

SOUNDROOM

WARWICK | ROSCOE



Warwick

WA 600s,
WCA 115 &
WCA 410

BY BRIAN FOX

WHEN WARWICK TEAMED UP WITH Jonas Hellborg a while back to produce a line of amps and cabinets, the resulting Hellborg Preamp, Power Amp, and cabinets made a big impression here at **BASS PLAYER**. The brainchild of the Swedish-born bass visionary (and tireless tone hound), the Hellborg system boasted exceptional design, top-notch components, and downright killer sound, but the price for the stack—a staggering \$8,000—left us wondering just how many players would plunk down that kind of coin for a new rig. Years in the making, a new line of amps built in China under Jonas's watchful eye brings the Warwick Hellborg series well within the reach of the typical weekend warrior.

Hellborg is not one to take his gear endorsements lightly; whether with Warwick, DR Strings, or any number of other manufacturers he's worked with over the years, Jonas has taken great care to ensure that any finished product bearing his name meets exacting standards. After months of working on-site with the Chinese factory

sourcing and assembling these new heads and cabinets, Hellborg has finally given the go-ahead on the WA 600 head, WCA 115 cab, and WCA 410 cab.

HEAD TALES

First, a note on nomenclature: the amp head itself, the WA 600, is available à la carte with a street price of \$630, while the WA 600s (as tested, \$730) pairs the head with a carpeted birch ply sleeve. For its part, the sleeve seems a worthy investment, as it protects the head and aids in transport. Those wishing to put the head in a rack of their own can save some scratch should they choose to do so.

The WA 600's front-panel layout is dead simple: a gain control, MUTE switch, and COMPRESSION circuit lie off to the right of the input jacks, followed by extensive (yet intuitive) EQ controls and a master volume control. At the far right, an AUX IN mini jack runs the signal from an mp3 player, CD player, etc. in stereo through to the front-panel headphone jack.

WARWICK WA 600s

Street \$730

Pros Pliable EQ control, sweet compression circuit

Cons None

WARWICK WCA 410

Street \$530

Pros Unflappable at high volumes, lush lows and smooth highs

Cons Bulky by some standards

WARWICK WCA 115

Street \$430

Pros Fast, firm, and formidable bottom

Cons None

TECH SPECS

WA 600s

Preamp Class A

Power rating 600 watts

Dimensions 19" x 3.5" x 13.4" (without case)

Controls GAIN, MUTE switch, COMPRESSION ratio (with on/off switch), 10-band graphic EQ (35Hz–10kHz), VOLUME, BASS, TREBLE

Front jacks active input (-10dB), passive input, aux in, headphone out

Rear jacks (2) Speakon combo speaker out, tuner out, effects loop, unbalanced line out, XLR di out (with pre/post switch and ground lift)

WCA 410

Speakers (4) Warwick custom 10" drivers, 4" HF horn

Power handling 400 watts

Impedance 8Ω

Cabinet Birch ply

Jacks Speakon combo

Frequency response 35Hz–20kHz

Dimensions 23.6" x 26" x 19"

Weight 88 lbs

WCA 115

Speaker Warwick custom 15" driver

Power handling 300 watts

Impedance 8Ω

Cabinet Birch ply

Jacks Speakon combo

Frequency response 30Hz–3kHz

Dimensions 23.6" x 26" x 19"

Weight 59.5 lbs

Made in China

Contact warwickbass.com

MORE ONLINE



MORE ONLINE AT BASSPLAYER.COM/SEPTEMBER2011

- Flash back to BP's first review of the Warwick Hellborg line of amps.
- Jonas talks tone in his April '11 Bass Player cover story.



HELLBORG ON AMP DESIGN

"If you're going to design an amplifier with a clean signal path, you actually have to do some work to match the components properly," Jonas told *BASS PLAYER* in his April 2011 cover story. "For instance, if you buy a speaker driver from somewhere and design a box around it, it will probably sound fine. But ideally it will all work together as one unit. If you make the effort to design the driver and the cabinet at the same time, you'll end up with a better result. It's actually quite easy to build a bass amp that sounds fine for today's accepted standard. But if you want to go beyond that, there's a lot of work to do. It doesn't have to be expensive, particularly nowadays when you can find manufacturing in Asia that is inexpensive and effective."

Set flat and run through both WCA cabinets, the head had most of the crisp clarity I remember liking in the flagship Hellborg rig, but it sounded a bit softer around the edges; whereas the hi-fi Hellborg Pre and Power Amp sounded entirely transparent, the WA 600 seemed to impart a touch more warmth to my bass signal. Extensive EQ options—via both the 10-band graphic EQ and the BASS and TREBLE shelving controls—afforded remarkable tone control. The WA 600's COMPRESSION circuit struck me as especially slick, and sounded subtle and organic at all but the most extreme setting.

CAB TAB

The cushy carpet covering, firm metal grilles, and thick birch ply construction on the WCA 115 and WCA 410 make the cabinets look and feel like anything but budget boxes, and the tough corner caps and rugged rubber feet offer assurance that the cabs could endure dozens of load-ins before beginning to show

signs of wear. Relative to other popular 1x15 and 4x10 cabinets, the WCA cabs felt fairly weighty. Though I was initially put off by their larger size (both cabs have the same dimensions), the bigger footprint seemed to have a sonic benefit when I cranked the WA 600s and a handful of other heads through the cabinets. The enclosures kept up admirably, and there was no unwanted rattling of loose screws or speaker grilles. For a \$50 upcharge per cab, Warwick offers casters for either enclosure. Having been rendered a relative weakling by the glut of great lightweight gear in recent years, this working stiff would consider casters a must-have for the WCAs.

In their attempt to bridge the gap between boutique and budget amplification, Warwick and Hellborg have scored a win with the WA 600, WCA 410, and WCA 115. For its flexibility, compression circuit, and ease of use—not to mention its rugged good looks—the WA 600s stack earns an Editors' Award. **BP**