

Nemesis NA320 bass head & NSP410 bass cabinet £429 & £449

A fine example of versatile bass amplification without spending a fortune by Roger Newell

Although a very popular brand in the United States, Nemesis bass amplification has yet to make any significant impact on the UK market so is unlikely to be one of the names at the forefront of your mind when you're about to purchase new backline. But as a supplier of among the most cost-effective American-built amplifiers, it really is worthy of consideration; especially since Nemesis is the budget brand originating in the Eden factory. Given Eden's reputation for high quality products you'd expect the build quality here to be dependable – and you won't be disappointed. Compact in size and ultra lightweight, this is ideal fodder for the gigging bass player responsible for transporting their own gear. Branching away from the combo format, the NA320 is their first standalone head. It's one of the smallest around, and this 4 x 10 cab will fit comfortably into the boot of any reasonably sized car. And even if there's nobody around to help you, there's nothing here that will break your back or, indeed, the bank account.

NA320 bass head

A strikingly designed head with a degree of colour coordination, the blue front panel on the NA320 has a blue switch and power indicator and even the Nemesis nameplate lights up in

pale blue. It all helps to offer an air of visual sophistication that belies the tidy price. Useable as a standalone head or mounted into a 2U rack slot, using the thoughtfully included brackets, this is a practical and well-designed amplifier with no skimping on the control options in spite of the compact proportions.

The single input benefits from a gain control, which is fitted with a pull switch that engages a -12 dB pad; ideal for high-output basses with active electronics. A red LED informs you when your instrument level is at saturation point and it's time to back off a little. Compression is of the fixed threshold type and is simultaneously adjusted as you use the gain control so the dedicated switch actually acts as a compression bypass rather than a means of turning it on. The result is never excessive, and highly effective.

Sound shaping fits into two main sections: the semi-parametric EQ and the Bi-FET preamp. On its own, the Bi-FET section is a powerful tonal tool housing the standard bass, middle and treble controls with the ability to boost or cut their respective frequency ranges, but it's the semi-parametric

NA320 BASS HEAD	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
<p>■ WE LIKED Simplicity of design; good tonal range</p> <p>■ WE DISLIKED Additional amp casing would be appreciated</p>	

pairing of level and frequency controls that expands the options and gives this head a sound of its own.

But there's more. The Enhance feature is the icing on the tonal cake as it offers a focus to the sound with a pre-shaped EQ effect that collectively boosts the really low bass, upper middle tones and treble frequencies while reducing the lower mids. The

The Enhance feature is the icing on the tonal cake – the effect on the overall sound is stunning

effect on the overall sound is stunning and the best way to appreciate what it can do is by sweeping the control from one extreme to the other. Hard anticlockwise gives you a flat response, and as you rotate the control the sound ranges from a barking edginess through to warmer mellower sounds and character is added to the overall delivery. It also presents a compressive quality to the

The rivals

Gallien-Krueger 250 BL Head & 410 Cabinet	£328 & £410
Ampeg B Series B2R & BSE 410H Cabinet	£675 & £595
Ashdown MAG 300R & MAG 410T Deep	£299 each

Gallien-Krueger is known for its compact designs and the Backline Series offers great portability and prices but, in spite of a four-band active EQ and variable boost control, at 125 watts it lacks the power of the rest. Ampeg's B Series amp and cab offers some serious competition with a similar-sized head and 350-watt power rating. It also boasts a solid-state power section and an effective nine-band EQ, but the extra cost is a big consideration. Highly cost-effective is Ashdown's MAG range with its famous harmoniser feature, albeit at a slightly lower output rating

BASS AMPS



Semi-parametric EQ adds an extra dimension of tonal control



NEMESIS NA320 BASS HEAD
PRICE: £429
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Solid-state FET
OUTPUT: 320 watts @ 4 ohm, 200 watts RMS @ 8 ohm
DIMENSIONS: 406 (w) x 254 (d) x 89mm (h)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 6.8/15
CHANNELS: Single with active pad switch
CONTROLS: Gain, enhance, level and frequency, bass, middle, treble and master volume plus switches for compression and parametric EQ
FOOTSWITCH: No
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Effects loop, pre-EQ DI output, ground lift
RANGE OPTIONS: NA650 head RRP £599 (coming soon)
Rock Solid Distribution 01483 458822
www.eden-electronics.com

NEMESIS NSP410 CABINET
PRICE: £449
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Front-ported enclosure
HANDLES: 500 watts RMS @ 4/8 ohms
DIMENSIONS: 629 (w) x 413 (d) x 629mm (h)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 23/50
SPEAKERS: 4 x ES 1040XL16 drivers and a T2004 Tweeter
RANGE OPTIONS: NSP115 cab (£319), NSP210 cab (£339), NSP212 (£379), NSP810 (£849)

NSP210 CABINET	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
<p>■ WE LIKED Lightweight but robust build quality</p> <p>■ WE DISLIKED Lack of horn adjustment</p>	

→ sound in steady stages, so proves to be an excellent addition here. A good top-end response is to be expected, but it's the sheer amount of low frequencies on tap that comes as a surprise.

The master volume handles the overall level but it is also used to adjust the headphone level. This head is designed for practice sessions as well as performances so it's safe to use it with only the headphones plugged in. The linking options are kept to the essentials, so the rear panel is also nicely uncluttered. Along with a pair of jack sockets and a Speakon for cabinet connection, there's a recording output section that provides an XLR-balanced line socket with associated level control and ground lift switch. A pre-EQ effects loop is included, along with a tuner socket so you can keep one permanently connected. This really is a very competent design and, considering the reasonable asking price, is quite a bargain.

NSP410 E8 cabinet

One of the lightest and tightest 4 x 10 cabs in the bass market today, the Nemesis design and power-handling ability never ceases to impress. The front-ported enclosure includes a horn and, while the outer casing may look a little thin compared to some, it's actually extremely tough and durable, with good sonic properties. And with an expanded metal front grille, black carpet covering and plastic corner protectors it's also very practical. It's fitted with solid rubber feet but also comes with removable castors. Sensibly, there are three recessed handles, the third being at the top so carrying this alone is made as easy as possible. Sit the amp on top and it neatly avoids contact with this handle. With no horn attenuation provided the connection panel is a no-nonsense affair, with input and parallel output sockets only – but sensibly, both jack and Speakon configurations are included. Nice touch.

SOUNDS: With a handling capacity of 500 watts RMS, this 4 x 10 is a good partner for the NA320 head and together this duo produces a tight and very American sound with a full-on delivery that will consistently delight the user. Push the low frequencies and adjust the Enhance accordingly and it will burp and bubble beautifully or,



This duo produces a tight and very American sound, possessing a full-on delivery that will consistently delight

with the help of the highly responsive horn, it can also slice your head off with a penetrating top end. More importantly, whatever sound you dial in you can be sure of great projection and note clarity. The Enhance feature is particularly impressive as it consistently gives the vital individuality that any decent amplifier should possess. It also seems to offer a degree of speaker protection by preventing any unreasonable excesses the player may unwittingly produce.

With the exception of the two volumes and frequency adjustment, all the controls are of the multi-stepped variety so dialling in your tonal parameters can become quite a precise affair. Having established how satisfied we are with the basic tone controls, the semi-parametric section becomes a really valuable addition that not only allows for some fine-tuning on the sound of your bass, but can also be used to provide a pre-arranged second sound that's available in an instant. Alternatively, it can be used to set the sound of an acoustic bass guitar or an upright, so when you change instruments the appropriate sound can be switched straight in.

Verdict

This is certainly a highly portable and capable combination that produces a good balanced tonal range and a punchy delivery. But in order to take full advantage of what the amp can really deliver, then an additional cabinet is an option well worth considering. We added an NSP115 cab, and the whole spectrum of sound was significantly expanded, with all those deep subs that we suspected were there finally unleashed. If you're sticking close to a budget then the 4 x 10 makes a great starting point – just add the 1 x 15 as soon as you can. With this in mind, the manufacturers make both 4- and 8-ohm versions of the NSP410: as nothing here's excessive in size, and even a full stack is highly transportable. A neat and pocket-friendly set-up with the possibility for expansion, for the time being this will do very nicely, thank you... 📧

Nemesis NA320 bass head

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

Nemesis NSP410 cabinet

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★