

BRUCE CLEMENT CREATES

Another Stellar Amplifier

A big amp with big tone and variable power that truly rocks.

It is rare that we receive an amplifier for review that is as versatile and powerful as the BC Audio Bel Air 40.



The key to this amp is your ability to run it with two or four 6V6 power tubes, and that option truly makes all the difference. Look at it this way – if you have a show slated for a smaller venue, the dual 6V6 configuration is perfect for a smaller room, although you could certainly run the Bel Air with two 6V6's at higher volume levels in a larger room and cut the gig with an outstanding overdriven tone. For a full stage four 6V6's will do the job with a very big tone and a tactile feel to the amp that encourages the best you've got to give. The bottom line is, this amp will make you sound palpably better, whether you use two or four power tubes.

But that's not the whole story by any means. The Bel Air is loaded with very useful and intuitive tone-shaping controls that allow you to vary not only your tone, but your clean

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levels, attack, sustain, and perceived power and volume. In this regard the Bel Air is one of the most versatile amps we have ever reviewed in these pages.



In addition to the power tube configuration, you can run the amp in pentode or triode mode, with fixed or cathode bias. Pentode gives you a richer, deeper tone while triode reveals more of the character of the 6V6 tubes within a seemingly smaller landscape. The differences in bias are very subtle. You also have the option of running the amp with two variations of negative feedback, or none. You get a cleaner tone using either of the negative feedback options. The same applies with the 'EQ In' setting versus 'EQ Out' of the circuit. 'EQ Out' gives you a leaner tone while 'EQ In' with treble, mid and bass adjusted to taste produces a much bigger sound stage. If you wanted to play a song with a broke down, old school '50s vibe taking the EQ Out will give you the kind of feel and tone you would get from an old amp with just a volume and single tone knob.



The two bright settings are really shining stars in this circuit. The sound of both settings is sparkling and very, very toneful in a way that many bright switches can't or don't emulate. The tone becomes brighter in both settings, but not at the expense of the lush bass and round midrange EQ. They are preserved, while adding a very musical bright

character to the amp that is penetrating, but also equally pleasing. The two bright settings simply add the right amount of variable sparkle to the notes.



The Body control changes the low and low-mid frequency response of the amp. Very versatile and useful, particularly when driving the amp harder.

For our taste, the Quad setting really unleashes the Bel Air to reach its full and considerable potential. It's a big amp with a very big sound, yet the volume is controllable without sacrificing the presence and smooth bluster that is available when you need it. On the other hand, this is a great amp for mining clean tones at low or higher volume levels as well. The clean tones are vivid and pure, complimenting your guitar brilliantly, and there is enough power to easily stay clean and hang with a band all night long should you wish. The Bel Air's overdriven sound is utterly classic – it sounds like a vintage amp and not unlike our vaunted '68 Pro Reverb cranked, yet the 6V6's add a smoother character to the amp that is truly addictive.

FEATURES

- 100% all-tube signal path
- True point-to-point wiring
- Four 6V6 power tubes
- GZ34 rectifier
- Presence and Cut Controls
- 3-band EQ with bypass
- 3-position bright switch
- Body control
- Impedance selector for 4, 8 or 16 ohms

If you crave a versatile amp that truly can do it all, endowed with intuitive, yet simple controls that create a wide range of 'vintage' soundscapes, the Bel Air is your amp. It's a true performance machine. Quest forth... **TQ**

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