

## MARSHALL SUPER 100JH LIMITED EDITION

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

### INSTANT GRATIFICATION MARSHALL SUPER 100JH

#### WHO'S IT FOR?

Well-heeled players and collectors who want the closest thing to the first Marshalls used by Hendrix.

#### KUDOS

A stunning replica of the 1966 Super 100. If you really want to sound like Jimi, this is the amp you need.

#### CONCERNS

Vintage-style leather strap handles on the speaker cabinets make you see why Marshall switched to inset side handles.

#### PRICE

\$8,000 retail (full stack)/street price N/A

#### CONTACT

Marshall Amplification, (631) 390-8737; marshallamps.com

THE NEW SUPER 100JH—MARSHALL'S latest hand-wired model—is based on an original Super 100 reportedly owned by Hendrix. The new amp's construction is consistent with that of the original, and Marshall obtained components from many of the original manufacturers to create a reasonably accurate replica. Some construction alterations on the power transformer were necessary to meet current safety standards, and the chassis on the new amp is steel instead of aluminum (which was done to make the amp more robust than the original), but the Super's circuitry is neatly handwired on tag boards that have the same thickness and matrix pitch as the original boards. The amp also retains the

original style gold-colored Perspex (Plexiglas) front panel, though the cream-colored styrene rear panel looks more yellow than those of most vintage Marshalls. As per original spec, the indicator lamp is a 6.3-volt incandescent type, which glows orange through its bullet-shaped plastic lens. Baltic birch plywood cabinetry, small gold "Marshall" script logos, and "100" corner badges and leather strap handles are found on the speaker cabinets. The black Levant covering and white piping and gold beading on the head and speaker cabs is also as per original spec, and the new amp even features the same tone-circuit mod that was done to all of Jimi's Super 100s (see sidebar for details).



With the rear panel removed, the size of the KT66 power tubes is readily apparent.



## SPECS

- Two channels (Normal and High Treble)
- Dual input jacks for each channel
- Normal and High Treble Loudness controls
- Shared Presence, Bass, Middle, and Treble controls
- Three Marshall-labeled JJ 12AX7 (ECC83) preamp tubes
- Four Marshall-labeled Golden Dragon KT66 power tubes
- Handwired circuitry
- Impedance selector (100-volt line, 8, 16 ohms)
- Voltage selector (100, 120, 230 volts)
- 100 watts
- 46.5 lbs (actual)
- Speaker cabinets: 1982AJH (angled front) and 1982BJH (straight front); both cabinets feature four Celestion G12C 25-watt speakers

## UP FROM THE SKIES

Courtesy of its extra-long tall cabinet (which stands 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" higher than a standard Marshall 1960B cab), the Super 100JH stack is impressive to behold. It harks to a time when guitar amps had to be big in order to produce the desired volume in a large hall, and while today's P.A. systems have essentially eliminated that

need, there's still a lot of primal thrill to be had just standing next to something like this. The leather handles found on these cabs aren't much help when moving time comes, however. Why Marshall didn't originally put wheels on these boxes is a mystery, although, considering how the earliest cabs for the 100 watt-setups housed eight 12" speakers (only about six of these 8x12s

## A TALE OF TWO MARSHALLS

No image of Jimi Hendrix in concert is complete without a wall of Marshall stacks in the background. Hendrix pretty much showed the world what could be done with an amp of the Super 100's magnitude, and the story of how Jimi came to use Marshall amplifiers is best told by the man who was destined to cross paths with Hendrix at a moment when all the guitarist needed was the right amplifier to make it all happen. That man, of course, was Jim Marshall, and here, in his own words, he recalls how Hendrix and he formed one of the most mutually beneficial alliances in rock history.

"During the mid 1960s, a lot of up-and-coming and famous guitarists came to see me at my shop in Hanwell in West London," remembers Marshall, "but there's one particular visitor I'll never forget. One Saturday in the autumn of 1966, a tall, lanky American chap walked in with Johnny Mitchell—or 'Mitch,' as most people know him. The bloke's name was James Marshall Hendrix, and he quickly became the greatest ambassador my amplifiers have ever had.

"When he was a teenager, Mitch used to work at my shop as a 'Saturday boy,' and also take drum lessons from me. He was a very talented lad, and he quickly became one of my top students. When Jimi came over to England in 1966, Mitch auditioned for his band and got the drumming job. Jimi had heard Marshall amplifiers being played by other musicians, and got his first real taste of them when he jammed with Cream [on October 1, 1966 at Regent Polytechnic College in London], and got to play through one of Eric Clapton's Super 100 stacks. A few days later, Jimi played at Ronnie Scott's club in Soho, and ended up using the Marshall stacks that were on stage. Pete Townshend also loaned one of his Super 100 stacks to Jimi.

"I'm delighted to say that Jimi fell in love with the Marshall sound straight away, and knowing that Mitch knew me, he said, 'I've just got to have this Marshall amplification. Can I meet up with this character who has my name—James Marshall?' Mitch said, 'Well, Jim is always so busy. I'll doubt he'll



have time to come out and see you, but I can take you to his shop and you can talk to him there.'

"When Mitch brought Jimi to my shop, the very first words he said to me were, 'I've just got to have this Marshall stuff!' I thought to myself, 'Oh crickey, that's all I need—another American guitarist coming over here thinking I was going to sponsor him.' But then, in virtually his next breath, Jimi said, 'I don't want anything given to me. I want to pay full retail price for whatever I order.' That impressed me greatly, and then he added, 'But I'm going to need service wherever I am in the world.' My first thought was, 'Oh Christ, he's going to expect me to send an engineer all over the place every time a valve needs replacing.' As that wasn't exactly practical, I suggested we teach his roadie how to change and bias valves and other basic amplifier servicing skills. Jimi liked the idea, and his roadie must've been a good learner, because we were never called out at all.

"Despite his somewhat wild appearance and his incredible, larger-than-life on-stage persona, Jimi was a very soft spoken and extremely polite young man with an unbelievable sense of humor. We hit it off right away, and we remained good friends right up to his unfortunate and untimely death. Sadly, because we both had such busy schedules, I only got to see him perform three or four times. But on those occasions, I'd always go back stage for a chat and a laugh with him. Jimi really was a lovely man." —AT

were made in 1965, the "new" 4x12 cabs were probably thought to be easy enough to carry. The fit and finish on the Super 100JH rig is excellent. The coverings and extensive beading and piping on the exteriors are well executed, and the gold front and white rear panels and gold-on-white badges look as cool today as they did 40 years ago when these elements helped establish the visual identity of Marshall products.

The Super 100JH is bone simple to use,



## THE SUPER MOD

The reference amplifier used as a basis for the Super 100JH is a vintage Super 100 (pictured above) owned by Rich Dickinson of England. Dickinson bought it in 1971 from Nottingham's Carlsboro Sound, which had advertised it as being previously owned by Hendrix. A worker in the store reportedly told Dickinson the amp was sold to them by one of Hendrix's roadies, and the "J.H. Exp" stenciled on the top would seem to confirm that story. However, a key feature that strongly indicates that this amp—serial number 7026—could have been one of Jimi's is a small change to its tone circuitry, which consisted of replacing a 56k ohm resistor with a 33k ohm resistor, and a 250 pf capacitor with a 500 pf cap. This gave the amp a moderate treble boost, along with an increase in bottom end and low mids. According to Marshall's research—which included talking to Jimi's techs and also people at Marshall who actually worked on his amps—all of the Super 100s from 1966 that Hendrix used probably featured this mod. Hendrix definitely requested a bit more drive and cut from his Marshalls, and apparently other players did, too, as this modification eventually became standard in all Marshall pre-amp circuits.

Another interesting aspect of the original Super 100 is that its high-voltage DC supply was less capable of delivering the current demanded from the power stage under load than that of the post-1968 100-watt models. This produced a slight sag or compression in the response that is characteristic of the early 100-watt amps. This same high-voltage DC filtering circuit and period-correct smoothing capacitor is incorporated into the Super 100JH in order to accurately replicate the original's softer dynamic response. A final nod to the JH's vintage authenticity comes in the form of the hum it produces when in standby mode. According to Marshall's Steve Dawson, who was the head engineer on the JH project, this is caused by the power transformer inducing 60Hz hum into the output transformer—and therefore into the speakers. Modern amps typically have their transformers at opposite ends of the chassis to prevent this type of proximity hum. —AT

though the two-channel configuration presents you with the choice of using them independently, or combining them with a short jumper cable (which is connected between the bottom input of one channel and the top input of the other) to allow blending the brighter and darker channels to best suit your style and instrument. You can also daisy-chain up to three heads together by plugging your guitar into the top input of either channel, and then running a longer jumper cable from the bottom input of the same channel to either of the top inputs on each subsequent amp. Jimi typically did this in concert, using the Channel 1 (High Treble) input on all his amps.

With only one amp to test, we simply jumpered the two channels, turned both Loudness controls to 10, and were quickly reveling in some amazing tones. The full Super 100JH setup produces a ton of volume, but the loudness actually proved a little less intense than what was delivered by the 1959HW Super Lead 100 reissue (which is based on a 1969 model that used EL34 output tubes). The Super 100JH is definitely a more pleasant amp to play—especially in a smaller room—and its softer dynamic response contrasts to the vicious attack of the studlier Super Lead. With a little finessing at the guitar end (and only one cabinet hooked up), you could probably get away with using the Super 100JH in a smaller club, while still enjoying the fantastic dynamic response that this amp delivers. Even with the Loudness controls maxed, you can still get a decent clean tone by rolling down your guitar's volume and lightening up on your picking attack. And for even better clean-to-lead transitions, you can always call on a venerable Fuzz Face (or other fuzz or distortion pedal) to provide the bulk of the grind for lead work, while setting the Loudness knobs a bit lower to ensure a clean, crisp rhythm sound.

## VOODOO CHILE

The real beauty of the Super 100JH, however, is how readily it delivers ultra-classic rock tones. Whether your touchstone tones are Jimi's, Peter Green's, or Eric Clapton's, this amp delivers them all with uncanny ease. For Hendrix stuff in particular, the Super 100 really has no peers. Plug in a Strat, put all the knobs on 10, and you can hardly help but cop those explosively electrified tones and otherworldly harmonics (such as occur when wrangling the vibrato to its stops while flicking the pickup selector back and forth) that pour forth from that wall of 12s. The power-supply-induced ghost harmonics are

also quite a trip with this amp. Those crying tones that halo fingered notes when you dig in hard are a signature element of early Marshalls, and they add a certain spice to the Super 100JH's sonic brew.

## BOLD AS LOVE

Big, powerful, and as exotically elemental as a mid-'60s Jaguar XKE, the Super 100JH is an amp that few will own (only 600 stacks will be available worldwide), and even fewer

will likely haul to gigs. It's an icon of the highest order, and, sadly, probably one that's destined to be relegated to the trophy rooms of wealthy guitar enthusiasts. There's nothing wrong with that, and Marshall certainly wouldn't have been able to allocate the resources necessary to revive such a beast if an upscale market wasn't there to support the effort. A cheap thrill it ain't, but the Super 100JH is definitely Marshall's most exciting handwired offering to date. ■