

## ZT Amplifiers Lunchbox Acoustic Amp Review

When it comes to amps, I am a fan of small and easy—and I don't think it would be possible to get smaller and easier than the new acoustic addition to the ZT Lunchbox line. I burst out laughing when I saw it, but in a good way. It recalled the days of yore, when men were men, women were scarce, and acoustic amps were gi-normous. These days, miniaturization seems to be the norm, and it's about damn time. Let's unpack this Lunchbox and see what goodies it contains.

### The Menu

Slightly smaller than a cooler that holds a six-pack and some ice, the 200-watt ZT Lunchbox Acoustic features an instrument channel and a vocal-mic channel—with independent Gain, Bass, Treble, and Reverb for each—in addition to a Master Volume and a Feedback Cut. All controls, as well as the 1/4" instrument jack and LED indicator, are intuitively arranged on top so you can easily view them. The amp itself is made of an attractive medium-density fiberboard that looks folksy and appealing, and the top and back panels are made of very robust-feeling machined aluminum.



The back of the cabinet is covered with featurey goodness. There's an XLR input and another 1/4", with a phantom power on/ off switch between them (wuhoo—phantom power!). There's also an 1/8" input for an mp3 player, an effect loop send/return, a headphone jack with an independent volume control, a 1/4" external speaker jack with a switch for selecting between internal and external speakers, a power-cord jack, and the on/off switch. Whew! That's a lot of stuff on this one little box.

### The Proof Is in the Pudding... Mmmm, Pudding

I plugged into the ZT at home in the living room and spent some time walking around with my guitar on a 20' tether. I was able to get the volume up pretty far without feedback in that enclosed space, though I think I was at the very limit. I had the Gain at three o'clock, and the Volume at just over one o'clock, and it was comfortably loud. The bass was remarkably present without muddiness. The treble was clear and present with plenty of sparkle, and I had no trouble hearing everything clear as a bell. If you are behind it or right beside it, the tone is a little bit brittle, but out in front it's lovely. Just don't push the volume way up—it gets a little too midrangey.

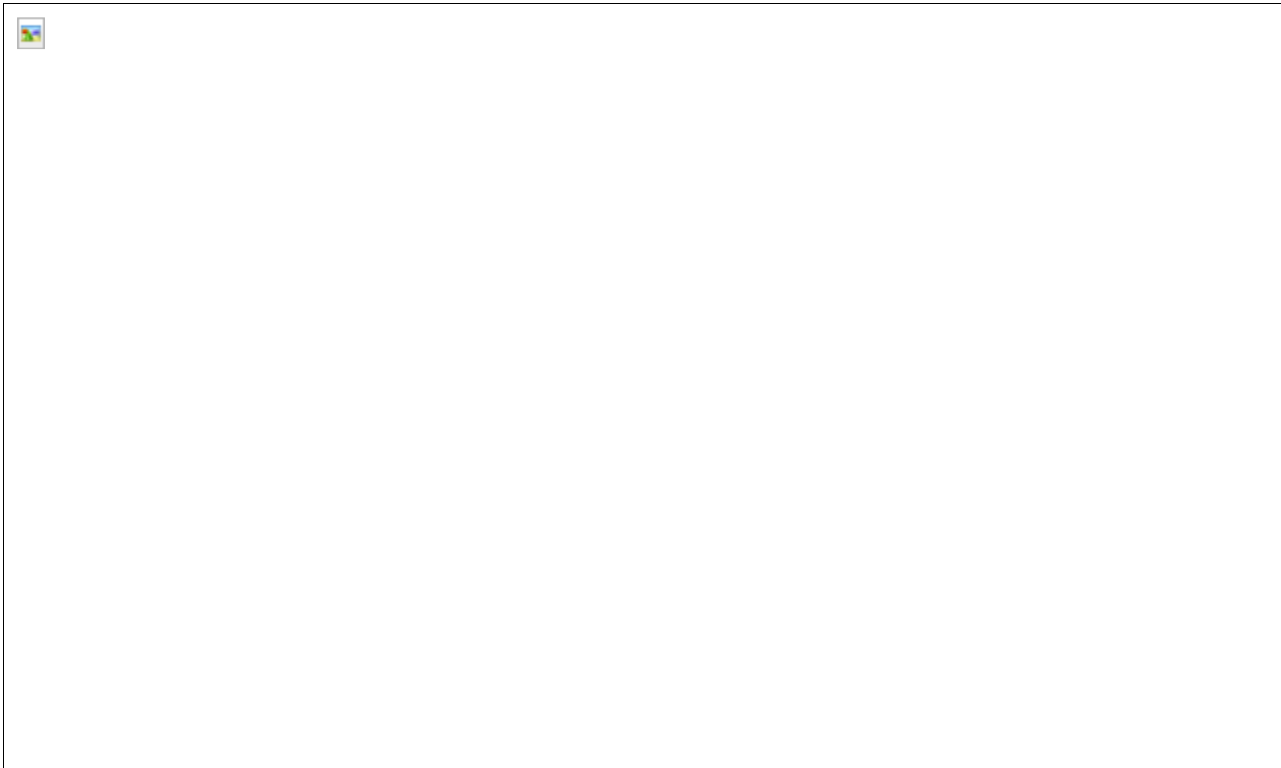
The real test of an acoustic amp, of course, is whether it will work at a real gig. There's a busy little bagel joint just up the street where they let me test gear whenever I want—I call it the Gear with a Schmeer Concert Series. So I took the ZT over there on a lively Sunday afternoon to see how it stood up to a room full of hungry folks. Setup was almost too easy. I found that setting the amp on a table or a chair was better than on the floor. On the floor, it lost some definition. Unlike some small amps that are engineered to use the floor to compensate for lack of bass response, the Lunchbox Acoustic has plenty of bass, even with the sixth string tuned down to a C. I handed the guitar to my son to play while I walked around, and I could hear the sound clearly around the whole L-shaped room. The gain on the guitar channel was set at three o'clock and the master volume was at one o'clock, just like I'd had it at home, and it cut through all the conversation and background noise nicely.

The Feedback Cut has three settings to notch out the most common frequency offenders. In the venue's high-ceilinged room with windows all around, I had two problem frequencies. So I used the ZT's Feedback Cut to notch out the ringing from the vocal mic and my L.R. Baggs Para Acoustic D.I. to clean up the persistent ringing around the E on my guitar's fourth string. I left the bass and treble flat on both channels, and the amp sounded just terrific. A mid-cut would be handy, but the ZT isn't honky or greasy sounding, so it's not absolutely necessary.

The plate-style reverb was very lush, pleasant, and natural sounding for both vocal and guitar, and it added that little extra bit of faerie dust to the tone.

### **The Final Mojo**

The ZT Lunchbox Acoustic is a terrific amp for small to medium-sized venues, especially those where people really want to listen. It's full featured, very functional, incredibly portable, and intuitive to use. Ladies and gentlemen, lunch is served.



**Buy if...**

you need a great-sounding amp for small to medium-sized rooms and you don't have a big budget.

**Skip if...**

you need more than two channels or independent feedback controls.

**Rating...**



**Street** \$399 - **ZT Amplifiers** - [ztamplifiers.com](http://ztamplifiers.com)