



Dr. Z

JETTA 1x12 COMBO

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

ALTHOUGH MIKE ZAITE is one of the more original designers on the boutique scene, he has often taken his inspiration from left-field vintage creations rather than the Vox-Marshall-Fender triumvirate to which 90 percent of the boutique market pays homage. So it is with the Jetta, a 30-watt 1x12 combo inspired by a 1968 Ampeg Reverbojet that was brought to Dr. Z for rehab and the jaw-dropping rock and roll tone that the patient exhibited upon recovery. It certainly didn't hurt that Keith Richards used a Reverbojet on much of *Exile on Main Street*. As Zaite relates, "I finished it up, plugged into it and hit a chord, and it was like, Oh my god, there's the Rolling Stones!"

As is often the Dr. Z style, the Jetta has an appealing simplicity that allows the company to offer it at a price that's affordable for a stout, toneful handmade guitar amp. The

original Reverbojet hailed from an era when its maker had moved over to printed circuit boards (PCBs) and arguably flimsier chassis construction. Dr. Z has upgraded the entire build considerably. In place of a PCB, the laser-cut, aircraft-grade aluminum chassis houses a thick, hand-wired epoxy turret board loaded with quality Jupiter and Mallory signal capacitors, Sprague and Illinois Capacitor electrolytics, carbon-film resistors, and Triad transformers on the other side of the wall.

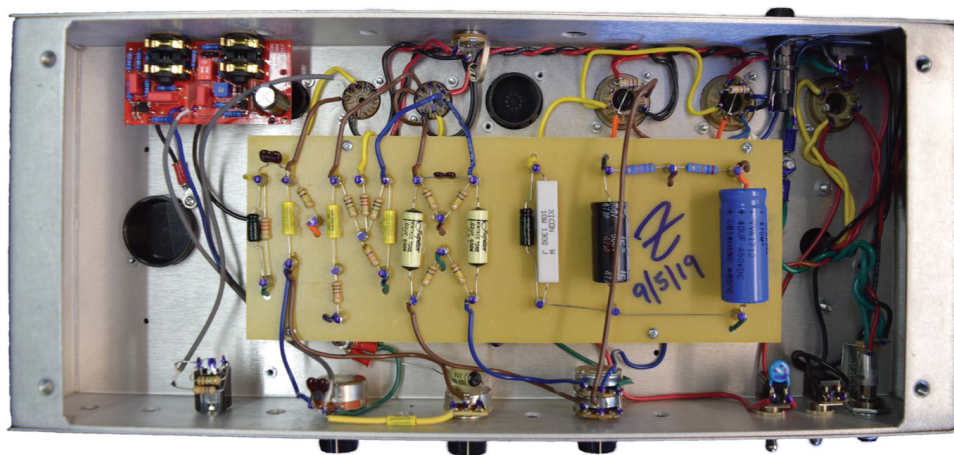
To keep the price appealing, Dr. Z has eliminated the reverb from the circuit but included a Metro Amps Zero Loss FX Loop (a component that has fast become the standard for many makers), and there's plenty of logic at play here. So many guitarists use advanced reverb and delay pedals these days that a great-sounding loop like this can offer more versatility, at lower cost, than a

traditional built-in spring reverb. As a result, the front panel presents just volume, tone and master controls — which, Keith Richards would likely confirm, are all you really need.

Of the two 12AX7s in the preamp stage, only half of the first is used, which is actually part of the key to this thing's mojo. The Jetta is a low-gain, vintage-style amp, for sure, but that allows it to push the output stage hard when you like without preamp-tube fizz and sizzle, or rein it in as required by dialing down the post-phase-inverter master volume. A long-tailed-pair phase inverter employs the second preamp tube, which feeds an unusual pair of 7591 output tubes in cathode-bias (the same used in the originals) for about 30 watts RMS. A kinda-sorta relative of the 6V6GT and 6L6GC, the 7591 is still very much its own thing and a major factor in the Jetta's sonic signature. The compact Studio Series



The compact cabinet houses a Celestion G12H-30 speaker (above). The Jetta's hand-wired epoxy turret board (below) is populated with top-quality components.



combo cabinet houses a Celestion G12H-30 speaker, and the entire package weighs just 34 pounds.

Tested with a '57 Telecaster and a Les Paul—like Patrick James Eggle Macon Single Cut, the Jetta proved a surprisingly gutsy little brute, capable of a wide range of personalities, yet with a thickness and

muscularity of tone that's evident throughout its range. With the master up high and volume in the nine-to-11 o'clock range, this is one thumpingly loud amp, with a bark and kick reminiscent of the great Hiwatt amps or, of course, the bigger Ampegs. As such, it's far more adept at anything from jazz to jangle to twang than I might initially have guessed. It

SPECIFICATIONS

Jetta 1x12 combo

CONTACT DrZAmps.com

PRICE \$1,399 street

CHANNELS

CONTROLS Volume, tone, master

POWER 30 watts

TUBES Two 12AX7 preamp tubes, two 7591 output tubes, one 5AR4 rectifier

EXTRAS Metro Amps Zero Loss FX Loop with send and return jacks

WEIGHT 34 lbs

BUILT Assembled in the USA

KUDOS A punchy and powerful 1x12 combo in a compact package. Has its own sonic personality and is built to high standards

CONCERNS None

also proved to be an outstanding pedal platform with both a Wampler Tumnus Plus and a JHS Angry Charlie, both of which yielded scorching rock tones and a surprisingly big sonic footprint for such a compact combo.

Dialed the other way around, with the volume between one o'clock and four o'clock, and the master down below noon, the Jetta becomes a more vintage-voiced, tweed-inflected brawler that delivers a raw, chewy tube overdrive that's redolent of "Rocks Off" or "Rip This Joint," while being equally applicable to a wide variety of rock hijinks, from garage to indie to power-pop. Of course, you can leave the volume up in this range and crank the master to retain this natural amp overdrive at significant volume levels, and it's a punishingly loud little combo when you get there, easily capable of slicing through a loud drummer onstage.

Amid all this, a Maxon AD999 delay and Mad Professor Silver Spring reverb sounded great in the loop, and I found little discernible difference between the amp's tone with the loop pedals bypassed and with them removed entirely. In a nutshell, the Jetta reminds you of what fun a simple, plug-and-go amp can be, and of that magical time when you first plugged into a real tube amp and got right down to the business of playing rock and roll. For that, and for being such a punchy, meaty and characterful platform for whatever you want to throw at it, the Jetta earns an Editors' Pick Award. ■