



SOUNDRoom



Genzler Amplification Bass Array 12-3 SLT & STR Cabinets

BY ED FRIEDLAND

GENZLER AMPLIFICATION HAS BEEN PUTTING A LOT OF THOUGHT AND development into its Bass Array series cabs, now offering 4x10, 2x10, 1x10, 1x12, as well as combo models of the innovative concept. The design forgoes the tweeter employed by most modern bass cab builders, swapping it out for a stack of smaller cone drivers (little tiny speakers) to handle the upper-mid and high frequencies. The vertical-array concept hearkens back to the Grateful Dead's famous "Wall of Sound" PA system, and is known for improved dispersion and projection—in this case, of these critical mid and high frequencies. The newest addition to the Genzler Amplification Bass Array series adds a new slant to the former BA 12-3 cab—literally. Borrowing again from high-end PA design, the BA 12-3 SLT mimics the trapezoidal shape of some speakers, which is said to improve low-end clarity. The 12-3 STR is the straight man to the SLT, essentially a reworking of the original BA 12-3 with a top-mounted, recessed bar handle. I tested these two cabs to see if there was something to the slanted-cab idea, or if it was just marketing magic.

First, while I am not an endorser of Genzler products, I have been informally involved with the company's previous iteration in a consulting role, beta testing, offering feedback, and demoing products. While I have not used Genzler's cabinets live, the Magellan 800 head (which I used in this test to drive the two cabs) has been the rock of my live setup for over 300 shows worldwide with the Mavericks. It's a piece I am intimately familiar with and have come to rely on as my standard for performance.

Having previously reviewed the Magellan 350 combo, which features the 350-watt head attached to a BA 10-2 cabinet, I had an idea what to expect from the array concept, but with the slightly larger 12" woofer, there were definitely some surprising new characteristics. While the BA 10-2 cab proved remarkably stout for its size, at times I felt it may have had too much low end—not a typical complaint for a mini-combo, but it proved troublesome with certain upright bass applications.

Initially, I expected even more of the same from the 12" version, but I was happily surprised to find that while the larger enclosure and greater speaker surface area did give me greater low-end response, it was more controlled. Jeff Genzler informed me that "the slant cabinet design has fewer perpendicular internal panel surfaces than a square cabinet. This means fewer standing waves inside, which produces a 'cleaner' response." He also suggested that the 12" Faital Pro woofer has a smoother transition between the mid and low frequencies, which makes them seem less bottom-heavy, while still providing the beef. I felt the best way to test this rig out was at full volume, with a wide range of instruments. As my landlord wouldn't approve, BP Online Editor Jon D'Auria lives a mile away and has his own personal "scream parlor" in the basement, allowing me to push this rig to the limit.

One small but significant detail I wanted to focus on was the difference between putting the straight or slanted cab on the bottom. First, I put the slanted SLT on the bottom, and picked up a Guild Starfire Bass II reissue with the factory roundwounds. While often considered a "rootsy"-sounding (read: dark) bass, the dual BiSonic single coils and rounds produce a complex, full-range tone. Remember, Rick Turner and Alembic launched the era of modern bass tone by modifying Starfire IIs owned by Jack Casady and Phil Lesh. With the slant cab on the bottom, I was treated to the entire spectrum of color this instrument produces—warm, round bottom, throaty mids, and subtle highs coating each note like the shell of a Jordan almond. It was delicious, but even more, it stayed delicious as I cranked the volume. The other Genzler Bass Array cabs I've tried have impressed me with their power handling, and while conservatively rated for 350 watts, the BA 12-3 cabs can handle quite a bit more. The high end from the array is sweeter to the ear than what your typical compression driver or piezo tweeter delivers, and while a tweeter certainly produces more output than a paper-cone 3" speaker one-to-one, a stack of four balances perfectly with the woofer's output—no attenuator needed. I moved on from the Guild to a passive Moollon 5-string J-bass and was knocked out with the BA 12-3 stack's performance on the B string. While the enclosures are relatively small, the cab depth and vented bass-reflex design produces a stage-worthy presence, and the 800-watt Magellan-fueled pair had more than enough *oomph* to satisfy. As I pounded away furiously on the non-tapered .125 B, the Genzler stack threw back a detailed, fully formed sound that seemed to say, "That all you got?"

When a company decides to build a bass rig, 97 percent of the time it's envisioning the end user as an electric bassist. There are way more "slab" players in the world, and they dominate the relatively small bass market. Some companies do cater to the acoustic/upright bass-specific market (in fact, Genzler has an Acoustic Array Pro combo), but most rigs are designed for electric bass application, and their usefulness to the upright crowd varies greatly. My work day involves amplifying upright bass to rock & roll sound levels, and I know too well the challenges many cabs present when it comes to amplifying the doghouse. If a cabinet's

low end response is too wide or "loose," it can exacerbate feedback, particularly if you have to stand close to the box. I plugged my Christopher plywood bass equipped with a Gage Lifeline pickup and Crown GLM 200 mic through an ancient-but-still useful Fishman Pocket Blender. Running this signal through the Magellan, I was able to dial in the tone I need—dark, full, thumpy, and loud—without feedback, while standing directly in front of the cabs. Yes, the drivers were blowing right into the back of the bass, which is a terrible spot—but how many gigs have you had with no choice but to stand in that zone? While there was some harmonic interference from the vibrations going into the bass on certain notes, it wasn't feeding back. I chose a variety of positions relative to the cab, and except for the obvious issue of high-end feedback when you face the Crown mic right at the speaker, the bass sounded better the farther away I stood. The wide dispersion of the upper-mid and high frequencies gave me detail even when I was off-axis to the speakers—which is a good spot to avoid feedback. And while the cabs don't sound overly bright, my rockabilly slap schtick came through pronounced, but with none of the ice-pick-to-the-ear effect most piezo tweeters have. I double-checked the high end with a quick pass on a 3-band MusicMan StingRay, and the slap tone was equally in your face—in the most pleasant way.

I was already sold on these cabs, but I had to see if there was any difference in sound based on which cab was on the bottom. Turns out, there is. The BA 12-3 SLT has a 6-degree angle, which as mentioned before creates fewer standing waves internally. Putting the SLT on the bottom changes the angle of the entire 12-speaker array toward the player's ear, as well as lifting the low projection a little off the floor. When I made the STR cab the low man on the totem pole, I clearly heard a build up in the lower realms. There seemed to be more coupling with the floor, and the low end became more pronounced, bordering on too much at high volume (but the low-ceiling basement played a role in that, too). I definitely preferred the SLT on the bottom, but understanding the effect of switching gives you another tool in the fight for good live sound. It would be interesting to compare the differences between two SLTs and two STRs, and with the Magellan's ability to run at 2.67 ohms, you could add a third box to the puzzle.

Overall, I was mightily impressed with the Genzler BA 12-3 SLT/STR stack—it's light, loud, and clean, with a sweet top end that projects nicely, and works great for electric or upright bass. What's not to like? **BP**

SPECIFICATIONS

GENZLER	<p>Bass Array 12-3 SLT & STR Cabinets Street \$900 each Pros Big sound, portable, full-range Cons None Bottom Line A unique approach to gig-worthy air movement.</p>
	<p>Speakers Faital Pro neodymium 12" woofer, four Faital neodymium 3" mid/high cone drivers Power handling 350 watts Impedance 8Ω Sensitivity 98dB (1W/1M) Frequency response 32Hz–15kHz Inputs Two Speakon NL-2, two ¼" Dimensions 16" x 19" x 18" Weight BA12-3 SLT, 32 lbs; BA12-3 STR, 34 lbs</p>
SPECS	<p>Made in USA Contact genzleramplification.com</p>