

BAREFACED

SUPER COMPACT 12 CABINET

KEV SANDERS TACKLES THE LATEST CAB FROM THE BAREFACED STABLE. WILL IT CUT THE MUSTARD?

Barefaced
www.barefaced.com



Barefaced was started in 2008 by Alex Claber. You may remember Alex from his *BGM* column 'But this Goes To Eleven?':

he's passionate about bass cabinet design, and with three generations of development since the start of the company, these Super Compact 12 cabs represent the real cutting edge of compact bass cab and speaker design.

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES

Despite the traditional looks, the construction of the Compact 12 is based soundly on science and the latest acoustic design principles. All bass cabs are built to be rigid: they need to be, but most manufacturers try to achieve this by using thick and dense plywood to construct a simple six-sided box to put the speaker in. Some add an internal 'front to back' brace or two. This obviously works to a degree and it's an inexpensive way to build them, but it can have the unfortunate side effect of making the cab extremely heavy and resonant.

The Barefaced Super Compact 12, like all Barefaced

cabs, uses relatively thin 9mm dual-density ply, but it's constructed around a complex internal structure of interlocking panels, which not only makes the whole thing incredibly rigid, but almost unbelievably light. The internal bracing panels support the external sides of the cab in such a way that there are no equal lengths of unsupported cab wall, minimising resonance. It's all clever stuff, and if you want to know more (much, much more) about the thinking behind the construction of these cabs, the Barefaced website has tons of additional information.

The single 12" driver is pretty special too. It's an Eminence unit, custom-made for Barefaced, but with an ingenious twist to the original design. The small centre dust cap is attached to the central tube that the voice coil is formed around, rather than glued to the speaker cone as usual. This little detail makes a big difference in that the dust cap itself can vibrate independently from the rest of the speaker, producing frequencies higher than the speaker cone

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could alone. An extra bonus is the improved midrange dispersion and a cooler-running voice coil, adding to the efficiency of the speaker. It's an idea that was used on early Lowther speakers and some ATC monitors, but as far as we know this is the first time it's been used for a dedicated bass driver.

So, a cabinet made in-house from best quality materials and a custom lightweight and efficient neodymium bass driver – this is shaping up well. How about the finish? The good news here is that it's smart, durable and looks great. It's a hard, sprayed-on, textured coating similar to that sometimes seen on pro PA speakers. The chrome corners are a nice retro touch and if you prefer even more of a vintage look, for a bit extra you can specify a silver grille cloth rather than the black steel version that comes as standard.

The Super Compact 12s are rated at eight ohms, and on the small back panel there are two dual-purpose Speakon/jack sockets, meaning you can link two cabs together for a more powerful rig.

SOUNDS

It was obvious that these cabs would need more than just a home test in the studio, so I took them off to work and used them on a good cross-section of gigs including a big stage set for a festival, a small concert theatre gig as part of a compact double bass rig and finally into the studio for a recording session. Before any of that though, they were given a thorough going-over to see how they sounded in a quiet environment.

Hooking them up to a Markbass Tube 800 gave a solid, muscular sound with an incredibly detailed midrange. Although the cabinet has no HF driver, you certainly don't miss the high frequencies at these lower volumes, and overall I'd describe the sound as focused and warm. There's a slight change as you stand further off-axis, but not much, and they should sound good to a wide area of the audience.

In the studio the Super Compact continued to impress, not least because the live room is up two flights of stairs and carrying it up was less effort than bringing up the tray of coffees before we started! In the acoustically neutral live room the cab sounded

fantastic and the recorded sound was open, detailed and with the kind of weight to the low end that you'd normally expect from a 4x10.

Expecting a single cab to do all things brilliantly is unrealistic, and using the cab for a double bass gig revealed that the Super Compact 12 is better suited to reproducing electric bass in a rock or soul situation. The sound was good, and the lack of feedback very impressive, but the Compact 12 isn't designed to reproduce the mile-wide frequency range put out by the double bass, although the midrange was reproduced with stunning accuracy.

However, I've saved the best until last, because linking two of these cabs together for the festival gig was genuinely amazing. Remember, what we had here was two single 12" cabs with no HF units and a footprint little bigger than a small combo. Using the same 800 watt amp that we'd used for the initial tests, we plugged in my old '62 Jazz bass and the sound was astonishing, with a fat and focused bottom end that seems completely at odds to the size of the cabs. You want loud? Well here it is, with no discernable distortion unless dialled in from the amp. The cabs sounded like a rig twice the size, with a level of definition and presence that could only be down to the cabs' super-rigid design.

CONCLUSION

Don't be fooled by the traditional appearance of the Barefaced Compact 12. This is as advanced as bass cab design goes, and you'd be hard pressed to find another bass speaker that would match it for performance at any price. These cabinets work well in a wide range of applications, but to hear them at their best you'll need to crank up the volume and stand back. Any decent 1x12 cabinet will sound OK being driven by a high quality powerful amp at lower volumes, but where most start flagging, the Super Compact 12s are just getting into their stride. They seem particularly well suited to rock and soul gigs; the kind of job where you might want to use an old-school Precision or Jazz, as the natural tone seems to suit this kind of sound perfectly. Impressive. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £549

SPEAKER | 1x12" Custom Eminence with Neodymium magnet

CONNECTIONS | 2 x ¼ Jack/Neutrik (parallel)

POWER | 150-600W RMS

FREQUENCY RESPONSE | 37Hz to 4kHz

IMPEDANCE | 8 ohms

DIMENSIONS | (HxWxD) 560 x 440 x 300mm

WEIGHT | 11kg / 23.5lbs

EXTRAS Fitted cover and silver grille cloth available at extra cost

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Huge low-end punch, lightweight and a great price. Two of these cabs will make a portable rig that will handle most gigs

MINUS | Nothing

OVERALL | British-made and designed and quite possibly the best compact and lightweight bass cabs available today. If used with a decent amp, a single cab should be more than adequate for most small gigs or rehearsals

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■■
VALUE ■■■■■■■■■■