

J. ROCKETT AUDIO DESIGNS

.45 CALIBER

REVIEW BY **PHILLIP DODGE**

STREET PRICE **\$189.00**



If the number “45” in the J. Rockett Audio Designs .45’s name didn’t give it away for you already, I’ll fill you in. It’s meant to sound like a Marshall JTM45—an amp also known as a “Marshall Plexi” and is legendary for a reason. With controls for Loud (volume), Gain, Treble, and Bass it might seem like the .45 would be a one-trick pony. But thanks to the interactivity between the Gain and Bass controls, the .45 is capable of a wide range of tones.

The .45 lacks enumeration for the controls, but rest assured, this baby goes to eleven. You can dial in an amazing crunch tone and

bang out some serious power chords. And yes, you can crank the gain and get a huge, singing lead tone with sustain for days. But you can also dial the Gain way back and use the .45 to give your American-voiced or other amp a bit of a British accent.

I love the EQ sections on the .45, so let’s start there. The voicing of the pedal is far from flat. It pushes the upper mids in a perfectly British way. If that’s not what you’re looking for, you should probably look elsewhere. But seeing as this pedal is intended to bring the bark of a JTM45 to any amp, I love the authentic timbre. The

Treble control is perfect for matching the .45 to a wide range of guitars and amps. I kept it dialed to about 11 o’clock or less running into a Fender ‘68 Custom Princeton Reverb, a Vox AC15HW, and a ZT Amplifiers Lunchbox. In this range with these amps, the .45 provided the perfect amount of sparkle and presence without getting shrill. Once I had the Treble dialed in for the amp, I left it alone. With the Bass control, I found myself adjusting it based on where I had the Gain set—typically at very similar settings for both knobs. In other words, when the Gain was low, I tended

to keep the Bass low. As I cranked the gain, the extra bass helped to offset the added snarl in the highs and mids.

Unity volume varies, based—not surprisingly—on where the Gain knob is set. With the Gain all of the way off, the Loud control needs to be at about 3 o'clock to hit unity. You might be asking why someone would set the Gain on an overdrive pedal all of the way down. That's because as I alluded to earlier, the .45 can re-voice the amp. Running the .45 into a Fender Princeton Reverb, I set the controls like this: Loud at 5 o'clock, Gain at 7 o'clock, Treble at 11 o'clock, and Bass at 10 o'clock. With the pedal off, my Princeton sounded scooped and spanky—the sound one might expect. When I engaged the .45, my Princeton lit up with the upper mid bark of a Marshall. It's not exactly like having two amps, but it certainly opens up your options.

The dirty tones of the .45 are full-bodied and

extremely amp like. The pedal responds well to picking dynamics, volume knob adjustments, and the varied outputs of different pickup types. It also plays nicely with other pedals. I really enjoyed stacking a Fuzz Face into the .45. You don't always expect "Marshall in a Box" pedals to sound good going into other pedals, but I was able to get some very cool tones with the .45 running into a Black Cat Pedals D&S Fuzz (a Muff variant). The .45 helped to tighten the bass and add a little upper mid presence. Without overwhelming the fuzz or adding to the noise floor. Speaking of which, the .45 is amazingly low noise, even with the gain cranked.

WHAT WE LIKE

Great tones in a small sized box with top-mounted jacks—there's a shocking amount of tones in a tiny little package.

CONCERNS

With all of the control dimed, I got a little bit of a squealing noise. Dialing the Treble control back by a fraction immediately silenced it.