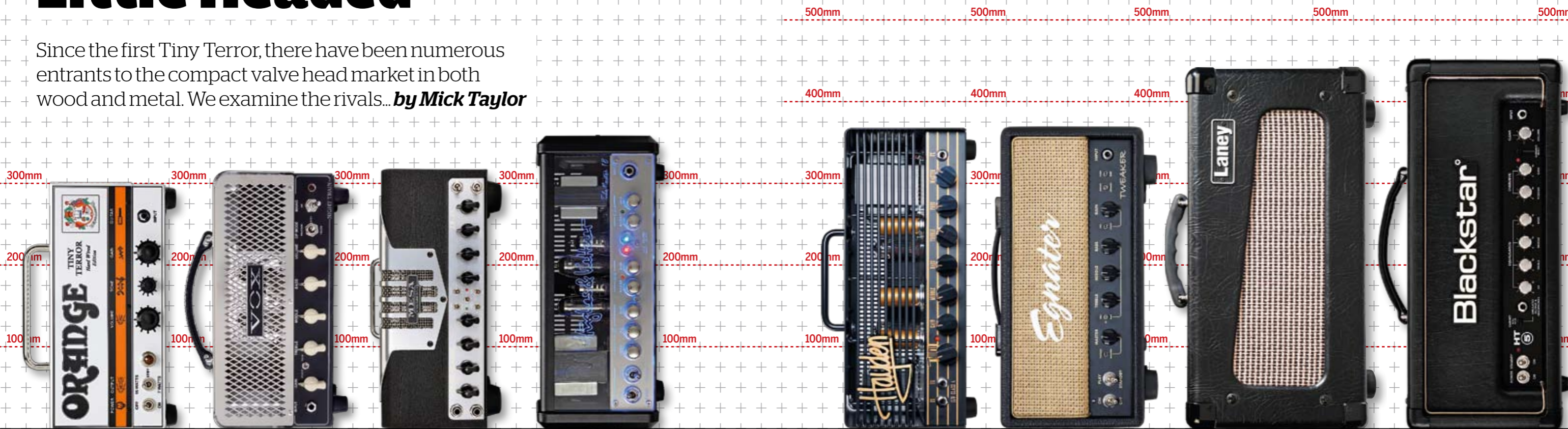


# Little Headed

Since the first Tiny Terror, there have been numerous entrants to the compact valve head market in both wood and metal. We examine the rivals... *by Mick Taylor*



**Orange Tiny Terror \$899**

The amp that started all of this back in 2006. Single-channel, capable of a range of clean-ish to medium-gained classic rock and blues tones. Switchable seven or 15 watts output power with a pair of EL84s. There's also the Hard Wired edition (\$1,399) that does sound better.

**Vox NT15H Night Train \$699.99**

A single-channel 15-watter that runs on a pair of EL84s and, like the Tiny Terror, switches down to half power. The three-band EQ section makes it a little more adjustable than the Orange, plus there's the bright/thick switch – the latter setting bypasses the tone controls for a heavier gained sound.

**Mesa TA-15 \$2,295**

Spent this much and you expect something special. The TransAtlantic delivers that with huge tonal versatility and the loudest voice of all the amps here. Two channels, one of which is Voxy, the other more Californian in nature, it's everything you expect of Mesa: referencing the past, but looking confidently to the future.

**Hughes & Kettner Tubemeister 18 \$999**

The German entrant uses two channels that span high headroom cleans to metal gains. It has an effects loop and the best speaker simulated direct out of any valve amp. Output levels are switchable at 18, five, and one watt, plus it'll run silent with no speaker for direct recording. A true all-rounder.

**Hayden Mini MoFo \$699.99**

Hayden's unique styling wraps around a dual-EL84-powered 15-watter, offering a wide range of sounds from a single channel with the additional, footswitchable MoFo mode. Dual inputs offer more British- and American-leaning tones respectively, there's an effects loop and also a 'stealth' switch to drop the power when practising.

**Egnater Tweaker \$850**

This Guitarist Gold Award-winning 15-watter uses a pair of 6V6 output valves and a number of switches to help it go from sparkling cleans through to all-out high gain. Far Eastern build keeps the cost low, but it still managed to impress our amp guru Nick Guppy from a technical point of view. Startlingly good.

**Laney Cub Head \$549**

Laney's single-channel 15-watter is the little brother of the Lionheart series of amps and runs on a pair of EL84 output valves for classic British sounding crunch and drive tones. It includes reverb and 'less-than-one-watt' input, which drops everything down to bedroom levels.

**Blackstar HT-5RH \$569**

This runaway success from the British company offers two channels, a level-adjustable effects loop, digital reverb, speaker-simulated direct out and the ISF tone control. It gets power from a single 12BH7 valve, which definitely gives it its own tone. It's a good all-round choice, though you'll want more watts for un-mic'd pub gigs.

**Choices, choices**

Which one would you go for?

We asked three of GA's writers and alumni which would be their preferred mini-head choice for all-round use.

Mick spends most of his playing life in pubs and clubs fighting for sonic space and projection in a noisy rock and blues band environment, which explains his usual preference for powerful

amps with tons of headroom.

Neville's gigs take him to many small and medium-sized theatres. As a result he benefits from larger PAs, great monitoring and plenty of physical and sonic space.

Nick plays a variety of gigs in small venues, including jazz, country, blues and classic rock, as well as recording, where he's often called on to recreate

Mick Taylor  
Writer, Guitarist



"The Tubemeister impressed me the minute I saw it. Hand on heart, I'd choose the Mesa for pure tone, but two things swing it for the H&K. First is price; second is the Red Box DI, which sounds great mixed with a mic'd speaker. It's just loud enough for small gigs, though obviously it can't match the headroom of a 50- or 100-watter. It's superb for recording."



**Test results**

- Build quality** ★★★★★
- Features** ★★★★★
- Sound** ★★★★★
- Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★

Nick Guppy  
Guitarist Amp Expert



"The Egnater gets my vote for its flexibility, good looks and bargain price. For blues and classic rock the HT-5 is great fun, but the Tweaker's USA tones are more versatile for what I do. I've used it to create a Billy Gibbons-style backing track and for jazz cabaret comping behind a solo singer; two wildly different sounds, yet it was perfect for both jobs."



**Test results**

- Build quality** ★★★★★
- Features** ★★★★★
- Sound** ★★★★★
- Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★

Neville Marten  
Editor, Guitar Techniques



I've loved Laney's full-on UK Lionheart series since I saw it in pre-production, and much of that development has ended up in the Cub. It's the least handsome of all the amps here, but I'm drawn to its lionine roar, simplicity of operation and smooth onboard reverb – an absolute necessity for home practice on the 'less than one watt' setting. Great price too.



**Test results (Cub 8 & 10)**

- Build quality** ★★★★★
- Features** ★★★★★
- Sound** ★★★★★
- Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★