

WTX500 Review

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Eden WTX500 & EN210XST

Apparently, not all that glitters is gold, which is true enough, but can this immensely portable offering from Eden deliver a 24-carat performance? Mike Brooks goes looking for bass treasure.

Originating in 1976, David Nordschow, with his high-end range of Eden amplification, became a very prominent player in the bass amp market during the mid 90s, with high visibility on stages and in studios around the world. Following a takeover by US Music Corporation in late 2002, the Eden brand has done well to maintain its position as a prominent player, though finds itself in an ever increasing market sector where customer demands on size, weight, power and ultimately cost mean that bassists are being far more selective in their

product choices, and therefore competition between the manufacturers is becoming ever tougher.

The WTX500 is the updated version of the WTX260 and certainly addresses the current fad for high-power, small-dimension amps with all the usual features a player might need. Reviewed here with a 2x10 cab from Eden's Nemesis range, we're expecting this set-up to score quite highly when it comes to portability, but will it be a contender in the race for the winning line when compared to other compact amps out there? Or is it just another also-ran?

Features

The front panel features a simple layout, and Eden have given five of the front panel controls (all except the master volume) dual push-pull functionality. Plugging in, the gain control sets the input level, a green LED signalling when you reach the loudest optimum signal level, but pulling the control brings a -12 dB pad into play should you be using an active bass or a particularly hot passive instrument. The enhance control also brings the compressor into play, which can be bypassed by pulling the control outwards, allowing the enhancer to boost the low, upper-mid and high frequencies while slightly cutting the lower mids. Next up is the three-band EQ, which offers +/-15 dB of cut and boost at 30 Hz, 550 Hz - 2.2 kHz (variable mid control) and 2 kHz. Pulling the bass control engages a 'dynamic bass boost' for a fuller sound, while pulling the mid control activates a 'mid shift', which allows you to pinpoint the mid frequencies you wish to cut or boost. The standard setting with the treble control pushed in is pre-EQ (ie clean with no EQ added), but pull the treble control and the signal sent via the DI output to a PA or mixer is post-EQ (ie EQ is

added to your signal).

An additional LED indicates when the amp's limiting circuit is called into play due to a high output level, so you can adjust the output accordingly and prevent any speaker damage. FX send/return sockets and a pair of auxiliary inputs (left/right) make connecting an external source (CD player, MP3 player, PC/Mac, keyboard etc) to the amp possible should you wish to practise or play along with a song, sample or loop, and complete the front panel. The rear panel features all the usual suspects you would expect: Speakon and jack speaker outputs, a headphone socket, an XLR DI socket with a level control and a ground lift selector switch, and finally a jack socket to utilise a footswitch (not included). The WTX500 can be used as is, or it can be rack-mounted using the side screw holes that have been pre-drilled, though a rack bracket is required.

Cabinet & Speakers

The EN210XST cab is a lightweight unit, rated at 400 watts, comprising two 10-inch paper cone speakers and a titanium compression driver. The cab looks pretty roadworthy and is covered with a black carpet material and tough plastic corners for cab stacking and added protection, with vents at the base. Pairs of Speakon and jack sockets are included on the rear panel, along with +3 dB tweeter control to improve high-end response.



Speakon and jack sockets are included on the rear panel



The EN210XST cab comprises two 10-inch paper cone speakers



Sounds

Set flat, the amp sounds surprisingly warm, and turning the master control up, the response from both the head and the cab is equally reassuring. Naturally, with a cab of this size, the bottom end and low mids will be restricted in their delivery due to its dimensions, but placing the cab on the floor and in the corner of a room improves the bottom end somewhat. The tweeter is very responsive, and cutting and boosting the level can have quite a dramatic effect on the overall tone. Some tweeters can sound too harsh but the one fitted here opens up the sound very well.

Adding some EQ to the mix changes the tonal palette, and in this instance it is certainly the case that a little goes a long way. For the most part, boosting the bass EQ was more than adequate, and it wasn't until the amp was tested with a 4-ohm 4x10 cabinet that there was any need to call the dynamic bass boost into play. In fact, the 2x10

cab limited the full potential of the amp, so as a pairing you won't get the full picture as to what this amp is capable of until you match it with a bigger cab or add another cab to the existing 2x10 unit. Returning to the EQ, the sweepable mid control lends some tonal flexibility, although we found using this in conjunction with the enhance control required some experimentation, as the enhancer on its own does a splendid job at transforming the upper end of the overall signal. Adding extra upper mids to this is simply overkill, so you may find that using the mid EQ to tighten up the lower mids while using the enhancer to brighten the overall sound is particularly useful.

Tonally, the WTX500 will cope perfectly with any style of playing you care to throw at it. The compressor and enhancer are useful tools for creating a great slap sound, and the tone-shaping options on offer work very well indeed. Fingerstyle and pick players are accommodated too, and as an all-round amp there is very little to fault. With

its solid-state front end the amp lacks the natural richness and harmonic performance of a tube amp, but by incorporating an ace up their sleeve in the form of the 'Golden Ear' chip, Eden claim to offer 'unequalled tube emulation' which may account for the warmth and roundness of tone that we first encountered upon plugging in.

As a set-up, the 2x10 cab is perfectly adequate for small acoustic gigs and relatively quiet band rehearsals, not to mention practising at home (the headphone socket being a particular boon). But in a wider context, for full-on band rehearsals and gigs, you will need a bigger single cab or an additional cab, which in effect will allow the amp to 'breathe' significantly better due to greater headroom.

Conclusion

With so many small, powerful bass amps now out there, us bassists really are spoilt for choice, and the WTX500 is definitely up there with the market leaders. It certainly performs well, sounds great and is so easy to carry around; it doesn't have any real negative points. Sure, the price might look a little higher than some alternatives, but you may find deals and competitive pricing by shopping around. The EN210XST 2x10 is a good cab, and in terms of quality of sound and portability it's a solid performer and certainly up to life on the road. It's just a shame that for this review it doesn't promote the full capabilities of the amp. Nevertheless, the build quality is still excellent, and tonally the amp provides evidence that Eden are still up there producing high-quality products for us bassists to enjoy. Long may it continue!



Further sockets can be found on the rear panel

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

EDEN WTX500

Price: £719

Controls: Gain (pull for -12 dB pad), enhance/compressor (pull for compressor bypass), 3-band EQ with +/-15 dB cut/boost, bass (pull for bass boost), mid (pull for mid-shift frequency selection), high (pull for post-EQ DI send), master volume, mute selector, ground lift selector

Inputs: 1 x 1/4-inch jack instrument input (passive & active), 1/4-inch jack auxiliary left and right inputs, 1/4-inch jack footswitch input (footswitch not included)

Outputs: 1 x Speakon speaker output, 2 x 1/4-inch jack speaker outputs, 1/4-inch jack FX send & return sockets, 1/4-inch jack tuner output, 1/4-inch jack headphone output, 1/4-inch XLR DI output

Power: Output 280 watts @ 8 ohms, 500 watts @ 4 ohms

Dimensions: 70(h) x 207(w) x 274(d) mm

Weight: 2.15 kg (4.12 lb)

Made in: China

EDEN EN210XST

Price: £499.99

Speakers: 2 x 10-inch E51040XL16 paper cone drivers and 1-inch T2004 titanium compression driver (with +3 dB tweeter level control)

Power handling: 400 watts

Impedance: 8 or 4 ohms

Connections: 2 x Speakon sockets, 2 x 1/4-inch jack sockets

Dimensions: 440(h) x 580(w) x 470(d) mm

Weight: 26.75 kg (59 lb)

Made in: China

CONTACT DETAILS

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WHAT WE THINK

Plus: The WTX500 is a great piece of kit and is certainly up there with other amps in this size and power category.

Minus: The cab, though small and portable, doesn't show off what the amp is truly capable of.

Overall: A great amp and a good cab which offer a sound foundation for a potentially bigger rig.

BGM RATING OUT OF FIVE

BGM RATING AMP
BGM RATING CAB

