

Micro Test

A small box with a big name to live up to



Review by
Simon Weir

Marshall MG10 10W practice amp

When you think about it, the fact that Marshall's biggest selling amp is also its smallest should come as no surprise. Budding guitarists have been plugged into a 10W Marshall in their bedrooms for years, pretending to be Jimmy Page or Hendrix (just with a smaller rig) and learning brand loyalty along with their first riffs. Thus revamping the 10W amp, turning L-plate guitarists into Marshall-for-life users, is a serious undertaking for the Bletchley firm.

Now, 10W practice amps have a reputation of their own (wasps and jam jars come to mind) so how does the little MG live up to the big, valve-stuffed Marshall heritage? The realities of sonic engineering mean that a general-purpose 6" speaker – of the type used in all low-cost practice amps – can never perform like a 12" Celestion designed specifically for amplifying guitars. Which is a problem. Marshall has tackled this with what it calls FDD (frequency dependent damping), which is basically a species of speaker emulation. Instead of playing the speaker in this little combo directly, you play the amp which then emulates a big guitar speaker... and the smaller speaker puts out this 'bigger' speaker's sound. Very clever – and it means you get a speaker-emulated line out as standard. That socket also doubles as a CD-in, for playing along with your heroes.

Plugging in, it's clear that this is not a JCM800 in a small box... but it does do a fairly convincing impression. The clean channel is bright, crisp and generally neutral, though the sound does colour slightly at the extreme ends of the tone dial (mushy at one end, somewhat glassy at the other).

Of course, most buyers of this amp will want that Marshall rock thang and punching into the overdrive channel gets the full range of distorted sounds, from edgy to crunchy to manically fuzzy. As with the tone control, the extreme ends of the gain dial are perhaps the least satisfying, but the MG10 can do every voice from Angus Young to Amen.

Still, at the end of the day we are talking about a small tranny amp here – and that is what the MG sounds like. However, it's a *good* small tranny amp and it definitely has that Marshall vibe. There is still a hint of fizzy, reedy transistors... but it's a world away from a wasp in a jar.



RRP: £69 Contact: Marshall ☎ 01908 375411