

TANGLEWOOD T3

At half the wattage and almost half the price, can Tanglewood's T3 live up to its acclaimed bigger brother? Alun Lower roots for the little guy...



It's not easy living in someone else's shadow. Just put yourself in Adam Lambert or Paul Rogers' shoes and imagine trying to follow up Freddie Mercury. Fair play, they gave it a shot, but let's be honest – it wasn't the real thing, was it? Such is the daunting prospect for the positively diminutive Tanglewood T3 – a smaller, more affordable version of an already small and affordable (not to mention excellent) amplifier. A cynic could rightly argue that there would little to no point in devising such an amplifier – after all, surely the utility of an acoustic amp starts to waver when you're starting to get down to tamer volumes? Not so, cries the T3, with all the determination of a long-distance runner making the final heroic yards of a five-mile run.

FEATURES & CONSTRUCTION

Make no mistake, the T3 is throwing everything it's got at this, coming packed with nearly all the features of its bigger, louder sibling.

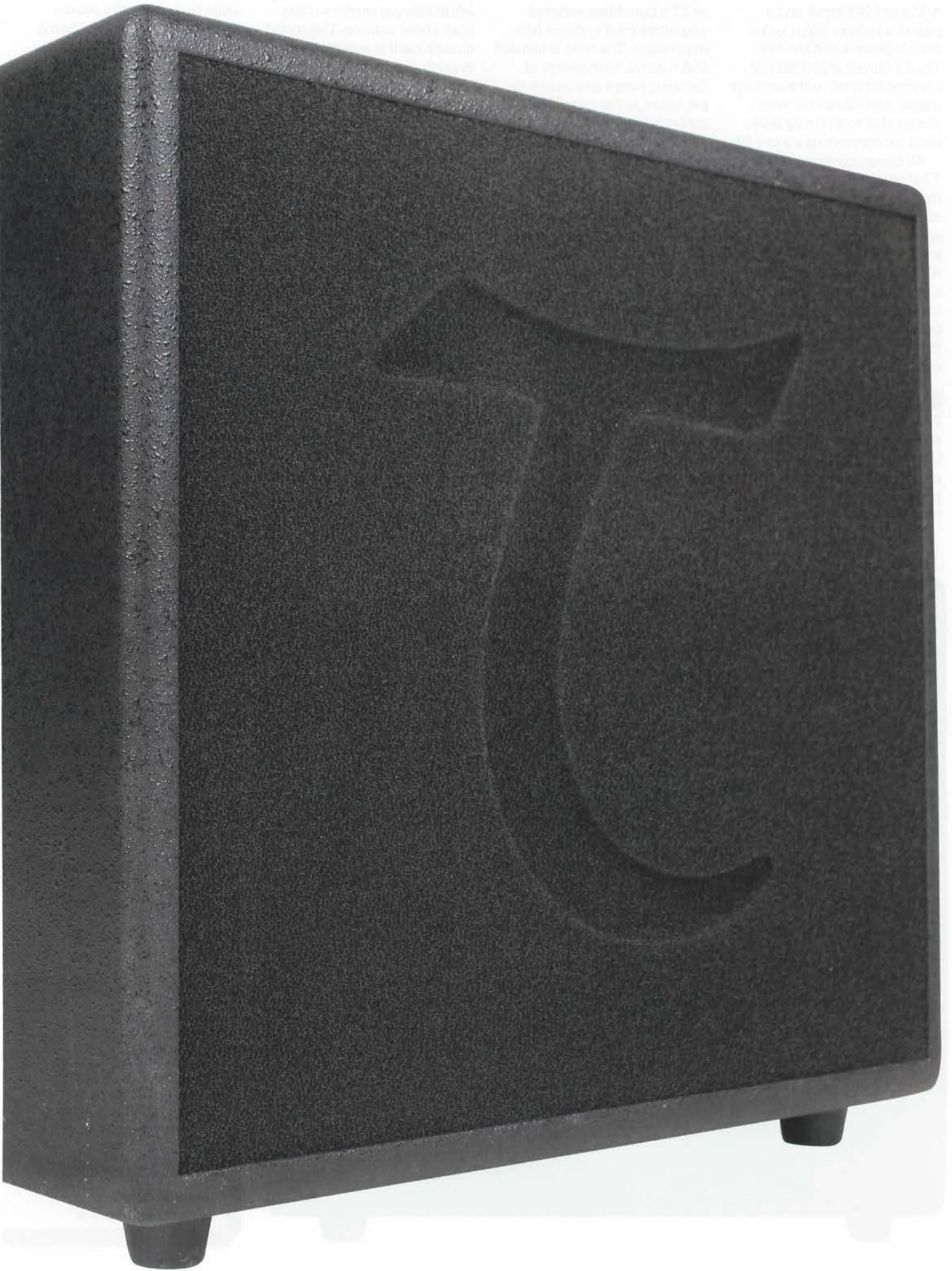
For starters, there are two dedicated channels to get to grips with – one for your actual guitar and the other for a microphone, making it perfectly suited to singer-songwriters in particular. You've got 30-watts of power to play around with, delivered in a compact enclosure housing a six-inch speaker, compared to 60-watts and an eight-inch speaker on the T6.

Channel 1 starts off with a high/low selector switch – this is a crucial first step when setting up the amplifier for the first time as it depends on what kind of electronics your guitar is packing. Higher output units (such as those sporting a battery-powered preamp) will have to opt for "low" setting, whereas lower output soundhole pickups and the like can use the "high" setting to give themselves a boost. Other controls for your guitar include a three-band EQ comprising of the usual bass, middle and treble, along with a gain control to monitor the output (complete with a clipping indicator to let

you know if you've gone a step too far) and a contour switch for brightening up your sound if your guitar happens to be especially mellow in tone.

The microphone channel is a rather more simplistic affair as you would expect, comprising of just a single gain control (again paired with a clipping indicator), and a switch to apply the amp's current effects settings to both channels or to leave it on just the guitar channel. This is where the T3 does suffer slightly compared to the T6 – only the bigger model boasts an on board effects loop in the (quite likely) event that you don't get on with the amp's built-in effects. It's a shame to have to such a feature, but unless you're a big effects user I can't see it being too big an issue.

Elsewhere on the amplifier, connectivity is very good; you get not only a headphone output but also a 6.35mm line out, an XLR DI balanced output, tuner connectivity,



a 3.5mm MP3 input and a pair of auxiliary input jacks for CD players and the like. The DI output is probably of greatest interest to the average gigger, as it allows for direct connection to a mixing desk, ideal for connecting up to a PA.

All things considered, the T3 is on paper pretty closely matched up to the T6, with only minor differences in speaker size and feature set. At a shade under nine kilograms, it's also about a third lighter than its chubbier sibling, making what was already a pretty portable amp even more convenient. Who knew it could be done?

SOUND QUALITY

Plugging in for the first time reveals a punchy, wholesome tone that belies the tiny enclosure. It's a sound that generally surprises most that hear it, much in the same way

as ZT's Lunchbox series of amplifiers tend to do on first impression. The tone is focused and natural, with plenty of dynamic range and punch to get heard in the mix. The tone controls work reliably and almost clinically, just as you would expect them to, and the quality of the two inputs is really very good indeed. Of course, there are restrictions as to how much low-end you can dial in compared to a larger unit, but you'd be mad for thinking that this wouldn't be the case and if you're reading this, chances are you're more concerned about portability, convenience and overall quality of sound, anyway.

While the core acoustic (and vocal) tone is excellent, the one area in which the amplifier lets itself down (and indeed where the T6 also suffers) is the on-board effects, which are simple to a fault, with no

adjustable parameters other than sheer volume. The sound quality itself is acceptable enough, but to have a delay with only one setting for time and decay is practically pointless, to say nothing of the rest of the effects. As it stands, the most useful effects are the reverbs, with the "hall" model arguably being the better of the two. To dwell too long on the effects though would be a mistake because, like the T6, the T3 offers some of the best acoustic and vocal tones of any amplifier in this price range and quite some way beyond.

CONCLUSION

While tone-chasers with slightly deeper pockets will definitely want to check out the T6 before going any further, the T3 is without a doubt a superb amplifier. It punches above its weight in just about every way imaginable, and

aside from some iffy effects and restricted controls I found myself completely bowled over by its considerable charms. If the portability appeals to you but you're concerned about a drop in low-end, merely consider that this little box of tricks makes an excellent accompaniment to any venue's PA, and those worries soon disappear into mere trivialities. Effects junkies that require more precise control over their sounds will want to hold out for the FX loop found on the larger model, but for the rest of us the sheer convenience of this amplifier is almost impossible to resist. Add to that an incredibly compelling price point, and you've got yourself a bit of a bargain. Try one out at your earliest convenience and prepare to be impressed.

Alun Lower



TANGLEWOOD T3

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Tanglewood
Model: T3
Price: £250
Power output: 30w
Speaker: 6" woofer
Built-in Effects: Hall, plate, chorus, delay
Inputs: jack (6.35mm) CH 1 Input, CH 2 Input, AUX in (RCA), MP3 in (3.5mm), tuner out, line out, DI out (XLR), phones out
Weight: 8.8kg

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: The portability and price of this amp is very desirable
Cons: On-board effects aren't up to what they should be
Overall: Incredible price point, impossible to resist

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality ★★★★★
Sound Quality ★★★★★
Value for Money ★★★★★

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

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