

## GEAR



# Electroplex Rocket 42-DC



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

**ELECTROPLEX GOT ITS START WAY** back in 1993, when electronics engineer-turned-amp-builder Don Morris teamed up with Trevor Wilkinson to produce the Rocket 90 model in head and combo form, which saw use by the Rolling Stones during their recording sessions for *Voodoo Lounge*. By 1995, Wilkinson had moved back to the UK to start a successful business in guitars and guitar hardware, while Morris pushed on here with his next amplifier, the Rocket 50—a 50-watt 4x10 combo that utilized the same preamp and gain structure as the 90. In 1996, *GP* reviewed the Rocket 50 in a roundup of boutique amps, where it emerged as one of our top three picks (it also went on to be named as one of our top gear picks for the year in the November '97 issue). Morris was able to get one to the Stones again for their *Bridges to Babylon* sessions—and this time he got an album credit for it! In 1998 guitarist Brian Ray purchased a Rocket 50 head, and after landing a touring gig with Paul McCartney in 2002, his Rocket 50 and pair of 4x12 cabs were on stages all over the world.

Electroplex's meteoric rise was followed by

a fallow period where Morris stopped production entirely to devote more time to his family. But in 2009 he returned to making amps, this time with a line that included EL34 versions of the Rocket 50 and 35 and the dual-6V6-powered Rocket 22, an amp/tube pairing that would lead to the more powerful Rocket 42 Chime Machine, and now the latest incarnation of that amp, the 42-DC.

Designed with input from Northern California blues/rock/alt country guitarist Danny Click, the 42-DC follows the basic template of the Chime Machine by featuring four 6V6 power tubes, two footswitchable channels with dual sets of tone controls (independently voiced for clean and overdriven tones), dual effects loops, spring reverb, and a power reduction switch (42 watts/25 watts). Morris tells us that Click was very involved in guiding the development of his Rocket, a process that reportedly took 11 months to complete. "Danny wanted a performance amp with extra headroom and extra firm response; i.e. minimal squish or 'sag.' At his request, I also totally redesigned the tone circuit of the overdrive channel, making it quite different than

the standard Red channel. Specifically it has more highs and lows, and reduced mids. Danny also had very specific design ideas for the 1x15 rear-ported cab. For larger venues he uses two of these cabs." Click's new CD, *Holding Up the Sun*, also features the amp on all of the tracks.

The 42-DC is carefully made with neat wiring throughout, and the circuit comprises high-grade components such as a custom Heyboer power transformer, Mercury Magnetics output tranny, metalized-polyester audio caps, and carbon-film resistors. The 42-DC is available as a head or in 1x12, 2x12, 2x10, 4x10 and 1x15 combo formats. Extension cabinets are offered in 2x12, 4x12, and 4x10 configurations, and you can choose between a variety of speakers from Austin Speaker Works, Celestion, Eminence, Jensen, and Weber. All cabinetry is made from 12-ply Baltic birch, and solid pine is available as an option. Standard finishes include black w/wheat grille, burgundy w/gold grille. Custom colors are also available.

As with other Electroplex amps we've tested, the 42-DC delivers excellent tones with no fuss. Auditioned with Teles, Strats, Les Pauls, and



PRS guitars, the clean channel (Green) with its Volume, Treble, Bass, and Middle controls proved to be a high-headroom, Fender-flavored affair with plenty of range to cover everything from sparkling rhythm sounds to edge-of-breakup textures when the volume is up. It's a dynamically responsive channel with a sound that is tight and presency, and quite loud too, even in 25-watt mode. The abundant clean ceiling makes it a great platform for distortion, modulation, and delay pedals, and the EQ is of the set-and-forget variety that make it easy to switch between humbuckers and single-coils without necessarily having to revisit the tone knobs. The tube driven/buffered spring reverb brings a nice airiness to the tones, covering the bases well for everything from light reflections to splashy "surf's up" textures.

By pushing in the Volume knob or using the included footswitch to select the Red channel, the 42-DC assumes a Marshall-like attitude in its distortion voicing. And here too, there's tons of range to play with as the Gain knob is advanced. While not an extremely high-gain amp, the DC-42

is tough-sounding and can dish out just about any shade of stringy sounding grit while remaining super responsive to player input. The attack on notes and chords is very aggressive, and there's little sag in the feel until the volume comes up enough to push the power tubes into mild compression. At higher levels the amp feels like it's clawing to get off the leash, delivering ballsy, harmonically rich grind that sounds badass for rhythm or solos. At full power, the 42-DC can really blast on bigger stages, but the Master is implemented to allow for stout tones at lower volumes too—and between it and the low-wattage function, it's pretty easy to tame this rig for smaller venues.

As with other Electroplex amps we've played, the 42-DC impresses on a lot of levels. It has clean tones to spare, and while possessing a certain "vintage-ness" in its soul, its tightness and bold attack are more reminiscent of a *vintage* plexi than anything from the American side. The end result is a flexible tone machine that could be a real inspiration for blues, rock, and country players. Well done! 🎸

#### SPECIFICATIONS

### ROCKET DC-42

<b>CONTACT</b>	<a href="http://electroplex.com">electroplex.com</a>
<b>PRICE</b>	Head \$2,669 street; 1x15 cabinet with Eminence Patriot Commonwealth speaker (\$869 street).
<b>CHANNELS</b>	2
<b>CONTROLS</b>	Green channel: Volume (pulls to switch channels), Treble, Middle, Bass. Red channel: Gain, Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Global Presence and Reverb.
<b>POWER</b>	42 watts/25 watts
<b>TUBES</b>	Preamp: JJ Electric 12AX7MG (x3), 5751 (x1), 12AT7 (x1). Power: JJ Electric 6V6S (x4)
<b>EXTRAS</b>	Dual FX loops. Dual speaker outs with 4/8/16Ω switch. Tube-driven spring reverb. Line out.
<b>SPEAKER</b>	Tested with Bad Cat 4x12 and a Mesa/Boogie Mini Recto Slant 1x12.
<b>WEIGHT</b>	37.38 lbs (head)
<b>BUILT</b>	USA
<b>KUDOS</b>	Stellar clean and overdriven tones.
<b>CONCERNS</b>	Some might wish for foot-switchable reverb.