

Genzler Acoustic Array Pro

Versatile, innovative combo amp with high-fidelity sound and tasteful features

BY PETE MADSEN

As a professional musician and engineer, Jeff Genzler helped to lead the development of lightweight, very powerful amps for musicians. His previous company, Genz Benz, helped to make class-D amplifiers common among bass players, who require a lot of clean power to amplify their low frequencies. While at Genz Benz, Genzler realized that the principles of solid-state amplification that work well for bass are equally suited to acoustic guitar. This led to amps like the Shenandoah, which was a popular choice for many acoustic guitarists.

After Fender acquired Genz Benz (and mothballed the line), Genzler took a few years off from the amp biz, returning recently with his new self-named company. The Acoustic Array Pro is the company's first acoustic offering, and shows Genzler returning to innovative products with unique designs.

With its solid-state electronics and light weight (just 27 pounds), the Acoustic Array Pro shares some pedigree with those early Genz Benz amps. But the heart of this amp is a vertical speaker array of four 2-1/2-inch neodymium paper-cone drivers aligned in front of a 10-inch woofer. The woofer's job is to produce depth and warmth for the low frequencies, while the small speaker array provides clarity and authentic acoustic tones to the mid and high frequencies. It's Genzler's claim that some tweeter-outfitted amplifiers can sound harsh, so he used this arrangement to produce what he feels is a warmer, more natural sound.

SOLID CONSTRUCTION

The combo is housed in a rugged-looking, nearly square box with steel-reinforced corners and a metal speaker grille. The Acoustic Array has two channels, each with two useable inputs, which gives you the potential to plug in four different sources.

Each channel sports identical controls and two inputs—an XLR and a 1/4-inch—that can be used simultaneously for potentially two instruments and two vocalists. Each channel has a preamp volume, three-band EQ (with semi-parametric mids), and controls for dialing in the amount of reverb and chorus. Both channels also have a Contour control, which is a pre-shaped EQ curve that boosts lows and highs while cutting mids for a quick, musical EQ starting point. For instance, if you switch between a nylon-string guitar and a steel-string,

rather than adjusting all of the Genzler's EQ knobs, you can rotate the contour knob to add warmth or clarity. There is also a phase switch for helping to regulate feedback. To the right of the channel EQ controls is a small section that controls master volume, chorus, and reverb.

Gigging musicians are bound to like the upward slanted cabinet for easier stage monitoring—a feature I found especially nice in a tight space—three XLR outputs that can send your signal selected for pre- or post-EQ, and a mounting insert for placing the Acoustic Array on a stand closer to ear level. An auxiliary input for another instrument or phone/tablet/CD player is helpful for music during set breaks.

Singer-songwriters, duos, and small combos who play in small- to medium-sized rooms should check out the Genzler Acoustic Array Pro.

WARM BASS TONES

The 150-watt class-D amp has enough volume to fill a medium-sized room (80–100 people) and if you add an extension cabinet, the output balloons to 300 watts. The sound is impressive, especially in the lower frequencies. The Acoustic Array's bass response has range and depth that I partly attribute to its 10-inch woofer. Many acoustic guitar amps on the market favor smaller 6- or 8-inch woofers, which sacrifice a bit of that low-end bass that many people love. As a mainly blues-based player, I had to dial down the bass to accommodate my alternating bass/Merle Travis-style playing, which can sound muddy or boomy with too much low end. I also turned the contour low to minimize the swept mids and was able to get an opulent sound through my Martin OM-28V outfitted with a Fishman Ellipse pickup system. I particularly liked the sound of the Martin tuned down to open D (D A D F# A D) and hearing the rich bass tones as I picked my way through "Poor Boy Long Ways From Home."

SIMPLER IS BETTER: EFFECTS

Rather than offer a huge palette of effects, Genzler focused the Acoustic Array on a simpler complement of reverb and chorus—

both with very silky and lush sounds. You can select the amount of reverb decay time and chorus rate and depth you want on your instrument and/or vocal in the master section of the amp and in each channel.

I enjoyed playing the AA at home, but was a little disappointed I wasn't able to try it out on a gig because of timing. I sometimes duet with an acoustic bass player, and the Array's configuration would have been perfect for our two-vocal/two-instrument setup.

Singer-songwriters, duos, and small combos who play in small- to medium-sized rooms should check out the Genzler Acoustic Array Pro. It has enough volume and high-quality sounds to make you heard, and is small enough—and light enough—to not make too big a footprint in a smaller space. **AC**

GENZLER ACOUSTIC ARRAY PRO

AMP Two-channel, 150-watt class-D amp @ 8 ohms (300-watts @ 4 ohms with extension cabinet); 3-band EQ with semi-parametric mids (200Hz–5kHz); contour and phase controls; XLR and 1/4" inputs for each channel, 1/4" auxiliary input, and 1/4" effects loop; three XLR (DI) pre- and post-EQ outputs, 1/4" headphone jack; 1/4" footswitch jack, 1/4" speaker extension

SPEAKERS 10" woofer and four 2.5" neodymium paper-cone drivers

OTHER Reverb and chorus effects; stand mount; tilted cabinet; footswitch (optional); 16.75" x 15.75" x 13.75"; 27 lbs.

PRICE \$999 (street)

ASSEMBLED IN USA

genzleramplification.com



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Acoustic
Array Pro