



GEAR

REVIEW

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DELUXE INSPIRATION

The Lazy J 20

After moving to England and leaving behind the vintage Fender Deluxe he modified as a gigging amp, Jesse Hoff decided to build a new amplifier from scratch, using the modded Deluxe as his inspiration. After many requests from other players for one of his tweed-inspired creations, Hoff began the Lazy J Project, building amps to customer specs.

The Lazy J 20 has a solid-pine finger-jointed cabinet with a plywood baffle, a lacquered tweed covering, a Celestion G12 Blue 12" alnico driver, a pair of EHX 6L6 power tubes, a 5AR4 rectifier tube, and a pair of 12AX7 preamp tubes. For those looking for more traditional Tweed Deluxe performance with less power-amp headroom and more output sag, the Lazy J 20 can also accommodate 6V6 power tubes and a 5Y3 rectifier without the need to re-bias. Under its hood, the J 20 sports all point-to-point circuits utilizing top-notch components like Heyboer transformers, CTS pots, Sprague filter caps, and Switchcraft jacks.

On the surface the Lazy J 20 looks like a typical narrow-panel Deluxe-inspired boutique amp. However, it happens to have several hidden treasures, the first of which is evident on the control panel. Along with the Bright and Normal channel dual inputs, corresponding Volume controls, and master Tone control is Lazy J's optional Variable Attenuation Control (VAC) in place of the ground switch, a feature

which allows the player to seamlessly dial the amp's output down from 18 watt to 5 watts. Inspection of the amp's back side reveals a tube-driven tremolo unit with Speed and

Intensity controls and a tube-driven spring-reverb unit with Volume and Tone controls. At first, housing the reverb and tremolo in the back of the amp

might seem a bit inconvenient for making adjustments, but the Lazy J comes with a dual-button footswitch to turn both units on and off, as well as corresponding controls to adjust tremolo speed and reverb depth on the fly.

Price: \$2,700 (as reviewed)
Info: www.lazyjprojects.com



The Lazy J 20 test unit was put through its paces with a Fender Custom Shop '60s Strat and a Gibson Les Paul '54 reissue. The bridge pickups in both produced a crisp, lively tone where open chords rang with overtones, while single notes jumped. The amp displayed a nice amount of gig-worthy headroom with the 6L6 tubes, and backing down on the guitars' Volume controls cleaned things up nicely without losing life. The J 20's single Tone control is very well-voiced, offering anything from bright and crispy to dark and round, and has the bonus of a subtle but effective push/pull mid boost to fatten the sound of the Strat's single-coils.

Two interactive channels with independent Volume controls affected the sound regardless of which channel the guitar was plugged into, not only adding a bit of gain but a nice midrange boost that thickened the tone when both Volume knobs were dialed in. In addition, the Lazy J was capable of some seriously crunchy overdrive with both volumes cranked up and the tone set to the treble side. The neck pickups on both guitars had a tendency to loosen up the low-end on the amp and make

it wash out with the volumes turned up, but this was easily rectified with another of the J 20's features: a subtle but very effective low-cut toggle switch nestled between the two preamp tubes. Once overall volume shifted to the loud side, the Lazy J's VAC attenuator brought it down without negatively affecting overall tone or the thickness of the overdrive. The optional tube-driven reverb had that classic Fender sound – clean and crisp, with a warm decay to accommodate anything from super-drenched surf licks to subtle, laid-back blues. The optional tremolo circuit likewise does not disappoint, with its thick, smooth, and slightly dirty effect that's not overly choppy and doesn't eat up a lot of gain or overall volume.

The J 20 certainly lives up to its "deluxe" inspiration, with outstanding tone and a host of nicely conceived features. – **Phil Feser VG**