

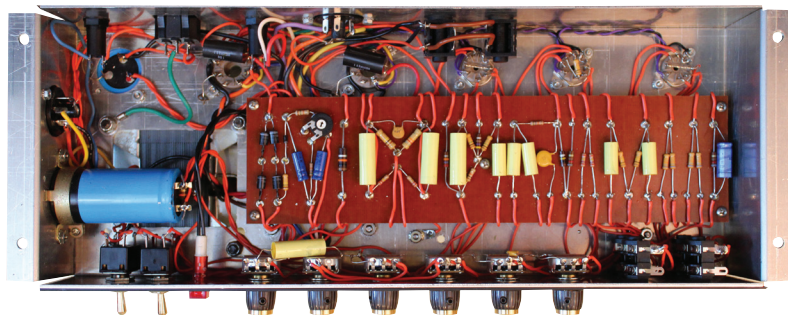
GEAR



Grammatico Blackpool

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

JOHN GRAMMATICO WAS AN AUDIO-ophile from a young age, and after training as an engineer he segued into guitar-amp building via a retail career in high-end audio. Grammatico Amplifiers was established in 2009 after its proprietor relocated from Portland, Oregon, to Austin, Texas, where a couple of locals by the name of Jimmie Vaughan and Redd Volkaert became prominent early clients. The Blackpool head is Grammatico's new counterpoint to his erstwhile predilection for tweed-inspired circuits. This new model reaches back to the first generation of classic Marshall tones in an effort to blend characteristics of the JTM45 and JTM45/100 in a 50-watt format. A look inside reveals that the circuit largely remains true to the former (which, of course, had its own roots in Fender's tweed 5F6-A Bassman), but Grammatico uses the solid-state rectification that Marshall introduced with the JTM50 "plexi" later in the '60s, along with beefier power-supply filtering, in a bid to firm up the low end and increase headroom. Build quality is very good—the circuit is hand-wired throughout—and components include signal caps from Germany's TAD, carbon-comp resistors, large ARS filter caps, and transformers from Magnetic Components, Heyboer, and Dagnall; all folded into an off-the-shelf aluminum JTM45-style chassis.



The controls are utterly traditional, just as most purists would have it, with no master volume or effects loop, and just a 3-way impedance switch

to accompany the dual speaker outs and fuse socket around back. In place of the bells and whistles that some makers add to amps of

this style, Grammatico has put his budget into the carefully-sourced components detailed above, as well as things that are harder to see outright, such as a rare composition of British solder, custom wire, and other things that he has learned, through extensive testing, help to deepen the dynamic response and harmonic content of his circuits.

Tested with a Stratocaster and a Les Paul through a closed-back Sourmash 2x12 cab with Greenbacks, the Blackpool confidently churned out the kind of bold yet pliant clean tones and classic British crunch that always feels like coming home to me. It's the stuff of countless classic recordings—a real pleasure to play, and a tone you just can't fault. Patching into a Fryette Big Bottom 2x12 with a Fane F70 and Celestion G12-65 speaker mix opened up further dimensions and a broader vocabulary,

revealing an amp with bigger and more multi-dimensional cleans, and a punchy overdriven tone that applied beautifully to just about anything short of metal.

A ported Port City OS 1x12 with EVM 12L Classic, on the other hand, leaned the entire mixture toward a more American-based tone, with a taut piano-like low end from the Strat and a sweetly playable dynamic response. However you slice it, it's a tasty amp, and impressively versatile. All of this is owed to Grammatico's chops as a builder, of course, but also to the veracity of the original JTM45 formula, which continues to stand the test of time and remain valid as a first-choice rock and blues amp today. If you're in the market for a vintage-M-flavored 50-watter I wouldn't hesitate to put the Blackpool on your list of amps to check out. ▶

SPECIFICATIONS

BLACKPOOL

CONTACT	grammaticoamps.com
PRICE	\$2,700 street
CHANNELS	2
CONTROLS	Normal Volume, High Treble Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Presence
POWER	50 watts
TUBES	Three 12AX7 preamp tubes, two KT66 output tubes
EXTRAS	Three-way 4/8/16Ω output switch, dual speaker outs
WEIGHT	37 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Quality hand-wired build. Excellent classic British-rock tones with added low-end solidity.
CONCERNS	A little pricey within its sector.