

## BC Audio Amplifier No. 7



When guitarist and BC Amps founder Bruce Clement initially approached us about reviewing his Amplifier No. 7 housed in an Army surplus ammo can, we accepted his invitation with reservations. A visit

to his web site quickly revealed that he was a serious builder and accomplished guitar player on a mission, so we relaxed and awaited the arrival of No. 7 with curious bemusement. However, the moment we fired up Amplifier No. 7, it was abundantly clear that Clement's amp is one of the best sounding compact and moderately-powered rigs we have ever reviewed. Yes, we said that, without reservation. The light weight and bullet-proof durability of the ammo can package is a secondary bonus of no little consequence for the traveling musician (or those of you with a bad back), and just imagine the reception you'll receive passing through TSA screening at the airport... "What's this, sir?" It's a guitar amplifier... "Why is it in this container for machine gun ammunition, sir?" Well, it's durable and it protects the tubes



Bruce Clement with Paul Caruso

and internal parts from damage... If you scan it you'll see that it's harmless enough – just wires, capacitors, resistors, tubes and a couple of transformers... You won't find a timing device, and certainly nothing resembling RDX, H-6 or C-4. "We won't find it, or it isn't there? You seem to be remarkably familiar with military explosives, sir..." No, not

really. I own a music store in Houston, surf a little and play the guitar, and being from Texas, I guess I do own a shitload of guns... My brother is also one of the biggest Burst fiends in the world. "A 'burst, sir?" Yeah, it's a guitar. As far as explosives, go, the amp does have an explosive tone when you ram a good guitar through it, but there's no terrorist shit in there. I'm just sayin'... And so on.

Here's the skinny on the BC Audio No. 7... The amp can be operated at 15 watts using a 5Y3 rectifier and dual 6V6s, or bumped up to 25 watts with a 5AR4 and 5881s. We recommend current Tung-Sols and a NOS rectifier, as does the builder. Either way, No. 7 is a deceptively big, lush sounding rig armed with Clement's brilliant secret weapon... dual 6SL7 octal preamp tubes. Mr. BC has crushed a home run with this setup, producing an amplifier that combines adequate levels of clean and extraordinarily clear tones from 1-5 on the volume control before gracefully ascending into the kind of beautifully rich, elegantly musical distortion that very few modern amplifiers possess. Oh, sure, there are lots of amps that sound good, but they'll wither pretty damn quick compared to No. 7, and as you know, the quest for tone is all about 'compared to what.' What is hip? This is hip.



Clement's cathode biased, Class A No. 7 is built by the man himself in San Francisco

utilizing a 16 gauge steel chassis and USA trannies. Features include true point-to-point wiring, mixable Bright and Normal Channels, a very useful and effective Presence control, single speaker output jack compatible with 8 or 16 ohm loads, a hospital grade AC cord, and a 3-way On/Standby/Off toggle switch. The lid on the ammo can is easily detachable, allowing you to place No. 7 wherever you wish with easy access to the spartan controls (it has all that it needs, and doesn't beg for more). With the steel handles on both ends of the chassis top, it's also very easy to pull the entire chassis out of the ammo can for a more permanent location, and No. 7 looks marvelous nekkid. Very high class... Clement makes a comment in his owner's manual that bears repeating: "There are only three knobs so you won't have a hard time dialing in your sound. And like the great amps of yesteryear, you can't really get a bad tone out of Amplifier No. 7."

**"You can't believe everything you see and hear, can you?" – Paul Caruso**

We completely, totally agree with Clement's observation, and

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this is not something you should take lightly, so let's take a minute to pause for The Cause – your ultimate fulfillment as a hopeful and willing tone hound. Do you actually believe that most of the stuff being hyped as the yellow brick road in your personal quest for tone will truly leave you floored and sated? Do you? The trend in 'gear-centric' media today has largely descended into little more than a crass grab for cash – yours, and the builder's, all in the name of 'tone.'

Advertising, MP3s, gear porn videos and artist endorsements will not transform an ordinary product into anything more than what it is, but these tools can effectively create an image of exceptional exclusivity and appeal, buoyed by users who understandably enjoy validating each other on product-driven fan forums. Yet in our quest to actually avoid the ordinary in the hope of finding something palpably better – extraordinary, even, we fall prey to that which gets heavily hyped the most. Dr. Z, on the other hand, has never exhibited at a NAMM show to our knowledge, he doesn't run full-page ads, and he has never given an amp away in exchange for an endorsement. Never had to. Still doesn't. Yet players play the living shit out of his amps because they a) sound great, and b) remain one of the best values in pro-level guitar amplification. Experienced within the context of the extraordinary choices that are available to you, ordinary products are simply grist for the grind – something to be hyped and sold, and the hype machine humping this stuff has never been more robust. The problem with hype, player, is that it universally pre-supposes that we, meaning you, me – all of us who play guitar – find the same sounds universally inspiring and appealing – as if we were all chasing the same sounds in our head. Are we?

“You mark me the deepest.” – Lula



What *is* tone?  
What is love?  
Why did you  
wind up with  
the one you're  
with rather than  
someone else?  
In our world,  
tone represents a

unique sound that connects with you as a musician in a much stronger, deeper and lasting way than other sounds. Can this mysterious and appealing quality be quantified on an oscilloscope? Nope – no more than an MRI would reveal why you find your mate so appealing. As reviewers, we question the *intention* of an amp in an effort to assess its broad appeal. What are the odds that *this* one will exceed your needs and expectations, in no small way completing *you* as a guitarist in your quest to find your own unique voice? We've nothing against marketing, we simply want you to understand that

with more potentially confusing choices confronting us today than ever before, mistaking marketing for reality can be expensive and disappointing. People love to brag about the 'killer' amp they just scored, but rarely do we hear a peep when they quietly unload it, having found something 'better.'



It seems to us that the sheer quality of No. 7's sound – the honest, unadorned simplicity of its organic,

hand-wired tube tone is remarkably appealing simply because it offers so little for anyone not to like. Its exceptionally rich, deep voice is endowed with adequate power (especially with a 2x12 cabinet), beautiful clean tones and graduated levels of distortion and musical clarity that allow rich harmonics to be fully experienced rather than obscured by zizzy grit, which also makes No. 7 the perfect 'pedal amp.' Clement's Amplifier No. 7 may be small in size, but in all other respects it casts a very large shadow over many similarly powered alternatives. If 15W- 25W is in your wheelhouse and you relish both lush clean tones and gorgeously endowed, bluesy distortion in an eminently portable package, get yours now. \$1795 shipped and worth every penny.[To](http://www.bcaudio.com)

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