

by the same people, from boxes of “identical” parts, with the same processes, there are better and worse examples. Some of the amps will be stellar examples, and some will be also-rans. There is a concept in the archeology, history and

financial arenas that translates to “the survivor effect”. We see survivors more often because they *did* survive. The super-stellar amp is here because it sounded good and was kept and valued, as well as being lucky in its manufacture and aging well. I suspect that as time goes on, some examples of more modern manufacture will age well, be kept and valued, and will become stellar examples too.

It may be that the wider variations in parts from the vintage amp era produced more really stellar amplifiers, just because of the wider variations. Modern parts are more consistent. What happens if you consistently just miss a combination that’s really stellar? I would like to see a real no-holds-barred blueprinting effort. We know from experience that some things, when changed, change the subtle sound of an amp. Which ones? Maybe all of them. But surely some things matter more than others. It would be great to blueprint enough amps to get some real data to confirm or deny my informed guesses. **to**

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## BC Amps Amplifier Number 8



*You may recall our review of Bruce Clement’s BC Audio Amplifier No. 7 in the March 2010 issue of TQR... We hope so, because we*

*described it as “one of the best sounding 15W-25W amps we’ve ever heard.” That was no exaggeration, and we credited the 6SL7 octal preamp tubes used in many Gibson and Valco amps from the ‘50s for much of the extraordinary tones we relished in No. 7. Clement has recently introduced a new, compact head aptly named Amplifier No. 8, and we asked Bruce to explain what’s new and different in his most recent design. Listen...*

Clement: Here’s what makes Amplifier No. 8 different from No. 7. First, Amplifier No. 8 has a master volume, so, obviously, this means that you can get distortion at low volume – big deal, right? Well, if you’re accustomed to power tube overdrive – if you know what that sounds like, what that feels like – you will recognize some of that power tube thing going on even at low volume settings thanks to the 6SL7s in the preamp section.

Second, Amplifier No. 8 is voiced more aggressively and has a lot more gain on tap than No. 7. People ask me if it will “do metal.” Well, yeah, it will do old-school heavy metal all day long – Sabbath, Priest, Maiden, the heavier side of Zeppelin, but not so much the scooped-mid, dropped-D, one-finger stuff the younger bands are playing these days. Like No. 7, Amplifier No. 8 has no tone stack, only Presence to shape the sound. Both amps share the same power supply and output section, transformers, chassis and many parts.

The Drive circuit in Amplifier No. 8 is something I came up with from scratch, and I have not seen anything like it on any other amp. The purpose of the Drive circuit is to provide rich clean tones as well as very high gain in a single channel. Why wouldn’t a normal gain or preamp volume control achieve this? Usually, if an amp is voiced for big, rich cleans, it gets muddy and farts out when you crank it up too high. On the other hand, if an amp is designed for high gain, the cleans usually end up thin and shrill, or just not really clean at all. My Drive circuit addresses this problem. At low settings, Drive allows the full range of the guitar signal to come through, giving you big, round, shimmering cleans. Semi-dirty tones are heavy and powerful, like a big amp on the edge of overdrive. At high Drive settings, the bottom is tightened up significantly, though it’s not really noticeable as such. You don’t turn up Drive and say, “Gee, the low end just got tight.” Rather, it just sounds right. You can crank Drive and experience the thick overdrive of the octal preamp tubes at any volume, and it stays nice and tight, without farting out or getting squishy.

**TQR:** We could use a low-power tweed Twin from someone with your skills. What’s ahead beyond No. 8?

I am actually working on a few new models. One is a 45w 2x KT66 non-master volume amp with a GZ34 rectifier, variable footswitchable Boost and optional FX loop. Another is a 50w 2xEL34 master volume model with Gain Boost and Volume Boost, and an FX loop. I have working prototypes of those two that I’m currently tweaking. Next on the horizon is a 4x 6V6 model. All amps will feature 6SL7 octal preamp tubes. One of my customers, Jon E. Love (Love/Hate, Hard Rock Allstars) keeps hounding me to get that 50 watter done so he can retire his Marshalls. He currently plays a No. 8 as part of his live rig. Oh, one more thing – I will be offering Amplifier

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No. 7 and No. 8 in a 1x12 combo format as soon as I can get it photographed and issue a press release. Ah the joys of being a one-man shop...

REVIEW

# Amplifier Number 8



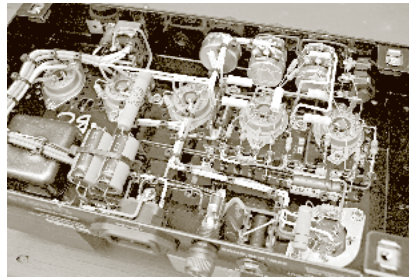
While you can milk 'clean' tones from No. 8, they are clean in the style of a plexi amp at moderate volume

levels rather than Fender 'clean.' In our opinion, No. 8 is all about crank and drive. Imagine a 25 watt dual 5881 vintage Marshall that sounds much bigger, richer and less compressed than any 18 or 20 watt Marshall or clone you may have heard, and that's Amplifier No. 8. Like No. 7, there isn't a bad tone to be found in this amp, whether you jack the Drive control and throttle the Volume down for low volume, high-distortion and sustain, or aim for a bigger, less distorted voice with the Volume set high and the Drive cut. One of our favorite settings was Volume and Drive set at 12 o'clock. Why does



Clement's No. 8 sound so thick and juicy? Well, you'll notice there is no tone stack to speak of... The Presence

control works in the power section to create a sharper tone at higher settings, or a darker, heavier sound set low. The 5881 Tung-Sol output tubes create a bigger, more open and less compressed tone than EL-84s or EL-34s, and the 6SL7 octals develop intense distortion and vivid overtones that remind us of a mid-'50s Gibson GA-20 reviewed here and christened the 'Cooderizer.' We ran No. 8 in our 16 ohm 2x12 oval open back cabinet loaded with a Celestion G12H30 and a Warehouse Veteran 30, and the sounds pouring forth can be described as huge and magnificent with tremendous low end, mids, and a super smooth treble voice. No. 8 is a fatty, pure and simple, and you could literally throw it in a carry-on bag for your next festival gig in the Netherlands, no problem. Really? Yeah, it's plenty loud enough to be miked for a big room, although if you need to fill a big outdoor stage you'll need a little help from the monitors. Don't laugh... Jeff Beck did it with a Pro Junior, didn't he?



No. 8 features one input with standby, Presence, Volume and Drive controls, and a single 8/16 ohm speaker input. Add a great guitar, some decent

chops and an effect or two (you won't need any help with distortion) and you couldn't possibly do any better for totable, easy-on-the-ears hard rockin.' *Rock forth...to*

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# Carr Sportsman



When we first featured Steve Carr and his amplifiers in our February 2001 cover story, the custom amp business was far easier to grasp than it

is today. To be perfectly honest, on more than a few occasions over the past 12 years we have wondered aloud, "Who is buying all this stuff?" Has the number of booteek amp builders doubled and trebled as a result of a static core of ampoholics doubling down on multiple amps, or has the market simply kept pace with supply and demand as more guitarists have jumped on the boutique bandwagon? Think about it... everybody needs a refrigerator, few need two, but how many amplifiers are 'enough'? For gigging musicians playing a wide variety of venues, owning multiple amps is essential both in terms of having a backup or two, and tailoring the optimum decibel level to the size of the stage. Bands limited to fly gigs and rented backlines are the exception, but ask Sonny Landreth if the greenback-loaded Marshall 4x12 cabs he rents or reissue Twins all sound the same... No, they sure don't, but an increasing number of mid-level working bands have forsaken vans and buses for a plane ticket, while entrusting their tone to the luck of the draw from a rental company. We do know this... the vast majority of custom amps being designed and sold today fall into the 20-25 watt range, indicating that stage volume has come down in favor of portability, fidelity

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