



GEAR

REVIEW



BIG-TONE CITY

BC Audio Amplifier No. 10 Mk. II

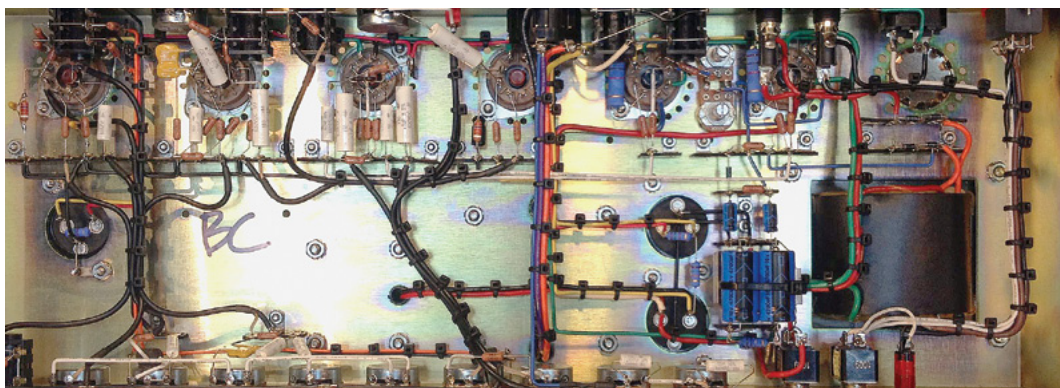
Bruce Clement is known for his quality amp work, including models housed in military ammo cans. One of his 50-watt heads, the Amplifier No. 10 Mk. II, might not be quite *that* unique, but it sports fresh features in a crowded “boutique” market. In addition, the No. 10 Mk. II is *not* designed to replicate any specific British or American amp.

The first thing tubeheads might notice is the amp’s unusual tube complement. Instead of 12AX7 preamp tubes, there are four 6SL7 octal tubes, which Clement regards as more “power amp-like,” meaning they provide a bigger, bolder tone rather than merely providing crunch on the front end. The head also has a pair of EL34 power tubes dishing out 50 watts of output, while other internal features like an all-tube signal path and true point-to-point wiring. On the back, look for a voltage selector, fuses, speaker output jacks, an impedance selector for cabinet selection, and an effects loop with Send and Return level controls.

The Gain control determines the tone’s overdrive texture, dependent on the guitar’s pickups, while the Mk. II feature – Gain Boost, engaged via footswitch – can be set to a higher crunch

level, for example, and activated with a tap of the toe. This fun is doubled with the addition of Volume Boost, another footswitchable control. Effectively, the footswitch puts four significantly different tone settings at the ready, making the No. 10 Mk. II akin to a four-channel head. In the name of higher fidelity, there’s also a three-band tone stack (treble, bass, mid) early in the preamp’s signal path for tweaking the tone before any distortion hits it. Conversely, the Presence and Depth knobs are located after the crunch in the power section for shaping the high and low ends to taste.

Price: \$2,495 (list)
Info: www.bcaudio.com



We didn’t plug the No. 10 Mk. II into a typical 2x12 or 4x12 cabinet. To make things challenging, we deployed a 1x12 closed-back

Mack. With a PRS and a Tele as our weapons of choice, we ran the amp through the full range of guitar tones, clean to dirty. Out of the gate, the BC Audio head offered up a full range of British-style sounds with lots of headroom and incredible tube compression. Despite the small cab, there were no flubby bass tones or any shortage of solid bottom end – this rig was club-ready, tight, and loud as hell. The cleans were huge and full with just enough grit to add spice. To provide another dimension of tone, we added an Oddfellow overdrive pedal to the signal chain and got some positively hairy tones. We left the No. 10’s Gain knob at 0 but dialed up the pedal’s overdrive, creating some monstrous blues-rock hues that would make Paul Kossoff smile. The reactivity of this amp was amazing. We could dial in the exact nuance of desired drive and the amp responded.

Next, we turned off the pedal and started ratcheting up the amp’s internal gain controls. Here we got more of that American “West Coast” crunch but without any frying-bacon sounds that connote a thin, hissy guitar tone. Ultimately, we pushed everything to the limit and were rewarded with heavenly hard rock and metal sounds, again with the emphasis on fat, broad guitar tone – no thin, brittle flavors, just earthshaking guitar tones.

Throughout testing, the BC Audio Amplifier No. 10 Mk. II proved outstanding. From the superb build quality to the stunning array of tones inside, it’s a top-end tone tool any guitarist would love to own. There are impressive looks, too. The tester featured a robin’s egg tolex skin, black faceplate and knobs, and two hot orange racing bands (familiar to auto racing fans as the “Gulf livery”).

It also comes in black and two other custom colors. Certainly, it’s priced on the higher end, but with gear of this caliber, price isn’t the point. If you’re looking for a new guitar

head in the “best of the best” category, check out this BC Audio model. It’s a serious contender. – **Pete Prown VG**