

# Laney Lionheart L5 Studio Head

Has Laney produced the best yet small, all-tube, recording amps? **Tom Quayle** was impressed. Then we told him the price...

5.0

STAR RATING

## PROS:

Boutique tone

Dual channel

Awesome I/O with T-USB interface and reamping options

Emulated DI Out

Superb Build Quality

Incredible value for money

## CONS:

None, even at twice the price

**L**aney's Lionheart series of amplifiers has been something of a revelation since it was released, offering boutique tone at extremely affordable prices. Available in 50, 20 and 5 Watt models, the Lionheart series has been a resounding success for the company, filling the 'clean and pedal platform amp' gap that existed in their product range of mostly high gain amplifiers. The Lionheart L5 Studio, which we were sent for review, is a small format 5 Watt head and represents the smallest output stage in the range. It's taken directly from the Laney L5T-112 12" combo being a single ended, Class-A design featuring a trio of 12AX7 tubes in the pre-amp and a single, hand picked, premium grade Ruby EL84 in the power stage. Just as a standalone amp the L5 Studio head would be a great package, but Laney has included some unique additions to the design to produce what could be seen as the ultimate recording package for guitar

players, in the form of its T-USB technology, borrowed from the IRT-Studio amp, turning the L5 Studio in a fully-fledged audio interface for laying down tracks and reamping from your DAW of choice.

The Lionheart has always been a good looking amp with a classic, vintage and very British feel. Not everyone will fall in love with the blue Tolex covering but I love it (and in fact I currently use an L20T-212 combo as my main amp of choice since it's such a great pedal platform that also looks really good on stage). The range shares the same overall look, with mirrored front panels and white, chicken head knobs, matched with the vintage-style Laney logo.

The L5 Studio is a two channel design with a shared EQ section and digital spring-style reverb. The Clean channel features a Volume control and Bright switch, whilst the Drive channel has both Gain and Volume controls with a High and Low



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input for driving the preamp tubes harder or lighter, offering a surprising amount of gain from the drive side and high input option. A powerful master Tone control allows you to brighten up and add sparkle to the overall tone without altering your three band EQ section and offers a broad sweep of settings for quickly sculpting your tone on both channels. Finally a Reverb control dials in the desired amount of the very musical and pleasing digital reverb that really enhances an amp that is a pleasure to play without anything other than your guitar and cable plugged in the front end.

On the back panel you'll find all manner of ins and outs including the balanced XLR

DI out with switchable speaker emulation, USB port for recording signals to your DAW with a 'Dry Record Gain' dial and 'Re-Amp Send' jack, a Headphone jack with a level and source control (you can actually monitor signals from the USB port just like a normal audio interface!), AUX in and a switchable effects loop and input with the included footswitch. Finally you'll find speaker outs for both 5W and 0.5W operation, allowing bedroom level boutique tones for practice or recording. The sheer amount of features that Laney has packed into this little head is mind blowing and makes this already very affordable head even more amazing value for money.



The included T-USB interface allows you to record both a dry DI guitar signal and the tone from the pre and power stages, giving you the option to 'reamp' your tone later down the line for the ultimate in studio flexibility. This means you're never committed to the tone you used on the day of recording and makes the L5 Studio a very affordable and portable reamping tool. The emulated DI out sounds and feels very good to play and gives you a viable alternative to miking a cab at a gig and plugging direct into the PA instead.

Build quality of the entire Lionheart range is superb and despite this very affordable price it doesn't seem like any corner cutting has taken place in the manufacturing. There are no rattles or weird noises from the chassis as

can be found in other more budget minded amps and all of the controls feel solid and responsive with positive thunks from all of the switches, this going a long way to enhancing the boutique feel of everything.

The L5 is a superb sounding amplifier that really lives up to the boutique ideals that Laney has placed upon it. The clean channel is especially good, with a chimy and punchy dynamic response that easily rivals amps costing three or four times the price and makes for a fantastic pedal platform with everything plugged in the front end, but with the flexibility of the FX loop when you need to use the drive channel. The drive can range from being a useful second clean channel with a different response and feel, to a raging lead tone with a boost in the front



end and is always very responsive and fun to play. I could see a lot of players buying the L5 purely for the amazing clean tones, but the addition of the Drive channel makes this amp even more versatile and appealing.

The L5 Studio head would be so easy to recommend just on the strength of its tone and size alone, but the addition of the T-USB interface and impressive I/O capabilities make it impossible to pass up on in my opinion. To get this level of boutique tone, versatility, build quality and recording/reamping power at this price point is quite simply staggering. Laney has produced a

modern classic with the Lionheart L5 Studio Head and you'd have to be crazy to not try one out for yourself.

We liked this one (and its price!) so much that we threw the rule book out of the window - it's five stars all the way and regular readers will know how rarely we do that! •

## TECH SPEC

### Laney L5 Studio Head

Made in: China

Power 5W & 0.5W RMS  
 Inputs 2x Jack, Hi & Lo  
 Channels Clean & Drive  
 Channel Controls Clean  
 Volume, Drive & Drive Volume  
 Equalisation Passive Bass,  
 Middle, Treble & Tone  
 Preamp Valves 3 x 12AX7  
 Output Valves 1x EL84

Class Single-Ended Class "A"  
 Reverb Digital hi  
 quality studio reverb  
 Footswitch FS2 (Included)

Speaker connections 0.5W & 5W output jacks  
 FX Loop(s) (series/switchable level)  
 Cabinet Design Marine  
 Grade Plywood cabinet with retro  
 banding strip, leather strap handle  
 Master Section Global  
 EQ, Reverb and Tone controls  
 Cover Supplied with custom  
 embroidered slip cover  
 Weight 7.8kg  
 Unit Dims - for int. case  
 (HxWxD mm) 90x420x185  
 RE-AMP  
 Enabled Yes - Re-amp functionality  
 USB  
 Connectivity T-USB USB connectivity  
 DI Socket Balanced DI output with  
 Speaker Emulation