

Crest CC5500

By Brian Klivanowicz

With all the new amplifiers coming out these days with all the bells and whistles, it just seems like something is missing on the market. Half of the people who use these super light-weight amps with gobs of processing wind up using external processors anyway. That is why we are going to check out the new "CC" series of amplifiers from Crest Audio. These are just good rock solid amps that do just what they are supposed to, and at a very economical price point.

The Gear

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The new series has 4 different models — the 1800, 2800, 4000 and 5500. We were sent the biggest one of them all, the CC5500. This amp offers 1150W @ 8ohms per channel, 1800W @ 4ohms per channel, 2750 @ 2 ohms per channel and 5500W @ 4ohms bridged. This is packed in a two-rack space unit that is 14.875 inches deep. If you add the rear rack rails onto it, then add another 1.25 inches to the depth. It also sports a pretty beefy power supply that makes the whole unit weigh 47 lbs. On the brighter and lighter side of things, the smaller models weigh less.

Taking a look at the amplifier, you will find that it has the usual functions. On the front you will find a power switch that doubles as a circuit breaker, two input attenuators (one for each channel), and four sets of LEDs. Starting from bottom to top you will find the "Active" LED. When this LED is lit it will let you know that your channel is ready and functioning properly. Next up is the "Temp" LED. Hopefully you will never have to see this one lit up, but if you do it's to let you know that the particular channel its lit on has overheated and will start func-



tioning again when it has cooled down. Moving onto the "Signal" LED, you will see if you have signal or not. Lastly, there is the "ACL" light. This is what most people consider the clip light, but for Crest it's a little different. ACL stands for Automatic Clip Limiter. This feature works very well, especially if you are in a club situation where fighting with the clip light is a daily occurrence.

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The input section of this amp features a recessed input sensitivity switch. It gives you the option of using X40 (32db gain) or X20 (26db gain). Directly below that, there are two combo XLR and 1/4-inch female jacks for the input A&B section. In between the two input jacks is a switch to choose between Stereo, Bridge or Parallel. Next to that are two cooling fans that have rear-to-front cooling. One feature that I would have liked to have seen on the input section is XLR pass-through/link jacks. These would come in handy, for example, if you wanted to use multiple amps for subs in one rack instead of using a sloppy 2- or

3-way "Y" cable. [Crest's engineers note the following workaround, which can be done the same way as is done on the Pro 200 series. With mono subs, you only have one signal to patch. Slide the rear panel Mode switch into Parallel or Bridged. This puts both A & B inputs in parallel as well as putting both channels in parallel. Connect the input to the A connector and use B as the output to patch to the next amp. The input connectors are XLR & 1/4-inch Combi, so you can use a TRS or TS patch cable. —ed.]

The output section sports two sets of binding post connectors as well as two NL4 jacks. One thing I do love about this setup, and is becoming more prominent with most amplifiers these days, is the way that the NL4 jacks are wired. Say

you are using this amp for a bi-amped speaker. You would probably send the lows into channel 1 and the highs into channel 2. Well, instead of having to have a panel to combine the two channels into one NL4 cable, its already done in the amplifier. It is very clearly depicted on the back of the amp as well.

The power connector that comes with the 5500 (in the USA) is a NEMA L5-30 hard-wired into the back. The three other models all come with an IEC connector on the back and an IEC to NEMA 5-15 (standard 15 amp wall outlet) cable.

The Gig

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I used this amp on an outdoor music festival in Vegas. It is a fairly large festival that's been growing every year, and has multiple stages.

The CC5500 wound up finding its place on one of the smaller stages. This particular stage is one that some of the national artists would come down to play a more toned-down intimate set for a smaller audience. I usually use the classic Crest 9001 on subs, but decided to give the CC5500 a shot instead.

After getting banged around the truck a bit and set up, I turned the amp on and was ready to go. The first thing I noticed was that the lights were nice and bright, and, being in Vegas, that's bright!

Crest CC5500

Pros: Nice bright lights for outside gigs, great price point.

Cons: A little bit on the heavy side, no XLR pass through on input section.

How Much: \$1,549 (\$1,349 street).

I've always been a huge fan of Crest's tone from the old Professional Series amps. It's such a nice warm sound, especially on subs. I wasn't sure what to expect from this amp, since I heard that dreaded word "economical." But I was pleasantly surprised when the first band showed up with a bass that they wanted plugged directly in and a Cajon (or "The Box" as most sound guys know it). While I didn't do a side-by-side shootout with another amp, I know what my subs sound like on a 9001, and I couldn't tell much of a difference at all. They sounded warm and punchy, but it didn't break my back when I picked it up at the end of the day.

All in all, I am a big fan of this amp. In the midst of the DSP-a-thon with most amp manufacturers today, this amp has filled the need for a good rock solid amp that just delivers power for a very reasonable price. **F●H**