

► definite solid state bias to it when the gain pot's cranked to the top. It's not an unpleasant distortion, although if the EQ is not carefully set the Valvestate is capable of producing as many naff sounds as it does good ones.

The same thing can be said of the boost channel, although when set up properly the character of the sound is unmistakably valve, and again, the available EQ allows it to sound more like a Marshall than a Marshall, if you follow me. There's bags of dirt, if needed, and because of the contour control this can be smoothed out enough for the bass end to really come through without muddying up the sound.

## THE CAB

At this point I should mention the 8412 4x12 cabinet, which plays no small part in helping the amp achieve the right results. If you've used 4x12s before and want to get into using them again, having dumped them in favour of something more portable, then this little cab is worth checking out.

The dimensions have been kept as small as possible, and in fact you'd be forgiven for thinking it housed a quartet of 10 inch units, such is its size.

But it still manages to give a big sound and, to be perfectly honest, I think I prefer it to the bigger cabs; the sound seems tighter and more precise than the big boys, and goes perfectly with the Valvestate head because it seems to respond better to the extra EQ.

Although it's possible to lift the cab single handed, I wish Marshall had included a set of detachable castors in the design, just for those gigs where the carry-ins are tougher than an army assault course. Remember Marshall, not all of us have roadcrews...

## CONCLUSION

I've moaned about the lack of switching, and it's a shame there are no castors, but looking at the retail price of this setup I can't help wondering if it's all simply a matter of cost. To do what I suggested with the switching would certainly take the Valvestate into a higher price bracket, and although I think it could stand it, Marshall obviously don't agree.

While I stand by my criticisms, the good points of the Marshall easily outweigh these, and looked at overall don't put more than a scratch on an otherwise well finished rig. I've heard on the grapevine

that the 8080 80 watt combo version of the 100 watt head is what's doing the business, but for my money I'd go for the stack given the choice.

The latest wave of hybrid amps seems to be cutting it a lot better than earlier examples, which used transistors in the front end and valves for the power amp, as opposed to the way Crate, Hughes & Kettner and now Marshall are doing it. I've always been sceptical about the attempt to solve the old transistor versus valve argument, but it seems that these companies - and the Marshall is the only one I've comprehensively tested - have successfully managed to overcome the problems. They've also put me into a whole new category of guitarist. The next time I'm dragged into the old valves vs transistors debate, I shall just look at both parties, draw a deep breath and say, 'I'm into hybrids, me...'

### RRP:

**8100 100 watt head: £280.00 inc vat.**

**8412 cabinet: £245.86 inc vat.**

For further information contact *Jim Marshall (Products) Ltd, Denbigh Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK1 1DQ. Tel: 0908 376118.*

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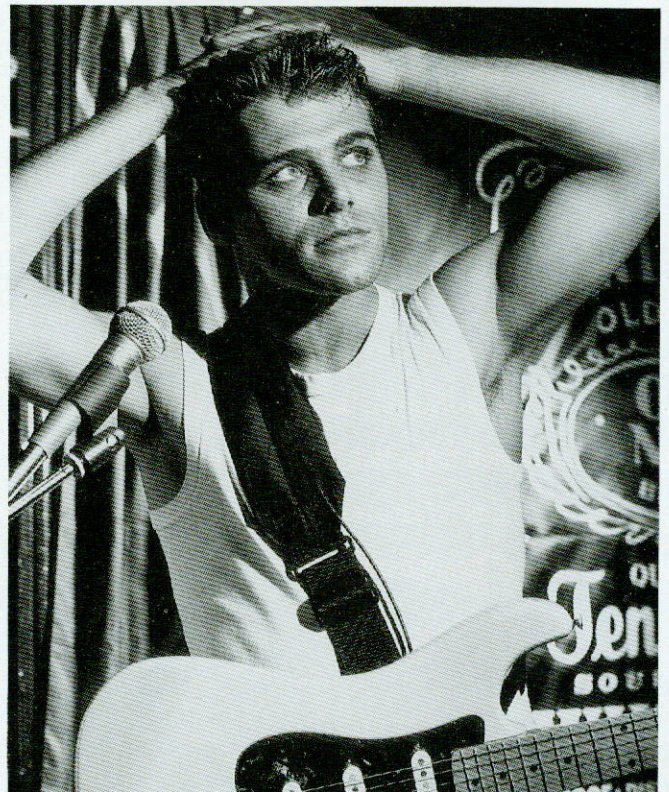
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