

Guitar Player

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GEAR Bench Test

Bugera 333-212 and 6262-212

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

BEHRINGER HAS TAKEN A GLORIOUS STEP, UM, backwards. As one of the music industry's big technology companies since 1989, Behringer has historically focused on affordable recording tools, live-performance gear, and DJ systems. Not surprisingly, when Behringer has made forays into the guitar market, technology has typically been the driving force—as evidenced by products such as the V-Tone and V-Amp modeling amps, the V-Amp modeling processor, and the recent series of USB guitars. But now Behringer is embracing decades-old circuits to start a completely new company: Bugera, a maker of all-tube guitar amps.

It's not a very tentative stride backwards, either, as Bugera debuted with eight amp variants and a 4x12 cabinet (the 412H-BK, \$369 retail/\$249 street). Take a breath here, because there's a lot to get through. The 333 (\$809 retail/\$549 street) is a 6L6-powered, 120-watt three-channel head with a 2x12 combo ver-

sion, the 333-212 (\$959 retail/\$649 street). The 333XLs—head (\$879 retail/\$599 street) and 2x12 combo (\$1,029 retail/\$629 street)—are also 120-watt, three-channel beasts, but are EL34 powered. The 6260 head (\$739 retail/ \$499 street) and 6260-212 combo (\$879 retail/ \$599 street) are the line's two-channel models, and they deliver 120 watts of 6L6 power. Finally, the 6262 head (\$809 retail/\$549 street) and 6262-212 combo (\$959 retail/\$649 street) are two-channel models that deliver three different sounds via a Crunch button on the clean channel. Like their siblings, the 6262s offer 120 watts—in this case, pumped out by 6L6s. All of the Bugeras include a bias switch that lets you easily swap out the power tubes from 6L6s to EL34s, and vice-versa.

We received four Bugera combos, so I decided to test the three-channel 333 and the two-channel 6262. I also spent a

SPECS | Bugera, info@bugera-amps.com; bugera-amps.com

MODEL	333-212	6262-212
PRICE	\$959 retail/\$649 street	\$959 retail/\$649 street
CHANNELS	Three	Two
CONTROLS	Bass, Mid, Treble, Volume (Clean); Gain, Bass, Mid, Treble, Volume (Crunch and Lead); Reverb; Master; Line Out Level; Effects Loop Send Level; Effects Loop Return Level; Damping (Lo, Mid, High); Impedance (4Ω, 8Ω, 16Ω)	Gain, Bass, Mid, Treble, Volume, Crunch, Bright, Presence, Reverb (Clean); Gain, Bass, Mid, Treble, Volume, Presence, Reverb (Lead); Impedance (4Ω, 8Ω, 16Ω)
POWER	120 watts	120 watts
TUBES	Preamp 12AX7A x2, 12AX7 x2; Power 6L6GC x4	Preamp 12AX7A x2, 12AX7 x2; Power 6L6GC x4
EXTRAS	Can use 6L6 or EL34 power tubes, footswitch, effects loop with independent Send/Return levels, Line Out	Can use 6L6 or EL34 power tubes, footswitch, Preamp Out
SPEAKERS	2x12 Bugera 12G70J8	2x12 Bugera 12G70J8
WEIGHT	63 lbs	63 lbs
KUDOS	Easy to swap 6L6 power tubes for EL34s. Damping control tightens or loosens dynamic response.	Easy to swap 6L6 power tubes for EL34s.
CONCERNS	Control knobs are shakey. Preamp sizzle audible at low volumes.	Preamp sizzle audible at low volumes.



ULI BEHRINGER ON THE BUGERA SERIES

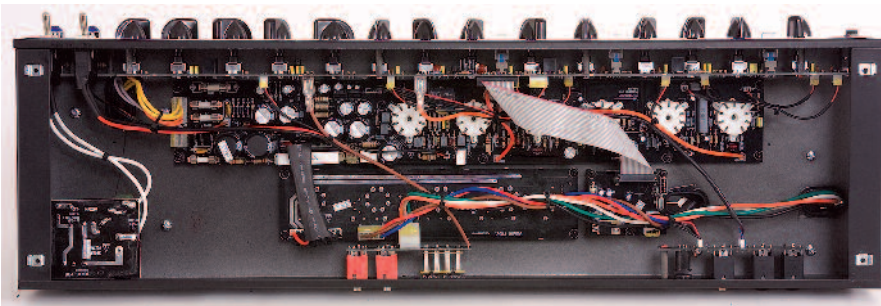
“Since I was 15 years old, I’ve been collecting antique tube radios, and because of this passion for valves, it has always been my dream to build high-end, boutique-style tube amps,” explains Behringer founder and chairman Uli Behringer. “When you study valve amps, you’ll find the technology is relatively simple, and nothing groundbreaking has been invented in recent years. All circuits are standard, and you’re basically left with playing around with tube stages and component values. But there are three major aspects that make the sound of an amp: the valves, the output transformer, and the PCB layout and component quality. When we started the Bugera project two years ago, we brought in some incredible engineers who are also passionate guitarists. They examined all Matchless, Rivera, Soldano, Mesa/Boogie, Bogner, Marshall, and Peavey amps, and they asked musicians what they liked about each specific amp. We also introduced a rigorous valve-selection process, and only five percent make it to our highest grade, which is used as each amp’s first and most critical gain stage. For the output transformer, we spent more than a year selecting the highest-grade materials, as well as defining a meticulous method for winding the copper wire, and how the final assembly must be executed. Open the amps, and you will understand what I mean. They are beautiful inside, and you can see the love for detail that went into their design.” —MM

little time with the EL34-equipped 333XL-212. Test environments were a couple of full-band rehearsals (guitars, bass, drums, and vocals) and a studio session. Guitars included a Gibson Les Paul, a new Collings 290 outfitted with Lollar P-90s, a PRS SE Paul Allen, and an Epiphone Elitist Country Deluxe.

BUGERA 333-212

Although the heads look like they scream rock and roll, the combo cosmetics are rather bland and non-descript—a ploy, perhaps, to ensure the Bugeras can sit on any stage without

telegraphing a predilection for metal, country, rock, or jazz. But make no mistake, these boxes are tuned for high-energy rock and metal. The 333’s Clean channel is extremely articulate. Single notes pop nicely, and chords ring with clarity. There’s not a lot of vibe or shimmer here (although the EL34s in the 333XL do get closer to the midrange zing of a Marshall), but the channel’s robust cleanliness will retain the personality of any pedals you plug in. The Crunch channel gives you that beautifully aggro, slightly overdriven AC/DC bark, but only when the Gain knob is



Top: The 6262-212 back panel includes an impedance switch, a Preamp Out, and an effects loop. **Middle:** The 333-212 adds a Damping control, a dedicated output level, and individual level knobs for the effects send and return. **Bottom:** The 6262's wiring is pristine, and boutique-style touches such as the ceramic tube sockets show that the Bugeras are loved and built to last.

barely past 0. Turn it more, and the distortion factor is like having a second Lead channel. The Lead channel itself delivers tons of creamy distortion and harmonically rich sustain, as well as increased bass emphasis. At its upper levels, the demonic roar is nearly out-of-control—which is fabulous for soaring and shredding, but players who dig a little less laser beam on their notes will be happy the Crunch channel offers a more refined overdrive. The 333's reverb is as tight and pristine as a studio unit, and it can produce subtle airiness or surf-approved washes.

This is an amp that needs some room and a fair amount of volume to truly blossom. At lower volumes, the tone can sound a tad pre-amp-y and midrange focused. The Lead channel chunks out a lot of bass at almost any volume, but the Clean and Crunch channels like to be rev'd up before they unleash the beef.

BUGERA 6262-212

The two-channel 6262 sneaks in three distinct tones by putting a Crunch button on the Clean channel. The other benefit to this “channel-sharing” arrangement is that you can dial in a wide palette of '70s-style overdrive crunch. If you're more Stones than Slipknot, the 6262 will be a better partner than the 333. In full clean mode, the 6262 echoes the taut purity of the 333's Clean channel. The addition of a Presence control lets you bestow upon the clean tones a little more air—ditto for the lead tones—but it's a subtle enhancement. The Lead channel is just as ferocious as that of the 333, albeit with perhaps a bit less sizzle. I dug the reverb, which adds a stunning sense of dimension without coloring the fundamental tone or adding any grit. (Sometimes, a little dirt sounds great, but a more studio-quality 'verb seems to work quite well with both the 6262 and the 333.) Overall, the 6262 is a versatile amp that's perfect for players who bounce between classic rock and cowabunga metalloid tones.

BLAST OFF

For the most part, these Bugeras are virile ravers that can cut a lot of rock tones—and ape a few jazz and country timbres—at affordable prices. They can definitely slice through a band mix, although each amp's low-frequency wallop may be a tad anemic for down-tuners, 7-stringers, and assorted crank-the-bass freaks. Loud and proud is the happiest place for the Bugeras to be, as turning down to home-studio or quiet rehearsal levels brings on a slight preamp-focused buzz that doesn't present these amps in their best light. If you live to rock hard, however, plug into a Bugera and reap your bliss.