

Guitar Player

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DR. Z MAZERATI AND Z-28

TESTED BY DARRIN FOH

In the boutique amp world, old school rules. Sure, a few builders—Diezel, Bogner, and Soldano to name three—specialize in modern-style multi-channel tone machines. But the majority of high-end designers are perfectly content to specialize in refining classic Fender, Vox, and Marshall circuits to the nth degree. And, judging by the steady stream of boutique amps over the past 12-plus years, there is clearly a market for tone blasters that sport a vintage aesthetic.

WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' KNOBS!

One builder who drools old school is Mike Zaito (a.k.a. Dr. Z), who, for the last decade, has unleashed amplifiers that offer happening twists on classic Fender and Marshall tones. The Mazerati and Z-28 combos are stripped-down single-channel amps that, with a total of five controls between them, are clearly designed for players who rely primarily on their touch and their guitar's volume knob to get their sound.

The Mazerati and Z-28 both feature world-class construction, with flawlessly applied Tolex on Baltic birch cabinets, cleanly soldered handwired circuits laid-out on vintage turret boards, and chassis-mounted

INSTANT GRATIFICATION

DR. Z Z-28

WHO'S IT FOR?

Anyone who appreciates a more muscular Fender Deluxe.

KUDOS

Beautifully simple.
A more aggressive take on classic Deluxe timbres.

CONCERNS

None

PRICE

\$1,349 retail
Street N/A

CONTACT

Dr. Z Amplifiers,
[216] 475-1444; drzamps.com

tube sockets and potentiometers. I tested both amps with a number of guitars, including a Fender Telecaster and a Stratocaster, a Gibson SG, and a PRS McCarty.

MAZERATI

A higher-powered companion to Dr. Z's popular Carmen Ghia head, the Mazerati delivers rich, beautifully detailed tones that offer a pointed, yet musical midrange. And though the top-end blooms with a touch of AC30 chime—a detail that was best revealed with a Strat—the Mazerati's pugnacious midrange and swift attack make it a decidedly more carnivorous animal than an AC30.

But that's not to say the Mazerati races down the road to gainville the minute you start inching up the volume. In fact, this amp never even gets close to full-on saturation. Instead, it yields a smooth, subtle breakup that is equal parts mean and sophisticated, while retaining all of your note definition (think *Sticky Fingers*-era Keef, and you'll be in the ballpark). And by just barely backing off your guitar's volume, the Mazerati cleans up enough to be a jazzier's wet dream.

What I appreciated most about the Mazerati, however, is that the amp is not only plenty loud, but its breathy low-end stays tight and focused even with the vol-

ZOOM



The Mazerati's elegantly simple control panel.

ume fully cranked. This is partly due to the beefy output and power transformers, which enable the amp to growl in approval of anything you can dish out on the bass strings.

As you've probably surmised, the Mazerati's Tone control is voiced magnificently. Not once did I find myself lamenting the need for more treble, less bass, scooped mids, etc. In fact, the range between 10 and 2 o'clock proved more than adequate to accommodate every test guitar—the Mazerati is so well designed that I didn't need anything more.

Z-28

Designed to be a lower-powered alternative to the righteous Route 66 amp (reviewed January '99), the Z-28 relies on a dual-6V6 power section rather than a more muscular pair of KT66s.

Tonally, the Z-28 falls squarely in the Fender camp. With my Tele plugged into the Z-28, I was instantly struck by the amp's sugary-sweet treble and lilting midrange—Fender-like traits for sure, but the Z-28 sports a decidedly bolder, punchier low-end toughness, as well as a snappier response to pick attack.

Turning up the volume, I was surprised by how quickly the bell-like tones started getting a little hair on them. Humbucker-equipped guitars kicked the Z-28 into overdrive a little faster than single-coils, but, thanks to its sensitive front end, the Z-28 was always just a nudge of my guitar's volume knob away from cleaning right back up.

Even with the Z-28 flying wide open, the amp never caved in on itself when I was going for some power-chord girth. Quite the contrary, the Z-28 barked with enough authority to make a tweed Deluxe seem rather tame by comparison.

It's amazing how many sonic shades are at your disposal with just a guitar,

Dr. Z Mazerati

- Single channel
- Volume and Tone controls
- Four Groove Tubes EL84s
- 12AX7 and 5751-equipped preamp
- Celestion Vintage 30 12" speaker
- 4 Ω , 8 Ω , 16 Ω speaker outputs
- 35 watts

Dr. Z Z-28

- Single channel
- Volume, Bass, and Treble controls
- Two Electro-Harmonix 6V6s
- 12AX7 and EF86-equipped preamp
- Two Dr. Z-designed 10" speakers
- 4 Ω , 8 Ω speaker outputs
- 22 watts

**INSTANT
GRATIFICATION**
DR. Z MAZERATI

WHO'S IT FOR?

Players seeking an ultra-simple amp with a blend of Vox and Marshall characteristics.

KUDOS

Plug in, play, and boom—killer tones.

CONCERNS

None

PRICE

\$1,499 retail
Street N/A

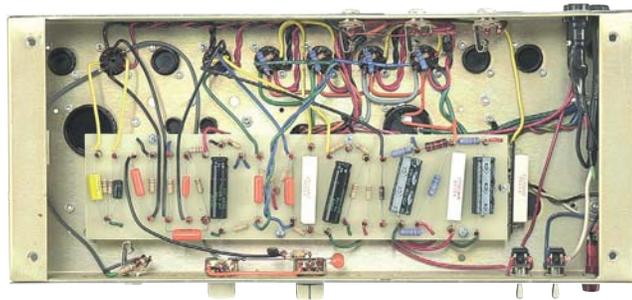
CONTACT

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your hands, and the Z-28. Snappy funk, delicious double-stops, vocal-like lead tones—they're all there. If you love the character of a classic Fender amp, but seek more snarl and punch, the Z-28 is your ticket to tonal titillation.

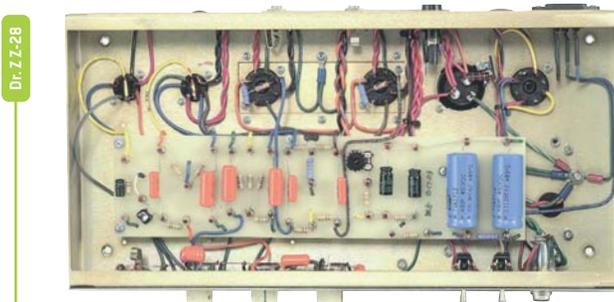
**SOMEBODY GET
ME A DOCTOR**

The Vox-meets-Marshall Mazerati and Deluxe-on-steroids Z-28 are both supreme sonic machines designed to bring out everything you and your guitar have to offer. True, their old-school “get the tone from your hands” aesthetic won't appeal to everyone, but as the old saying goes, “Nothing worth having comes easy.”



The Dr. Z Z-28 and Mazerati sport chassis-mounted components and handwired circuits.

Dr. Z Mazerati



Dr. Z Z-28