

Test Results Speakers

INTRODUCTION:

OBJECT OF THE TEST

To establish the different sounds provided by speakers used in classic amp set-ups and provide a simple guide as to the speaker type which will best suit your application.

EQUIPMENT USED

The amplifiers used to evaluate the 12 inch speakers were: 70 's Fender Twin reverb combo. Marshall 100 super lead into 4 x 12 cab. Fender Princeton Reverb 2 combo. A single 1 x 12 cabinet loaded with each speaker. The amplifiers used to evaluate the 10 inch speakers were a Vox AC10 and Fender pro. Guitars used where a 1973 Fender Stratocaster, 1980 Yamaha SA 2000S semi acoustic and a 1980 Gibson Les Paul Standard.

ALNICO MAGNET SPEAKERS

Alnico magnets are made from a combination of aluminium, nickel and cobalt used to make the magnets. The speakers in amps made in the 1940 through to the late sixties generally had Alnico speaker with the most famous being made by JENSEN and CELESTION. The Alnico speakers have a rich warm overdrive sound. They are famous for the early speaker distortion with touch sensitive response. They have a large dynamic range and long life.

HOW WE TESTED:

JENSEN P10R- ALNICO

The Jensen P10R is the industry standard for vintage alnico tone. The alnico gives off a warmth and subtlety that is not available with any other drive unit and has become famous as the speaker that gave the 1959 Fender bassman its voice. In clean mode the highs are sparkling with that famous Fender twang. Country licks are full with superb definition with finger picking

smooth and precise. Turn up the amp and that classic at the point of break up sound shines through. The speaker never loses control with single note runs and power chord ringing perfectly.

The speaker when run hard has huge presence and sound stage with solo's easily cutting through the mix. At this level the bass response has that sweet blurring affect with just gets bigger the more you turn up the amplifier.

If you are looking for that vintage sound then fits these units as I have not come across a better sounding 10 inch speaker, Which is why Fender fit these in all there tweed series amps and Mesa/boogie in the nomads. The Jensen P10R is simply the best.

JENSEN P12R 25 WATT & P12N 50 WATT-ALNICO

These are possibly the most famous 12 inch units that shaped American rock and blues to become industry standards. The speakers sound identical but for your favourite deluxe reverb we would go with the higher rated P12N.

The immediate warmth and clarity is why these are the favourite speaker of so many blues players. The smooth treble with touch sensitive response gives the guitar its own soul. String bends become a joy as every last detail can be clearly heard. The break up of the cone happens early and gets larger as the amp is turned up. Every note has clean attack and punch. The speaker provides huge volume with a forward mid range. This is ideal for long sustained notes or slow blues runs. The bass response is loose but giving plenty of definition. When considering the cost of the Celestion blue the Jensens are a bargain which will have more impact on your sound than any other component.

CELESTION BLUE 12 ALNICO

This was the worlds first dedicated guitar speaker and really is the industry

standard for vintage blues and rock. Hearing one of these is believing. Rated at a meagre 15 watt rms this speaker has tone and dynamic range in abundance. The speaker in clean settings has perfect balance with clear note definition.

The mid range response is clear with that sweet alnico punch. The highs remain glassy and smooth.

Turn up the gain and the alnico punch hits you with such power. The cone starts to break up evenly. On playing runs on the E string the sustain and volume was huge with that touch sensitivity that was breathtaking. The standard of workmanship in the speaker also needs a special mention as it is total perfection. This speaker is expensive but it is worth every penny as the pleasure that you will get out of playing this unit with your favourite amp cannot be measured in monetary terms. This is the best guitar speaker on the planet.

CERAMIC MAGNET SPEAKERS

Ceramic magnet units tend to provide higher power handling at a lower cost than alnico magnet units. They produce a sound which is generally considered harder and less sweet than the alnico whilst providing greater clean headroom.

JENSEN C10Q

The little 35 watt Jensen is one of my favourite current production units and an ideal upgrade for class A amps such as the Laney LC15.

The Jensen are super smooth sounding with no harshness or hardness.

The speaker provides a very tight bottom end with a crisp treble tone. When used with single coil pickups all the Fender trademark sounds come to life.

When pushed hard the sound stage becomes larger than life without any loss of clarity. The speaker is always in

control whether power chords, riffs or single runs even under heavy distortion. The mid range clarity goes a little in full drive mode but what it adds is a sweet mid band fuzz which I happen to love. These are a great sounding unit and if you cannot afford the P10R for your reissue bassman , then these are the next best thing.

JENSEN C12N

The Jensen C12N was used in many famous Fender amps during the mid sixties through to the mid seventies. The Jensen produces one of the smoothest sounds from any ceramic magnet speaker. In clean mode the speaker is bright and crisp with a gritty rock sound. Plenty of Fender twang

with no rough edges. When the gain is increased the C12N really finds its true voice. The speaker becomes throaty with superb sustain and balance.

What I love about this speaker is however hard you hit it the sound just gets bigger with no harshness. The bass is very tight and full which does not alter whatever the musical style you choose to play on it.

The mid range is bright and cutting which makes it ideal for soloing.

This is the ideal speaker to upgrade any Fender or American sounding amp.

JENSEN C12R

The C12R has the same virtues as its larger brother the C12N with reduced power handling. The speaker is ideally suited to small combo as it shares the tight bass response of the C12N. Treble response is smooth with clean note definition. good sustain with more midrange forwardness than the C12N makes this an ideal blues speaker.

CELESTION G12M GREENBACK

The 'greenback' was used most in Marshall cabinets in the late sixties early 70's. The speaker produces a blurring effect in the bass and mid frequency when the amp was used at high volume

in the clean mode with single coils. The treble seemed on the edge of break up without going over in full distortion. Introducing humbuckers, the speaker produced a rich harmonic wall of sound. Note definition was loose with the mid range higher in the musical spectrum. The greenback has immense warmth and provides rich sustain. In rolling off the tone on the guitar and turning up the volume and playing some blues licks the speaker began to sing the famous woman tone was all there. The bass is warm and full but definition and tightness demanded by today's rock player is not its strong point. The Celestion is a great blues speaker which gives that classic 70's Led Zeppelin Free sound.

CELESTION G12H 70TH ANNIVERSARY

The G12H is made to the exact specification of the original which was the standard speaker used in the 70's Marshall cabinets with the 'h' standing for heavy magnet.

The first thing that struck me was the immense warmth of the speaker. It was well balanced and musical at low volume with the treble response silky smooth. When the volume was increased the speaker did not lose control, balance was perfect with the treble still smooth tight and crisp. With the gain wound right up with humbuckers full on the speaker provided a rich harmonic treble with touch responsiveness that would normally only be associated with an alnico speaker.

The speaker provides a sweet singing sustain that was very musical and in no way harsh. The speaker has a very tight bass response with smooth cut and clarity which was equally at home with single notes or power chords.

This is one of the best Celestion ever made in my opinion and with no faults whatsoever.

It has the warmth and soul we all look for in a speaker and is fantastic in a Marshall 4 x 12.

This is a great choice as an up grade for all guitar applications.

CELESTION CLASSIC LEAD 80

The classic lead is a modern speaker which has been optimised for frequencies critical for lead guitar.

The speaker is ideally suited to small single speaker combos. The bass response is deep but it is not as tight as the Vintage 30 or G12H and does have a slight blurring effect in the bass which reminded me of the greenback. The mid range had a slight forwardness when used at normal volume levels. The treble response also sounded clear and in focus. On turning up the gain and going into solo mode the high frequencies fired out of the speaker like a cascade of bullets from a semi automatic. They were all clear and well defined. When compared to the vintage 30 at the same volume settings the classic lead produced a smoother tone than the vintage 30 in the treble department but this was not as smooth as the Jensen C12N or Celestion G12H. Celestion have maintained the cut of the vintage 30 whilst smoothing out the treble. The classic lead maintains a sweet mid response that has characterised the Celestion speakers of the 1970's whilst adding the cut demanded by modern high gain amps.

CELESTION VINTAGE 30

The vintage 30 is the ultimate hard rock/thrash speaker. The speaker provides immense volume and sustain with very tight bass response. Single note runs are clear with rich harmonics. The speaker provides musical transparency at all volume levels on single note or power chords with the sound spectrum well balanced.

In a live situation when the gain is increased for soloing the speaker cuts like a knife. Solo's are crisp out front and in your face and it does not matter how much you throw at the vintage 30 it just wants more. My only slight reservations

on the vintage 30 is that it produces a very hard tight sound which over long periods of playing can cause fatigue. That said with a high gain amp the speaker demands your attention and for thrash/metal/hardrock this speaker does not have any competition.

CELESTION G12T-75

The G12-75 is a versatile speaker that incorporates the sounds of the greenback, Vintage 30 and G12H all in one package.

It has a very nice tight bass response with blurs around the edge like the greenback. The mid range response is wide but it appears to lack the bite or the cut of the vintage 30 speaker. The treble response is very smooth with no harshness. Single note runs are note as clearly defined as some of the others with power chords sound full but dominating the mid band. When compared to other speakers in the test the G12T-75 is a 'jack of all trades but master of none'. The mid band dominance of this unit did not cut it for me as this made it sound very ordinary.

It must be remembered that Celestion have set out to provide a speaker which is capable of providing a good rendition of every style of music from thrash to folk. This have been achieved with flying colours and as a general purpose unit it is better than many of the stock OEM units that come as standard with modern enclosures.

CONCLUSION:

The speaker that you use will have a dramatic effect on your sound and it is one of the areas that most musicians tend to overlook. If you have a particular sound or a favourite player then find out how he gets his sound and the units that he uses. The test conclusions have been arranged as a simple guide to point you in the right areas so you can choose which units may fit your style of music.

We have chosen 8 broad categories of music and given the speakers a rating

from 1 to 5 with number 1 being the best choice.

UNIT Metal/Thrash

1. Celestion Vintage 30
2. Celestion G12 Classic lead
3. Celestion G12H
4. Celestion G12T-75
5. Jensen C12N

UNIT Blues

1. Celestion Alnico blue
2. Jensen P10R
3. Jensen P12R & P12N
4. Jensen C12N
- 5 Celestion G12H

UNIT ROCK

1. Celestion Alnico Blue
2. Celestion G12H
3. Celestion Vintage 30
4. Celestion G12T-75
5. Jensen C12N

UNIT JAZZ

1. Jensen P12R & P12N
2. Celestion Alnico Blue
3. Jensen P10R
4. Jensen C12N
5. Celestion G12H

UNIT BRIT ROCK

1. Celestion G12H
2. Celestion Alnico blue
3. Celestion G12M 'Green'
4. Celestion Vintage 30
5. Jensen P10R

UNIT 70'S ROCK

1. Celestion G12H
2. Celsetion G12M'Green'
3. Jensen C12N
4. Celestion G12 Classic lead
5. Jensen P10R

UNIT COUNTRY

1. Jensen P10R
2. Jensen P12R & P12N
3. Jensen C12N
4. Celestion Alnico Blue
5. Celestion G12H

UNIT CLASSIC FUNK

1. Jensen P12R & P12N
2. Jensen C12N
3. Jensen P10R
4. Celestion Alnico Blue
5. Celestion G12H