental low end isn't compromised, and in use, the frequency response is well-rounded and versatile. Obviously, with a 15-inch speaker, the clarity of 10 and 12-inch speakers isn't there, but the horn helps to provide some extra articulation. There is some room for improvement on this point; it would have been useful to have attenuator adjustment for the horn.

Both passive and active instruments are conveyed well. Passive basses benefit from the warm delivery, and dialing in some mid boost brings a gritty tone to the fore. Fingerstyle tones are conveyed with authority, while the rasp of a pick becomes particularly pleasing when the amp is pushed a little. Individual bass character is also particularly prevalent, so the combo doesn't color the signal to any great degree. The active basses also worked well, putting out plenty of punch, and the core tone of each bass was even more noticeable due to their individual on-board electronics. Slapping brought the compressor and limiter into play; you could hear a positive effect on the signal and tone.

The EQ frequencies on offer have been well selected and none of the four EQ bands sounded excessive. The tonal coloring is effective and usable in a variety of playing situations. With up to 12 and eight decibels of boost across the EQ range, there should be enough tonal tailoring to cope with the requirements of most players. The Aux input and Headphone output are both useful additions. Indeed, it seems that these are expected on combo amps these days. The additional Aux Volume control is also good to see. Although the combo has a Line Out facility, it might have been preferable to offer a balanced XLR DI output; then again, that would doubtless have affected the overall price.

Conclusion

At a touch under \$500, this no-nonsense combo won't break the bank and is capable of an impressive sonic display. It ticks many of the boxes that a player would want from a combo, so check one out at your earliest convenience. We liked it. ■

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