

# Roland Jazz Chorus JC-120

Roland were the first people to build chorus amplifiers and now, several years on, they still maintain their reputation as leaders in this field.

This month we look at the JC-120 to find out what makes it so distinctive.

Outwardly the amplifier looks fairly conventional, the control panel running along the top and the two twelve inch speakers being mounted directly below in an open backed enclosure for increased bass response. Cabinet size is a modest 29½" × 21¼" × 10⅝" and it is fitted with rubber wheeled castors to support its 62 lbs, one strap handle being fitted for carrying purposes.

The output power is 120w continuous rating provided by two separate 60w amplifiers, one for each speaker, and provision is made for the connection of extension speakers to spread the sound if required.

There are two input channels, one straight, and one with chorus, overdrive and reverb enabling two instruments to be processed separately, a particularly handy feature for rehearsals where amp sharing may be necessary.

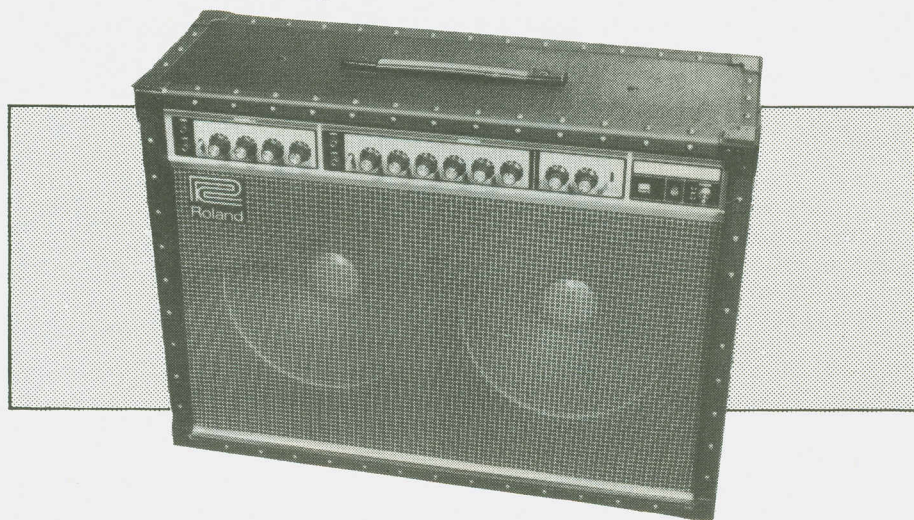
Another field in which this amp scores is its suitability for use with guitar synths where the guitar and synth sounds can be fed to their own individual channels enabling the tonal balance to be optimised for each sound source.

## Construction

The cabinet is sturdily built from half inch plywood, reinforced in strategic areas for added strength, and the whole assembly is finished in black vinyl with studded fibre edging and plastic corners lending a purposeful air to the finished article.

Both loudspeakers are of Rolands' own design being fabricated on pressed steel chassis, the open backed cabinet giving some cause for concern here as it is possible to damage the speakers by the careless storage of articles in the rear of the amplifier.

The single carrying strap is strong enough to take the weight of the amplifier but I'm not sure that the same could be said of me, one handed over long distances.



## Controls

Both channels feature a high and low gain input, and channel one is very basic having only volume, bass, middle and treble controls with a brightness switch for adding extra top if required.

Channel two is somewhat more comprehensive and has distortion and reverb controls in addition to the controls sported by channel one.

### Chorus

The chorus section applies only to channel two and, in addition to the usual depth and speed controls, a switch enables chorus or vibrato mode to be selected but, strangely, the depth and speed controls only work in the vibrato mode.

The power switch is of the three position centre-off type with a small red indicator LED. Overall, the control panel is very clearly laid out and the controls have a reassuringly chunky feel.

## Back Panel

All the jack sockets on the rear of the amplifier are recessed to prevent damage (and the use of right angled jack plugs) and the facilities include foot switch control of chorus, reverb and distortion as well as extension speaker sockets, line output socket and two main input sockets

which allow line level signals to be mixed directly into the power amp stage.

Strangely, no effects send and return loop is provided and I consider this to be a serious omission.

### In use

The basic amplifier tone is warm, bright and flattering to the guitar, and the chorus mode is particularly effective.

The chorus, while not being particularly deep, adds greatly to the depth of sound available and I suspect that the output is stereo, divided between the two power amps and speakers which would explain the almost three dimensional sound produced.

Reverberation is provided by a folded spring system which works well in the context of guitar material but it is not likely to be very sympathetic towards drum machines because of its propensity for twanging when subjected to transients. Reverb is only available on channel two and an optional footswitch is available for remote control.

Next comes the distortion section which is like most Japanese amplifier overdrive circuits in that it is horrible.

Why is it that Roland, who produce some of the best pedal effects available under their Boss brand name, can't incorporate some of this expertise into their combos? This distortion effect produces a sound that makes you wonder if the amp is broken or if someone has filled the speakers with rice and it does not do justice to the JC-120 as it is in all other respects a beautiful amplifier.

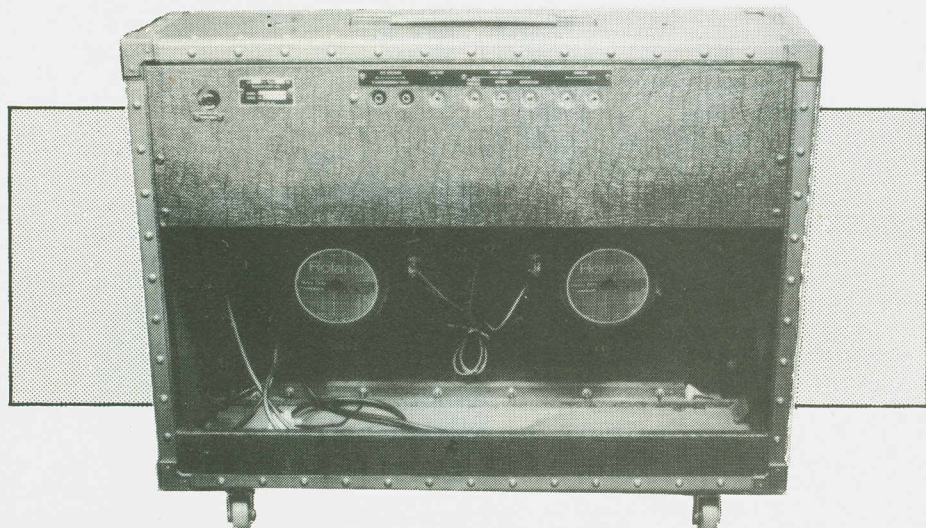
## Conclusions

Apart from the comments concerning the distortion effect, this is a very nice amp and we don't want to give it back. It has been tried on both guitar and bass, and handles both with ease, although I wouldn't recommend it for bass use at high levels as the lack of any air loading on the back of the speakers could lead to eventual damage.

So, the Roland JC-120 deserves its reputation in most respects and you can always buy a Boss distortion pedal to go with it. At £559, the JC-120 isn't cheap, but then quality rarely is.

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