



PHOTOGRAPHY NEIL GODWIN



Marshall JVM410H head £899

Loud to the power of phwoar – with tone to match. Marshall's new flagship will blow your socks off and probably blow your mind too by Nick Guppy



If you discount the various reissues, it's been a long time since we've had a proper new model from Marshall to look at. However, Marshall never does things by halves and we've recently been blessed with not one but two new designs. Following on from the exciting KT66-powered Vintage Modern series, it's time to check out Marshall's all-new flagship – the JVM 100-watt head.

The JVM's cabinet and styling are

what we've come to expect from Marshall – the word 'iconic' is over-used these days, but nobody would argue that it shouldn't apply here. Heavy-duty hardware combined with black vinyl, gold control panel and the famous white script logo produces a reassuring presence that will make any guitarist feel right at home. The JVM's deep steel box chassis is home to a lot of electronics, and as you'd expect from

an amp with 28 knobs on its control panel, these are all mounted on printed circuit boards.

One very big PCB holds all the preamp and power amp components, including the valve bases and most of the rear panel items, while three more support all the front panel controls. The main board is through-plated and all the components are typical of Marshall's high quality standards. With →

MARSHALL JVM410H HEAD £899

GUITAR AMPS  GUITARIST INTERACTIVE



MARSHALL JVM410H HEAD

PRICE: £899
ORIGIN: UK
TYPE: All-valve four-channel head with solid-state rectification
OUTPUT: 100W RMS
VALVES: Five ECC83/12AX7 preamp, Four EL34 power amp
DIMENSIONS: 260 (h) x 700 (w) x 225mm (d)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 21/44
CABINET: Birch ply
CHANNELS: Four, each with three voicing modes
FOOTSWITCH: Six-button stageboard included, can be user-programmed to suit requirements
CONTROLS: Gain, bass, mid, treble, volume and mode switch x 4, reverb level x 4, master volume x 2, presence and resonance
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: MIDI in/thru sockets, series effects loop with bypass, parallel effects loop with instrument/line level switch and mix controls, balanced speaker-emulated line out operates in standby mode for silent recording, digital reverb
OPTIONS: Also available in 2 x 12 combo format as the JVM410C for £1,155, 1960A/B 4 x 12 cabinets, £460
Marshall Amplification
01908 375411
www.marshallamps.com

JVM410H HEAD	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

■ WE LIKED Huge versatility linked to a switching system that's as easy as pie; superb tone; excellent low-noise performance
■ WE DISLIKED The PCB-mounted preamp valves are deeply recessed, making them fiddly to replace

→ such a reliance on PCB layout, internal wiring is minimal but what there is has been neatly routed. One benefit of this type of construction is built-in consistency – gone are the days when you could tweak a Marshall just by repositioning a few wires inside the chassis. However, this construction means the five ECC83 preamp valves are deeply recessed and will be tricky to replace in a hurry.

The reason for such a densely populated control panel is that the JVM is a proper four-channel design, with four sets of gain, volume and tone controls for each channel. Furthermore, each channel has a mode switch that offers three distinct voices with varying amounts of gain, giving no less than 12 preset sounds to play with. There is a digital reverb with a level control for each channel, two switchable global master volume controls and presence and resonance controls to fine-tune the power amp's high and low frequency response.

Moving to the rear panel, there are no less than five speaker outlets, two effects loops (one series, one parallel), a balanced speaker-emulated line out, which works in conjunction with the front-panel standby switch to offer a silent recording mode, a footswitch jack for the included six-button stage board and a pair of MIDI sockets. Yes, the JVM is MIDI compatible so any



The speaker-emulated line out offers a silent recording mode

Marshall is back with a new flagship that delivers on every promise. Its versatility is up there with the best and so are the tones

MIDI effects unit can track program changes, or send program changes to the JVM. But that's not all. The non-MIDI stage board is also programmable – you can use it to either duplicate any of the front panel switches or recall entire channel presets. Every time you change a function the amp remembers this setting so, for example, if you select the crunch channel in red mode with reverb and the switchable master volume engaged, that's what you'll get the next time you return to that channel. Marshall has deliberately left each footswitch button with a blank label, so you can work out your ideal set-up and then write the various functions on it yourself. Furthermore, this board isn't connected using an

expensive multicore cable; any two-conductor lead up to almost any length will do the job. It's a very clever and logical switching design, making what seems at first glance an intimidating amp child's play to operate.

SOUNDS: However, massive flexibility and clever switching tricks aren't enough. Do those four tri-mode channels cut the proverbial mustard? Holy rock 'n' roll, yes they do!

The clean channel is one of the best you'll find on any guitar amp, let alone a Marshall. In green mode, this channel's volume control is bypassed, so the gain takes over as a single volume control, giving you a very pleasant, high-headroom clean sound that can be either fat and juicy or crystalline, depending on how you set the EQ. Switch to orange or red modes, and the gain stages are added post-EQ, which is unusual for a Marshall, giving a wide range of highly interactive mild break-up effects.

The crunch channel takes you from JTM45 or 'Plexi' tonality into JCM800 →



The rivals

Mesa Stiletto Deuce
£1,975
Hughes & Kettner
TriAmp II £1,295
Rivera Knucklehead
Reverb head £1,799
Mesa's Stiletto is its dedicated EL34-powered head – it's nothing less than a firehose of tone, capable of delivering some of the best rock guitar sounds in the known universe. But over here it's also quite pricey. The TriAmp is a well-developed design with a long pedigree and neck-snapping good looks to match its awesome tonal armoury. It can be easily upgraded for MIDI use too, and it's one of our favourite super-heads – less well-known than the Mesa, maybe, but just as formidable. Rivera's awe-inspiring MIDI-powered Knucklehead Reverb can easily match the JVM's huge flexibility – for tone it's arguably the ultimate in EL34 power and its build quality is the best there is. Yet it is double the JVM's price and you'd expect nothing less for that kind of money.



The JVM is a full-blown four channel design with four sets of controls for each channel



The JVM's channels cover a vast array of territory and would not be found lacking in the studio

→ territory as you switch through the three modes, while OD1 and OD2 cover just about every player's wish for a great Marshall lead sound. It's all there – JCM900, DSL, TSL and a lot more besides. The full-on power of OD2 with the gain control maxed out will be more than enough for any distortion fiend. Mind-blowing overdrive capability is matched by impressively low background noise – in fact, with the clean channel selected, it's hard to tell the amp is actually on until you hit the strings. There are many amps that cost considerably more, which are sadly lacking in this area. It's good to see Marshall leading by example, with a low-noise design that will work just as well in studios as it will on stage.

The digital plate reverb used on the JVM is nicely EQ'd and very flattering,


with the added extra that the reverb tail isn't chopped off when you change channels, it's left to decay naturally. All of the switching functions operate virtually seamlessly, with almost no clicks or pops, even at very high gain. It's great to have all this functionality but the abiding impression here is that the JVM sounds utterly superb – far better than its immediate predecessors.

For the first time in quite a while, this is a modern Marshall that boasts an almost pure all-valve path from input jack to speaker socket. We say almost, but if you discount the digital reverb (which still uses a valve in the recovery circuit) and a single MOSFET in the resonance circuit, it is all valve, and the result is a more organic and flexible tonality than you'd previously expect from this kind of amp. That's not to say

The clean channel is one of the best you'll find on any guitar amp, let alone a Marshall

the JVM can't rock hard if you want it to – the sheer power and aggression is typical Marshall – but you can do a lot more besides and that is this amp's strong point: it's a multi-channel, multi-mode monster that really works and, try as we have, we can't find a single weak point in the JVM's tonal palette.

Verdict

So, after a long wait, Marshall is back with a new flagship that delivers on every promise. Its versatility is up there with the best and so are the tones. You could easily pick one of several sounds lurking behind the JVM's front panel and cut an entire album without changing it. Build quality is as good as you'd expect and better than many of its competitors. The final clincher is the price – at just under £900 for the head, the JVM represents incredible value for players at any level, especially as this is an amp to last. If you've been waiting for the ultimate Marshall, then it's time you headed to your local dealer to meet it in person. The JVM is going to be one of the hottest amps of 2007, mark our words. 

Marshall JVM410H head

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★