

GEAR



BC Audio JMX50

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

AS PART OF BC AUDIO'S OCTAL PLEXI Series (which includes the JTX45 and JTX50), the JMX50 is based on a classic Marshall plexi circuit, but has been adapted for use

with 6SL7GT octal (8-pin) preamp tubes. BC Audio's Bruce Clement says these tubes provide a bigger and more powerful sound, and when coupled with a pair of EL34 power tubes

under solid-state rectification, the result is a boutique vintage-Marshall hybrid amplifier that benefits tonally (as well as from a servicing perspective) by having a superbly rendered,



point-to-point wired circuit (i.e. components soldered directly to each other, rather than being laid out on boards). Other quality details, such as a custom 16-gauge powder-coated steel chassis, American-made paper bobbin/paper layer-wound transformers, and stainless-steel hardware round out the build, making the JMX50 and its tube-rectified siblings among the best-made guitar amplifiers we've seen.

Our review sample JMX50 came fitted with a few options that elevated the \$2k base price to \$2,325: A Gain Boost (\$75) and Volume Boost (\$100)—both footswitchable via the LED-equipped switching box—and an effects loop with send and return Level controls *and* a true-bypass switch (\$150). It's worth noting that BC Audio will further customize amps to suit a customer's needs. Whether you want a brighter or mellow sound, tighter or looser response, a different rectifier, or just about anything else, they're ready and willing to speak with you.

The JMX50 has shared tone controls, but since the channels differ quite a bit sonically, switching between them provides a good range of distinctive tones. Auditioned with a Les Paul, a PRS McCarty, a John Page Classic Ashburn (with three single-coils), and a Buzz Feiten T-Pro, the JMX50's Normal channel sounded surprisingly thick. It sure made our single-coil guitars sound fat—faux archtop tones with a Tele even—but lowering the Bass, Treble, and Presence controls was necessary to get enough clarity with humbuckers. The gain range here is sufficient for

crunching rhythm work and moderately sustaining solos, and clicking on the Gain Boost bumps up the distortion significantly, while still allowing for easy guitar-volume segues between clean and overdriven sounds. The Bright channel is way leaner sounding (we're told it's being re-voiced for a less trebly response), and, in this mode, the single-coilers sounded best with both Volume knobs cranked up and the Gain Boost activated. That worked with humbuckers too, which responded by delivering tones that were richly saturated, but with plenty of bite and definition. With any of our test guitars, activating the Volume Boost provided a perfect amount of level increase to cut through on a loud stage. The important thing is that the JMX50 never loses its tightness when running high gain levels or when more volume is demanded. Those 6SL7 preamp tubes in combination with a silicon-fueled EL34 power section really preserve headroom, and the result is that the JMX50 is able to keep flexing its muscles while other 50-watters might be getting short of breath.

The JMX50 offers much of what is cherished about vintage Marshalls: ballsy, in-your-face presence, firm lows, and a harmonics-infused treble that sings sweetly when pushed with great pickups. The JMX's use of octal tubes helps to bring more clarity and dimension to the mix, and the result is an amp that stands out from the crowd of Marshall clones. In all, if you're a hard rocker, or you play aggressive blues or country, you should definitely give the JMX50 a try. **B**

SPECIFICATIONS

JMX50

CONTACT	bcaudio.com
PRICE	Head \$2,000 street; \$2,325 as tested
CHANNELS	2
CONTROLS	Normal Volume, Channel-Select switch, Bright Volume, Bass, Middle, Treble, Master Volume, Presence
POWER	50 watts
TUBES	2x EL34 power tubes, 3x 6SL7GT octal preamp tubes (4x w/FX loop)
EXTRAS	Effects loop with send/return Level controls and true-bypass switch. Dual speaker outs with 4/8/16Ω impedance switch.
SPEAKER	Tested with BC Audio Square 2x12 cab with Celestion Greenbacks (\$725)
WEIGHT	36 lbs (head); 54 lbs (cab)
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Superb headroom. Tough sounding distortion. Outstanding build quality.
CONCERNS	A slimmer sounding Normal channel could be in order for some players.