

ToneQuest Ammo



Bruce Clements builds truly great amps. We have been reviewing his work for years, and every amp he has sent us has been a keeper, beginning with the famous

“ammo can” Amplifier No. 7. Mark Johnson of Delta Moon bought one because he was tired of using dicey backline amps for fly gigs, although he didn’t go with the ammo can for fear of upsetting airport security. Mark has been using Amplifier No.7 and truly loves it. We were hardly surprised...

Clements has continued to expand his line of amps and we asked that he send us a new JTX50 Octal Plexi head for review. Once again we were smitten with this new amplifier,



which honors the Marshall Plexi amps but with Clement’s love for octal preamp tubes. Well, all we can say is that he’s done it again. Here’s his description in his own words:

Based on the rare but mighty transitional “flag logo” plexi. Brighter; more aggressive voice. EL34 crunch with tube rectifier sag. Raw, raunchy and loud as hell. JTM50 circuit: EL34 power tubes, GZ34 rectifier, shared VI cathodes, medium bright cap, large mix resistors, early tone stack, large PI coupling caps, less negative feedback, high B+ voltage, moderate B+ rail filtering.

Anyone that has owned and played through a true Marshall Plexi will tell you that these were not filthy gain monsters by any means. Marshall amps progressively acquired more gain and less clean headroom throughout the ‘70s, but the original Plexi amps possessed headroom and cleaner tones than the ‘70s gain monsters. And so it goes with Clement’s amp... It is built to deliver both clean headroom and sweet overdriven tones with the flick of a toggle switch, which seems to be a trademark of Clement’s amps. He also offers a wide range of optional modifications to the Octal Plexi series, such as:

Bass Spec

Warmer and mellower; favored by many Strat players; no additional charge.

Gain Boost

Foot-switchable Gain Boost (not a tone stack lift); includes LED illuminated footswitch

Volume Boost

Foot-switchable Volume Boost; includes LED illuminated footswitch

Send Return

*Effects Loop
Tube Buffered Effects Loop with Send Level, Return Level and True Bypass switch*

Loop Footswitch

Footswitch control of Effects Loop bypass; includes LED illuminated footswitch; requires purchase of Effects Loop

BC Ultimate Voicing

Bruce Clement’s award-winning ear for tone applied to the plexi circuit for what we believe is the ultimate plexi sound

Custom Circuit Tweaks

Tailored specifically for you. Want it brighter or mellower? More gain or more headroom? Tighter or looser power section? Different rectifier? Different style MV? Cut instead of Presence? We can perform any number of alterations to make your amp a truly custom affair. Contact us to discuss your needs.

Perhaps you’ll agree that this is the way buying a new amp should be – choosing optional features that suit your needs and playing style.



The JTX 50 Octal Plexi amp we received came with an effects loop, but this amp is feature rich in its stock form. Controls include Presence, Master Volume, Bass, Mid, Treble, Bright and Normal Volume with a 3-way toggle switch for Bright, Linked and Normal operation. The amp also features octal preamp, power and rectifier tubes and true point-to-point construction. Controls on the back panel include FX footswitch, FX Loop Send and Return, an FX Loop switch with true bypass, Impedance switch for 4, 8, and 16 OHM operation, and two speaker jacks.

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The amplifier head itself is a stout piece of custom work, expertly crafted and built to take the rigors of the road. Like us, you no doubt know quality when you see it, and the JTX50 is a quality example of custom work. When you spend \$2,000 on an amp, you should enjoy looking at it and absorbing the craftsmanship as much as playing it. No problem here with Clement's amp, which is completely tight and right throughout. We consider Clement's style to be one of understated elegance and quality throughout, and this is what buying a custom amplifier should be all about.

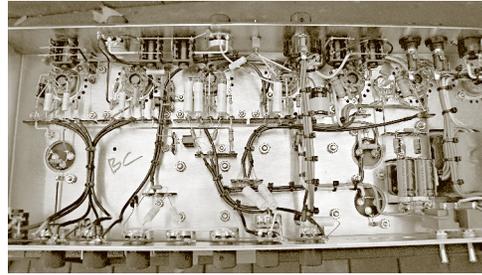
Tone



The JTX50 sounds as smooth and toneful as an amplifier can possibly sound. The

heart of the amp is tapped through the Bright, Normal and Linked 3-way toggle switch. Normal is leaner and pristine, Bright is indeed brighter with slightly more gain, and Link is the money setting that sends the amp into a heavier and louder mode with excellent gain and an overdriven tone. Between these settings and the Master Volume control you have access to a wide variety of tones and gain levels, from cleaner tones with excellent EQ control via the Bass, Mid and Treble controls, to an impressive overdriven tone that is fat and deep via the Link setting. We really freaked the first time we set the toggle switch in the Link setting, and so will you as it seems to almost double the amp's presence, girth and sonic impact.

Now, when we say clean, understand that the octal tubes produce a tone that is far more 3 dimensional than a 'normal' amplifier. Even set clean you will hear a deeper tone and an overdriven character that is much more complex than mere distortion. A tone that does not obscure the fundamental of each string or create a tight, linear feel to the notes. This is the beauty of the octal tubes, which produce a bigger sound stage to work from. As we said, the toggled Bright and Normal settings produce a cleaner, more pristine tone, while the Link middle setting of the toggle switch really turns the amp loose with a polyphonic mix of overdriven tones and overtones that are nothing less than inspiring. Playing through this amplifier gives you the freedom to really work with the harmonic character of the guitar and variable levels of sustain. It's as if you are occupying a new space that adds another dimension to your sound. Bass, Mid and Treble controls are also very effective and somewhat interactive. You can alter the tone of the amp as well as the resonant character of the guitar with these controls.



In terms of volume the master volume makes this amplifier extremely versatile, with very

little difference in attack and sustain when running the amp at half volume or higher. It simply reduces volume without radically changing the response characteristics of the amp. Very cool, and precisely what a master volume should do. Note separation remains pristine with no muddiness or blurring of clarity. Clement knows what he is chasing and he simply gets it.

In addition to the JTX50 and amplifier No.7, Clement builds the 25 watt, 5881 powered Amplifier No. 8 previously reviewed here, the tube rectified 45 watt KT66 Amplifier No. 9, and the EL34 octal preamp 50 watt Amplifier No. 10. Clement also builds excellent convertible open/closed back speaker cabinets, and a Hot Foot Solo Boost mod for the THD Hotplate.

We love Clement's work and every amplifier we have reviewed has spoiled us rotten. If you need to compete with a hard hitting drummer the JTX50 could be your amp of love. For lower volume applications check out the Amplifier No. 7 and Amplifier No. 8. Both will rock your world. Quest forth...to

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