

► the first of the amp's two channels operate purely as a solid state device, while the second channel has an ECC83/12AX7 valve fitted to the preamp to create the sound we associate with good, gutsy lead overdrive.

The look of the 100 watt head is, I think, an improvement on the traditional Marshall amp head. With the single cab stack the controls are perfectly angled to the player and logically read from left to right, starting with the guitar input and the normal channel controls.

The normal channel has two modes of operation, clean or crunch, selected by a push switch. In clean mode the gain pot acts like a straightforward volume control, but when the crunch option is selected the amount of crunch is increased as the pot is turned up.

The trio of tone controls is fairly standard stuff, but there's more correction available than I was expecting. The old Marshall trick of cranking all the way up for

blast away with the kind of distortion that puts the rash in thrash! In both modes the gain control takes care of the amount of distortion – as you'd expect – and there's a channel volume control to balance the ratio of distortion to volume, and balance the levels of both channels. The amp's overall output level is then taken care of by a master volume pot at the far right of the front panel. With this channel, again there's a three band EQ setup, but with the addition of a fourth pot to contour the midband voicing. The amount of sweep from this pot really does add a lot to the already versatile tone controls.

For some reason Marshall have chosen to site the effects loop sockets on the front panel. I always find this messy, because it means a couple of extra cables hanging down the front of the amp. I'd prefer the sockets located on the back panel but with the mix pot left on the front. Mix pot? Yes, Marshall have included a control to govern the mix

also been included in the front panel and I have similar views about these as with the effects loop sockets. While it's an advantage to be able to plug in without having to crawl around the back of the amp, all that extra cable hanging down or draped over the amp is the messy way of doing the job.

## IN USE

With Valvestate, the R&D people have managed to retain that distinctive Marshall edge – crisp and biting – although in this case there's rather more EQ available. I've always felt other Marshalls to be a touch light in the warmth department, but this really isn't the case here.

I do however have one major gripe. The amp's versatility has been severely limited because the clean/crunch on channel 1, and channel 2's OD1/OD2 options are not footswitchable. They have to be selected from the front panel.



the best results isn't the best approach in this case. What?! A subtle Marshall?

Next comes the boost channel and that's where the fun really starts. Selected by a push switch which sits between the two channels, or by a footswitch, the boost channel also starts with a gain control followed by a push switch to select one of two overdrive options. OD1 is a fat, blues type distortion which leaves you something to work with via the guitar's volume pot. OD2, on the other hand, leaves nothing for the player to do except throw back his head, pull the obligatory grimace and

between the dry and effected signal. I hope a lot more people follow Marshall's lead here because it helps solve the problem of instantly controlling the amount of effect in the signal without altering the level, and without having to nose dive to the floor for the pedals, or squint pathetically at the LCD window on a digital processor.

The last remaining pot on the front is the reverb master. This is calibrated to give more than enough control without making it overbearing, although at full tilt there's a fair bit of reverb available here.

A line out and footswitch socket have

General channel switching, and reverb switching, can be done by the footswitch, but I really can't see why the other options couldn't have been channelled in the same way – unless the ugly costing monster has had a hand in it! This would have offered four independent sounds, upgrading the amp from a two channel with either/or options to a full four channel, placing it in a much higher league in terms of versatility.

Soundwise, though, it's well up there, with lots of warmth and richness on the clean side, staying clean even with the volume right up. Crunch is just that, with a ►