

## FACTFILE

Louis Electrics  
KR12

DESCRIPTION 40W 1x12" combo with 3 x ECC83, 2 x EL34 and 1 x GZ34 valves (solid state rectifier optional), Celestion G12 Vintage 30 Speaker. Made in USA

PRICE £2,150

CONTROLS Preamp Volume, Master Volume, Treble, Bass, Middle, Presence; Standby and On/Off switches; negative feedback control at rear

ACCESSORIES Footswitch for gain boost (included)

DIMENSIONS 61cm wide, 53cm high, 25cm deep  
WEIGHT 22kg/48.4lbs

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www.louisamps.com

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## Bogner

Shiva 112

Two-channel monster with reverb and four EL34s blasting 80W through a single Celestion

RRP £2,199

## Orange

Rockerverb 50 MkII 1X12 Seriously noisy lump of pure retro rock, with two EL34s driving the same V30 speaker as the KR12

RRP £1,428

REVIEWED August 2010

are just about waking up, the Buster is fat and loud enough to compete with a 12W silverface combo close to full blast. Push things up past 4 or 5 and the solid, sticky, creamy, touch-sensitive magic of a classic tweed amp fills the room. Sonically, it's perfect. There's not much difference between the channels - just a hint of added chime on Bright - and the lack of variety on offer through running both together and adjusting the relative levels is slightly disappointing.

The true test of a valve-rectified amp like this involves plugging in a Les Paul and patching both channels in line with everything on full for a half-hour pummelling of *Cortez The Killer*. The Buster delivers all the soaring, splatting magnificence of Neil Young at his ragged best. It's on the edge but the tone always remains smooth, clear and well-balanced, which all in all makes this amp an absolute joy to be with.

## KR12

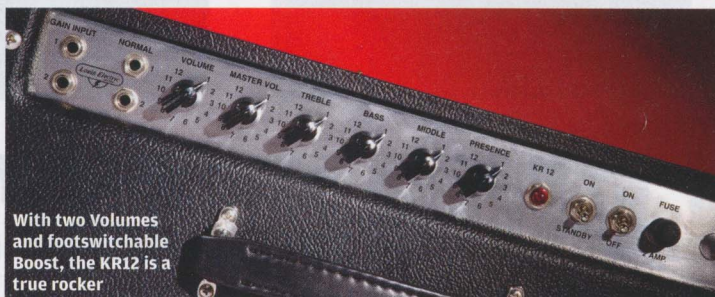
Two EL34s, gold piping and the size all recall a Marshall 1974, but the porthole baffle gives the KR12 a look all its own, and the brushed metal control panel and chickenhead knobs mix things up further. The KR12 has Volume controls for both ends of the circuit, a three-way tone stack plus Presence and, lurking on the underside of the chassis, a little cream Damping knob which adjusts the level of negative feedback. The speaker is a Vintage 30, well-suited to British-style overdrive and more than up to handling 40W. This one's a single-channel amp but the four inputs offer different levels of gain, and there's a cute footswitch... but no footswitch socket. How's that going to work?

## Sounds

With a Tele plugged into Normal 1 and all the controls at halfway, the KR12 has a crisp, throaty tone with lots of crunch and an element of



To bridge both channels on the Buster you'll need an old-school patch lead



With two Volumes and footswitchable Boost, the KR12 is a true rocker

## The KR12's four inputs offer different levels of gain from crisp, crunchy throatiness to a hefty vintage rock bark

Marshall-style boxiness... fantastic. More or less overdrive is easily dialed in, and the tone stays rich even with Master very low (although this is not a bedroom amp). The EQ is excellent; zeroing Middle while keeping Treble and Presence high gives a passable impression of a blackface Fender Twin.

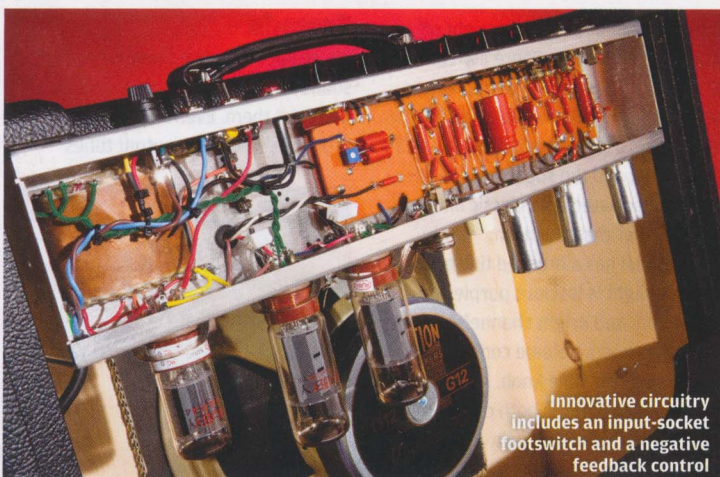
Plugging into Gain 1 brings a hefty vintage rock bark that'll have you swearing it's a 2x12" - and there's more to come. Plugging the little footswitch into Normal 2 gives a warm blast of extra gain from the extra triode. Cleverly, the inputs are wired so the switch works like a stage-linking patch lead that you can plug and unplug with the flick of a toe. With the footswitch in Normal 1 the grind is even more ferocious, but always tight and controlled. The only thing you can't do

with just one channel is adjust output levels to get a perfect match between clean and dirty settings.

The extra knob round the back is a good advert for non-negative-feedback amps, as every sliver of damping you dial in robs the KR12 of a little more depth and sparkle. A careful dose could be useful for taming a bloomy semi-acoustic, but go too far and the whole thing becomes strangely cold and stiff.

## Verdict

This has to be the greatest debut since Fabrizio Ravanelli pulled on a Middlesbrough shirt and put three past Liverpool. If you're looking for a loud, versatile 1x12" combo, it'd be hard to do better than the KR12; and if you're looking for a compact but giggable tweed-type, it's just as hard to see how you could beat the Buster. There's some high-class competition at this price, for sure, but it would have been downright perverse not to give either of these amps 20 out of 20 for sound, and that might be all you need to know.



Innovative circuitry includes an input-socket footswitch and a negative feedback control

## FINAL SCORE

LOUIS ELECTRICS KR12	
Build Quality	19/20
Playability	20/20
Sound	20/20
Value for money	17/20
Looks	16/20
TOTAL	92%