

Product Review: The Lunchbox Acoustic by ZT Amplifiers

By

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One Sunday evening last January, during the period of time in which the NAMM show was in progress in Los Angeles, I went to hear a friend perform solo at a restaurant in Pasadena. I am always blown away by the mastery of this particular guitarist. (His seemingly effortless execution of techniques one would deem impossible is at once inspiring, exciting and demoralizing.) The sound of his instrument, itself, was full, rich, and clean, with a presence that projected through the medium-sized venue with both clarity and warmth. At first, I thought he was hooked up to his regular rig, an amp (with a few items he added outboard) at a total cost that rang in at over \$1000. I was fairly thunderstruck when I realized he was plugged into the new “Lunchbox Acoustic” by ZT Amplifiers. Now I will be the first to say that when you spend a thousand dollars or more for an amplifier, you definitely get what you pay for, there’s nothing wanting in my friend’s set-up. The good news is that when you make the *modest* investment for a Lunchbox Acoustic, you get *significantly more* than what you would expect – both in terms of quality and features. This amp, which is concrete proof of the adage “good things come in small packages”, is a gigger’s dream come true. As a matter of fact, this amplifier is so unusually compact, that one might make the understandable error of mistaking it for a practice amp. While it could conveniently be used for practice (there is an input for headphones), this amplifier was conceived, designed, and built to be used *and to deliver in the workplace* – and it delivers in no uncertain terms. The ZT Lunchbox Acoustic is the result of smart and thoughtful engineering. It seems as if the folks at ZT Amplifiers, when in the development and planning stages, surveyed gigging archtop players to create a wish-list of the qualities they would find both desirable and necessary to have in the amplifier they regularly use for work.

This professional quality, two-channel amplifier (one channel for guitar, one for microphone) which is 7.5 inches tall, 9.8 inches wide, and 7.7 inches deep, weighs in at only 12 lbs., making it (according to ZT Amplifiers – and to this reviewer’s knowledge) the smallest and lightest amplifier on the market that will satisfy live performance needs. The music heard through the Lunchbox Acoustic’s 6 ½” speaker has a peak output of almost 130dB-SPL at 1 meter. There is also an output for an external speaker. This feature is beneficial for seven-string players who naturally need a larger speaker to avoid distortion that might occur when playing notes on the low A string. The amp is wired so that when the external speaker is activated, there will be no output from the main speaker (and vice versa). The mic channel strip has both ¼” and

XLR inputs as well as phantom power. (The instrument channel has one ¼” input.) Each of these channels has a dedicated gain control. Plate style reverb is inboard with independent controls in each channel. There is also an EFX loop with active send for multi-amp setups. In order to address performance situations requiring more “oomph” there is a Direct Power Amp in option. For all this you will probably pay a retail price that is under \$400.

Although the above is easily and obviously enough to merit my enthusiastic recommendation, I would like to add one more item: When reading the manual that is provided in the box in which the Lunchbox Acoustic is shipped, I found something unusually impressive, and I think it is important to make note of this to musicians who read this review. The buyer is encouraged to communicate with the manufacturers to relay “any and all suggestions”. Furthermore, they go on to say, “We take our customers’ input very seriously.” The folks at ZT Amplifiers are the type of people we want in our musical community. Clearly, their mission is to meet the needs of working musicians, and they are willing and prepared to exert the effort to ensure that these needs are met. They genuinely want our input – not just our cash. The Lunchbox Acoustic is an outstanding product made by people who truly care.

To find out where one can audition or purchase a ZT Lunchbox Acoustic amplifier go to www.ztamplifiers.com, then continue to the dropdown menu under “Resellers & Reps” which contains a dealer locator.