

Product Reviews

The Vintage Sound VS112 - JZ amplifier



As a jazz guitar player, I fall somewhere between Joe Pass and Tiny Tim (probably closer to the latter!). To put it another way, I am not the greatest player to expound on the pages of Just Jazz Guitar. This being the case, what qualifies me to review an amp created for jazz guitar players? Well, the fact is, I have very good ears. My qualifications come from my ears and from a lifelong passionate quest to find the best amplified sound of an archtop guitar.

Those of us old enough to have been playing back in the sixties were often drawn to the sound of the Fender tube amps. Encouraged by jazz guitarist Bruce Forman, Sound Island Music and Vintage Sound Amps combined their ideas and headed in that same direction, creating, with the VS112 - JZ model, a sound that is similar to the classic "blackface" Fenders, only better, clearer, warmer and more musical, with richly colored overtones.

The VS112-JZ amp stands an elegantly compact square shape, generates 22 clean watts through twin 6L6 power tubes, voices through a single 12" Weber speaker, and is nicely finished in an attractive light brown tolex. You can get more component details about these amps at www.soundislandmusic.com.

For this review, I want to do something a little different. I want to write from the standpoint of the beauty of sound. This is something to which guitar players often don't give enough attention.

When was the last time you played a single note and marveled over how good it sounded? Most amplified guitar notes could not be accused of sounding beautiful. This may be one reason why we guitar players often play too many notes. We don't really trust one note alone to ring out and sound beautiful.

Of course, you need a decent guitar and pickup, but given these, the VS112 - JZ will sing that beautiful, single-note sound. Since the amp also has excellent detail and note separation, chords sound beautiful too! This amp makes a single note on my guitars sound like a grand piano or, with a different attack, like a saxophone. The low notes are clear and full, and with a turn of the presence knob, you can easily control their edge and sparkle. The middle register and high notes are both fat and pure, making a vibrato beautiful and satisfying. The reverb is smartly paired with a dwell control that allows you to vary the "tail" of the effect so you can add reverb without muddying your sound.

It all adds up to this: the VS112 - JZ is the most exciting and musically satisfying amp I have ever owned. If only I could play better!

Review by Allen Johnson Jr.

SPECIFICATIONS

Construction: PTP hand-wired
Cabinet: Dove-tailed, jointed pine
Circuitry: Modified "Prin-Luxe"
Size: 18"h x 20"w x 9 1/2 "d (nominal)
Weight: 42 Lbs
Speaker: 1x12 Weber California
... 80 watts
... ceramic magnet
... large dome
Output: 22 watts RMS
Transformers:
... Mercury Magnetics
... High headroom designs
Power tubes: 2x6L6 Ruby MSTR
Tone caps: Orange
Electrolics: Sprague
Controls:
... volume
... treble
... midrange
... bass
... reverb
... dwell
... presence
External speaker output jack
Includes: cover
Price: \$1,650.00
Available from Sound Island Music
www.soundislandmusic.com)