

**BUGERA BVP5500 \$799**  
BASS AMPS



## Bugera BVP5500 \$799

Good ideas. Good looks. But when all is said and done, isn't it all about tone? *by Steve Henderson*



**T**he BVP5500 is a pretty slick looking unit. It has a single channel with a tunable mid control, a foot-switchable valve preamp, a 9-band equalizer with level, and plenty of ins and outs. It takes up two rack spaces and pumps out 550 watts into a 4 ohm load.

This amp has some really nice features. To start with, the preamp section has a selectable mid – 5 positions from 220Hz up to 3 kHz, with 15db of boost and cut. This gives, all by itself, an enormous amount of tone shaping, from upper mid focused to deep, whooshy bottoms to that scooped, woody tone that sits beautifully under acoustic guitars. Add to this a footswitchable 9-band equalizer and you have real tone-shaping power. The EQ has its own level fader so any setting can be engaged with the appropriate volume already preset. Or, it can be used as an overall EQ, for when you find yourself in a sonically unfriendly room.

It also has two effects loops

– one is a dedicated loop and the other is a pre out/power in insert point that can be used for effects or for slaving to and from another amp. It has a variable balanced DI to go straight into the desk – a nice touch – and speaker outs in the form of jacks and a speakon. It even has a tuner out for silent tuning when the mute function is engaged via the footswitch. This amp has loads of features!

### Sounds

But the best feature is the valve stage of the preamp – four little bottles glowing happily inside. We're not sure why a bass player would need four 12AX7s – that's usually the domain of the guitar player, for cascading gain stages into that smooth overdrive – but it seems to work because the warmth that gently swells in as the valve control is dialed up is smooth and even, and a welcomed function on a bass amp. The 5500 takes advantage of the natural compression that tubes provide to create a really organic limiting effect – a

sweet softening of the attack. Very cool. Even into the 410 and horn, there was no nasty spikiness in the top end. Running it through an old 200w EV TL, which goes up to a potentially harsh 6.5kHz, the valve stage compressed the tone in a very musical way – much more natural than a compressor pedal and with none of the frequency loss that solid state compressor circuits usually cause.

It is possible to overdrive the valve stage but this isn't its reason of being there, and it will depend on the pickups driving it. It's also possible to get a nasty sound out of this amp but, if you're doing a bunch of Who covers, this may be just perfect. We found that a little drive in the rockier tunes help the bass cut through the mix in a really musical way – and a touch too much became immediately un-musical, so experimentation may be the order of the day and this amp encourages just that.

### Verdict

The Bugera BVP5500 has loads of features packed into a fairly small package. The valve feature works fine but even rolling it back offered really toneful sounds. We still can't believe it's only 800 bills, so go and get one now before they spot the typo in their price. **G**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Simple to use, great tone, nice valve stage  
**We dislike:** At this price?  
**Guitarist says:** Solidly built, musical sounds, this one's a keeper



### Bugera BVP5500

**PRICE:** \$799.00  
**ORIGIN:** China  
**TYPE:** Hybrid, rackmount bass head  
**OUTPUT:** 300/550w  
**VALVES:** 12AX7 x 4  
**CHANNELS:** One  
**FOOTSWITCH:** Included  
**DIMENSIONS:** 485mm/19.1" (w) x 315mm/12.4" (d) x 95mm/3.7" (h)  
**WEIGHT:** 27.3kg/12.4lb

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### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



The rear panel houses an effects loop, speak and line outputs, and more