

# Radial JDX Direct-Drive

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

**I KNOW TONS OF GUITARISTS THESE** days that often do shows requiring a plane flight, and their rigs must fit in their checked and/or carry-on luggage. And, whether you travel a few miles or across the country, there's always the hassle of back-lined gigs where the provided amp is simply crap. How do you keep your head from exploding and your tone from sucking?

A bevy of excellent "fly rigs" now exist from many manufacturers, but one of the most clandestine and absolutely bulletproof is the JDX Direct-Drive (\$199 street). Just the size of a conventional stompbox, the Direct-Drive can fit in a gig bag—or even a coat pocket—and it offers three amp/speaker emulations (a Fender Twin, a Marshall JCM half-stack, and a 4x12 cabinet

miked with a Shure SM57), a Presence switch, Polarity and Ground switches for the XLR balanced output, a tuner jack, an unbalanced 1/4" output, and an unbalanced 1/4" Thru output that bypasses the amp emulations. If you have more room in your flight bag, you can even plug pedals right into the Direct-Drive as if it were your favorite amp.

The JDX 4x12 and Stack emulations are spot-on. A little ambience from your soundperson (or recording engineer if you're using the Direct-Drive with a DAW), and it'll sound like tube-amp wonderland. The Combo setting sounded less



like a Fender Twin, and more like a transparent direct-guitar sound through a good studio preamp, but it gets the job done. The Direct-Drive is a fantastic tool for fly dates, studio sessions, and impromptu gigs where you can't grab your

rig. It's also a Savior Machine, because if my amp ever goes down for whatever reason, I'm going to be thankful the Direct-Drive can be plugged right in to save the show.

**KUDOS** Super portable. Great stack sounds. Rugged and road ready. Good output options.

**CONCERNS** Combo sound a bit too clean.

**CONTACT** radialeng.com

## >>> FIELD TEST

# Jensen Jet Tornado Stealth 100

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

**JENSEN IS BEST KNOWN FOR ITS** reproductions of classic American speakers of the 1950s and early '60s, but the Italian manufacturer behind the revised brand was also one of the first makers to dive headlong into neodymium-magnet guitar speakers, with good success. The new Jet Tornado Stealth 100 (\$159 street) is an update of the Tornado Classic 100, which captures a lot of the popular 12" neo speaker's characteristics in a cleaner, more classic-looking new format. Hence the "Stealth" in the name—without knowing, you might expect to find an alnico or ceramic magnet under that elegant cover, which nicely matches the frame's textured matte-black finish. Pick it up, though, and you'll surely feel the difference that a neodymium magnet makes. At a mere 4.41 lbs, it sheds as much as 5 lbs from the weight of a traditional speaker. Its 100-watt power handling means it works well with many amps on its own, and a 98.5dB sensitivity rating (measured at 1W/1M)

implies it might not be as hard and spikey as some overly sensitive neo speakers of yore.

Tested in a StoneAge 1x12 cab with back both open and closed, using a tweed Deluxe and a custom modified JTM45-style amp—with a Telecaster and a Les Paul—the Jet Tornado Stealth 100 exuded a rich tone with a predominantly warm characteristic, yet with good detail and articulation. The lows aren't bountiful, but they are sufficient for most playing styles, and appealingly round at that, if a little soft for metal or some other contemporary genres. The speaker displayed excellent detail and good responsiveness, and a voice that was not necessarily "American," as we've come to expect from Jensen, but which ably stood in where you might expect a Celestion to excel; for example, sounding right at home with the tweed 15-watter.



The Jet Tornado Stealth 100 is a great speaker for subtly darkening an overly bright amp without losing the clarity and responsiveness that the shift might imply. A worthy new offering in general, and also available in 65- and 80-watt versions, it's definitely one to try if you'd also like to drop a few pounds from your rig.

**KUDOS** A round- and warm-sounding speaker with enjoyable richness.

**CONCERNS** Low-end might be a little loose for some contemporary rock applications.

**CONTACT** jensentone.com