



BC Audio Amplifier No. 10-Mk II

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

BRUCE CLEMENT'S PHILOSOPHY OF building amps that will appeal to players looking for a specific feel and sound has led to range of models—from Amplifier No. 7 to the No. 10-Mk II on review here—all of which use 8-pin 6SL7 tubes in the preamp instead of the more common 9-pin 12AX7s and 12AT7s. For reference, the larger 6SL7 is a high mu twin-triode design that is found in the preamp sections of many old-school hi-fi and guitar amplifiers. It has a beefy response that Clement likens to that of an overdriven power tube.

The "Mk II" part of Amplifier No. 10 refers to the addition of footswitchable Gain Boost and Volume Boost controls, an improved tube-buffered effects loop (with send and return level controls and a bypass switch), 3-band EQ placed early in the preamp stage to tailor the pre-overdrive response, and Depth and Presence controls in the power stage.

The only other knobs are Gain and Volume, making this amp easy to navigate, and the only slight drag is that you have to use the included two-button footswitch to activate the Gain and Volume Boost functions.

The build quality is impressive throughout, and is especially evident in the hand-wired circuitry, which features true point-to-point construction (no eyelet or turret boards), super-neat wire runs, and chassis-mounted pots, jacks, switches, and tube sockets. And without a

stitch of silicon or hot glue to be found anywhere in the circuitry, you get unobstructed access to all the inner workings. Couple all this with the racing stripes and silver piping on the birch-ply cabinet, and it's a sweet looking rig to say the least.

We auditioned the Amplifier No. 10-Mk II though a Fuchs/Feiten 2x12 cabinet loaded with Eminence Patriot Series Texas Heat 12s (see review in the September 2014 issue) and a Mesa Recto 4x12. Test guitars included a Gibson/Memphis Les Paul Standard, a PRS Modern Eagle II, and a Buzz Feiten T-Pro. The amp performed well with all these cabs and instruments, delivering sounds that roam around the Marshall neighborhood with stops at master-volume JMP to higher-gain JCM800 Split-Channel tones to the "modded" textures that players have often sought in order to extract more gain and low-end chunk.

Of course, BC Audio does it all with a pure tube signal path, which enhances the dynamic feel and yields a more muscular sound at all volumes. The amp's clean range is fairly limited—even the lowest Gain settings can be nudged into grittiness—but that's not what the Mk II is about. This is a purposeful hard-rock amp that excels at distorted rhythm and lead tones, and without the need for OD or boost pedals. That said, a Big Joe Empire, an MXR II Torino overdrive, and a Way Huge Saucy Box all sounded

MODEL

AMPLIFIER NO. 10-MK II

CONTACT bcaudio.com
PRICE \$2,495

SPECIFICATIONS

CHANNELS	One
CONTROLS	(L-R) Presence, Depth, Vol Boost, Volume, Bass, Mid, Treble, Gain Boost, Gain
POWER	50 watts
TUBES	Four Tung-Sol 6SL7GT octal pre-amp tubes, two Mullard EL34s
EXTRAS	Effects loop with Send and Return controls and bypass switch. Dual speaker outs with 4/8/16Ω switch. Two-button footswitch included.
SPEAKER	Tested with Fuchs Buzz Feiten Designed Vintage 2x12 and Mesa/Boogie 4x12
WEIGHT	32.6 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Masterful build quality. Wide range of potent overdriven tones. Handy gain- and volume-boost functions.
CONCERNS	Boost functions can only be activated via footswitch.

excellent though this amp. In terms of Gain, the Mk II has plenty on tap for sustaining solos and the like. Activating the Gain Boost doesn't increase the gain dramatically, even with the knob full up, but it fattens single-coils very effectively and adds some upper-midrange bite to make highly distorted tones cut through more clearly.

Leaving the Gain Boost off, I liked the amp's sound a lot with the standard Gain knob at around two o'clock, which leaves plenty of room to work between dirty clean and crunch/lead tones using the guitar's volume control. Cranking up the Volume summons the power stage to increase level *and* add more overdriven harmonic content. Getting the 6SL7s and EL34s cooking together is definitely the recipe for badass tones with this amp, and if you fear being buried by your band at that moment when your solo needs to stand tall, just preset the Volume Boost for whatever loudness increase you want and deploy it with the foot-switch. The Presence knob can also be used to sharpen the sound and add more sustain, while the Depth control helps to tighten the response in

the output stage, which can be especially useful when running through open-back cabinets.

The Amplifier No. 10-Mk II will appeal to players who seek stout rock tones in situations where cranking up a 50-watter is no problem. The tube configuration absolutely gets its mojo on when you turn this thing up, and while the master volume does a good job of holding the levels down, this is not an amp for bedroom shredders. I connected it

to a Mesa/Boogie Cab Clone speaker-simulator/direct box for practicing with headphones, which is a good way to experience the amp's full spectrum without blowing out any windows.

All considered, and given its excellent build quality and reasonable price, the Amplifier No. 10-Mk II should be at the top of your list if you're shopping in the boutique section of the rock amp market. ■

