

SOUNDROOM

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Genz Benz

ShuttleMAX 12.0, GB 410T-UB, & GB 212T-UB

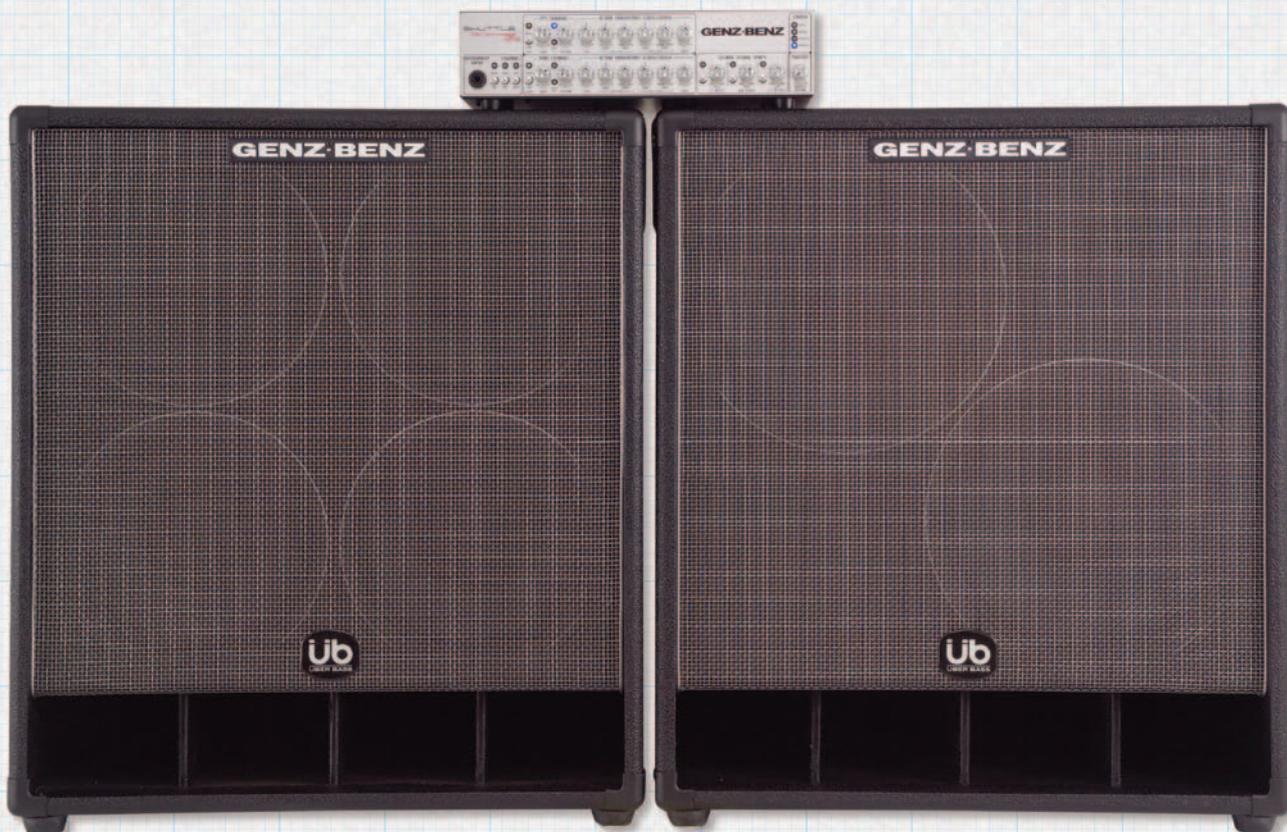


OF THE MANY LIGHTWEIGHT AMPS, CABS, and combos that BASS PLAYER has reviewed, the Genz Benz Shuttle-series stands out for its particularly well-executed incorporation of myriad weight-reducing technologies. In my August '08 review I praised the thoughtfully designed Shuttle quasi-combos, which paired the Shuttle 3.0 and 6.0 heads with neodymium cabs topped with an ingenious

cradle that allowed the amps to be used on their own. The Shuttle 3.0 and 6.0 both featured preamps clearly descended from Genz Benz's top-of-the-line GBE-series heads, but in a paired down form appropriate to the heads' small footprint. Conversely, the new ShuttleMAX amps offer much of the GBE heads' feature-set, including blendable tube/solid-state input stages and major

EQ options, but deliver these bells-and-whistles in heads as remarkably light as the other Shuttle heads. Genz Benz also sent along its latest UBER-series cabs, which they think pair best with the ShuttleMAX head.

The ShuttleMAX is absolutely slathered with knobs. Despite this, Genz Benz's clear graphics and intuitive layout helped miti-



**GENZ BENZ SHUTTLEMAX
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& GB 212T-UB**



I've always loved Genz Benz's extensive status-indicating lights.



For those uninclined to lug the whole 5-button footswitch around, the ShuttleMAX also has a 1/4" jack that at least offers remote control of the always handy-dandy MUTE function.

gate the potential confusion. The reason for all the knobs is the head's dual-channel preamp design. Essentially, the ShuttleMAX features two independent parallel signal paths with identical tone sculpting, but different input stages: a solid-state FET CHANNEL and a 12AX7-aided TUBE CHANNEL. Each channel has input GAIN and VOLUME controls, which control sensitivity and signaling level into the preamp, respectively. Each channel's HIGH/LOW GAIN switches offer further input control, especially useful for those inclined to overload the TUBE channel for extra grit. Both channels are blendable via the MIX CHAN button.

Out back, the ShuttleMAX offers as much flexibility as it does up front. There are three effect loops, a MASTER that applies to both pre-amp channels and independent loops for each channel. Coupled with the included footswitch, the independent loops are a cool idea; you could have different effects on each channel, with appropriate EQ, and access them with a quick foot stomp. In addition, there's a DIRECT OUT, TUNER OUT, AUX IN, and HEADPHONE jack.

The ShuttleMAX had nice interior construction with ample ventilation courtesy a low-noise fan and side vents. One notable interior feature that may not be immediately obvious is the dual power supplies. The

ShuttleMAX is truly like two amps in one, at least in the power section. Each 600-watt Class D amplifier is fed via its own switchmode power supply (SMPS). Quick recap: SMPS are what make heads like the ShuttleMAX light; their high-frequency power switching eliminates the need for a bulky and heavy power transformer. As with most SMPS, the ShuttleMAX offers instant voltage adjustment for international playing courtesy rear-panel switches (one for each power supply).

DAS UBER

The Genz Benz UB-series cabs seemed to fall into their product line between the ultra low-weight NEOX-series cabs and much heavier, ceramic-speaker-equipped XB2 cabs. The cabs were well made, with 13-ply birch/poplar cabinetry, excellent bracing, and major porting, courtesy Genz Benz's "Smooth Tone" design with radiused each internal surface of the port to produce less turbulence in outgoing air, and thus, according to Genz Benz, "smoother and cleaner low-frequency punch." The cabinets utilize an 18dB/octave crossover, brawny 100-watt L-pad for adjusting the compression tweeter, and an airtight crossover/jack plate. The large cabinets were relatively light for their configuration and I dug the huge handles, but I wasn't a big fan of

STREET ShuttleMAX 12.0, \$1,100; GB 410T-UB, \$1,160; GB 212T-UB, \$1,040

PROS Exceptionally versatile; loud; thoughtful design

CONS Cabs a bit expensive

Contact

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TECH SPECS

ShuttleMAX 12.0

INPUT IMPEDANCE 500kΩ

TONE CONTROLS Low: 315dB @ 80Hz (shelving); Low MID: 315dB @ 150Hz-2kHz (semi-parametric); HIGH MID: 315dB @ 300Hz-3.5kHz (semi-parametric) HIGH: 315dB @ 3.5kHz (shelving)

SIGNAL SHAPE L.F. BOOST: peaking gain @ 35-65Hz, up to +7dB; MID SCOOP: cut centered @ 600Hz; H.F. ATTACK: peaking gain @ 2.5kHz-16kHz, up to +7dB

DI OUTPUT XLR with LINE/MIC level selection, PRE/POST EQ switch, and ground lift

POWER AMP TOPOLOGY Class D

POWER SUPPLY Switch-mode

POWER OUTPUT Dual power amp, maximum 600 watts @ 4Ω per side

WEIGHT 6.75 lbs

GB 410T-UB & GB 212T-UB

CABINET TYPE GB 410T, 4x10 + tweeter; GB 212T, 2x12 + tweeter

FREQUENCY RESPONSE GB 410T, 45Hz-18kHz; GB 212T, 42Hz-18kHz

SENSITIVITY GB 410T, 103dB; GB 212T, 102DB

SPEAKER MANUFACTURER Custom-designed Eminence neodymium drivers

WEIGHT GB 410T, 72 lbs; GB 212T, 63 lbs

MADE IN ShuttleMAX, Taiwan; designed and QC'd in U.S.A.; UBER, U.S.A.

WARRANTY 3 years transferable

the tilt-back wheel scheme. While they're probably quieter and less of an initial hassle than pop-in casters, they made moving the cabs a slightly more awkward affair.

Both cabinets performed well throughout testing, with the 4x10 being the more balanced and poised of the two. The 2x12, conversely, added a special bit of midrange flavor and seemed to throw further and cut more into a room. The tweeters were well behaved and coherently voiced with the rest of the cabinet. Both cabinets were impressive, although they are definitely priced on the high end of the segment's spectrum.

SOUND

Paired with both the UB-series cabs and those from other manufacturers, playing the ShuttleMAX 12.0 was an immediately familiar experience. I spent a lot of time with the Shuttle-series amps when they were originally here for testing, and on a fundamental level, the ShuttleMAX sounded much like

its stablemates. That meant razor-sharp and arid response with quick lows, responsive and mildly textured mids, and a slicing top. Overall the Shuttle stuff is quick and propulsive, not slow, sludgy, and slathered in gooeyness. Obviously, the ShuttleMAX differs from the other Shuttle heads in its extensive EQ. The two bands of semi-parametric mids were potent, particularly when I blended the two channels. In fact, this experience revealed one danger of the powerful ShuttleMAX pre-amp—with double an already robust preamp, I had to take care to choose complementary filtering when blending the two channels. I've long been a fan of Genz Benz's GLOBAL SIGNAL SHAPE filters, which in the ShuttleMAX include adjustability over the amount of low- and high-end boost and midrange scoop. The flexible TUBE channel was wonderfully adept at going from mellow-to-bellow as I dialed in extra gain. Another note, however: with three volume-determining knobs per channel, getting your head around

the ShuttleMAX's gain staging is an important step toward maximizing tone.

The ShuttleMAX also differs from its lower-powered cousins in its massive volume capabilities. This is only evident when each of its independent speaker outputs is connected to 4 cabs, like the UB-series 2x12 and 4x10 I tested. With this configuration, the burly lows and bumped-up mids of the 12's were well matched to the 4x10's more balanced top-to-bottom response, yielding a burnished tone that seemed to welcome prolonged high-volume slap, pick, and aggressive fingerstyle.

Considering the original Shuttle-series amps had little to fault, and that the ShuttleMAX 12.0 does all those amps did plus more, the new top dog is a winner. While it's distinctly sharp, quick, and responsive personality may not suit the Ampeg B-15-style lovers of beautifully slow bumpiness, its flexibility and serious volume potential should satisfy most everyone else. **BP**