

This review by Ken Fischer (Trainwreck Amps) appeared
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Naylor Update

Since this review the Special Design 50 speaker has been improved. It now features a paper gasket and original C12N frame. The overall tone is even fatter with smoother high end response. Now available in 8 and 16 ohms.

Review from Vintage Guitar Magazine

Road Testing the J. F. Naylor Special Design 50
By Ken Fischer

By now everyone has seen the ads for Joe Naylor's new Vintage Tone Speaker here in Vintage Guitar. Of course the question becomes, is this new speaker a prince or just another toad in a world where new products are commonly all bluff and no beef?

Joe claims his speaker sounds like the Jensen Speakers of the 1950's/1960's. The first thing I should explain is that Jensen made three different types of speakers. They made "Electrodynamic Speakers", which used no permanent magnet material at all; instead the speakers used a field coil. That is a coil of wire that was connected to the power supply to form an electromagnet for the voice coil to react against.

The second type speaker they made was a "Permanent Magnet Speaker" using an "Alnico Five (V) Magnet", (these later became known as "Blue Bell Jensens"). No matter what you read anywhere you can not replace an Alnico Magnet with a ceramic magnet and get the same sound. You might get the voice coil gap energy right with ceramic, but the overall magnetic field shape will be different. Also, Alnico is inductive and adds inductance to the voice coil without adding any additional wire or changing it's size or the way it's wound.

The third type Jensen speaker made used a "ceramic magnet" which changed the Jensen sound yet a third time. Among the three designs of Jensen's as far as magnet type there were many individual models of each type. As you can see, if you claim a Jensen sound, then which Jensen sound are you claiming?

Back to the J. F. Naylor speaker; this speaker uses a 40oz. ceramic magnet and a 1 1/2 inch voice coil rated at 8 ohms and 50 watts. Its frame is painted black and has a blue and silver label. Jensen used a blue and silver label on their top of the line Alnico speakers. As for the J. F. Naylor's, the frame, magnet and label have a sixties look, but the cone looks more modern. The rubber baffle gasket on the front of the speaker doesn't fit the vintage theme and during testing I found that unless the speakers were tightened down just enough to hold them in place the gasket compressed and dampened the vibration of the baffle. I talked to Joe about this and he's looking into the possibility of going to a paper (vintage style) gasket. I should mention that this speaker is designed to be a sonic rather than an exact cosmetic reproduction, so my comments on cosmetics are for clarification as I'm sure someone will ask "Does It Look Just Like A Jensen"?

So now the big question ... How does it sound? I used a Fender 2x12 cabinet and also installed one in the Kendrick 2112 deluxe amp. The Naylor delivers the tone and feel of an early sixties Jensen as promised. It's sort of a cross between a C 12N and one or two other early ceramic Jensen's. It does not sound like a 50's Jensen Alnico, but, none the less, gave a really nice Jensen tone in the Kendrick tweed. I got sweet clean tones, righteous Jensen dirty tones, and a nice midrange compression on leads.

If the sound you've got to have is an Alnico Jensen, well the Naylor has a ceramic magnet and we've already covered that number. What Joe has here is a really nice sounding speaker with an early sixties Jensen tone. No current speaker I know of will get you closer to a 12 inch Jensen tone than this one, except for an original Jensen. In the 2x12 cabinet the sound was the quality of a blond or Fender electric black face Twin with the factory stock Jensen's.

While I was testing the Naylor in the 2112 my friend Bill Holter, of Vintage Sound in Virginia, dropped by for a visit. Bill plays original tweed Deluxes with his band. After Bill played this combo he commented that both the amp and speaker sound authentic Fender/Jensen.

I know what you've thinking! In the heat of the shootout did I fire up all the speakers or is there one Kendrick Black Frame left in the chamber? Since the Kendrick Black Frame is the heaviest black frame in the world and could knock my head clean off if Gerald threw one at me do I dare compare the Naylor and the Kendrick! Well, do I feel lucky? I'll go ahead and make your day!

NAYLOR VS. KENDRICK

The Kendrick Black Frame 12 inch speaker appears in Kendrick ads as a replacement for original Jensen's. Well what happened is the original Kendrick Black Frame 12 was designed as a replacement for Jensen speakers. This Kendrick speaker is no longer being made but I have tested them and that speaker would lose on every count to the J. F. Naylor. I should tell you lots of people did like the original Kendrick black frame, I didn't. When Gerald designed his 4212 amp (tweed Twin), he wanted a new, higher power, Texas tone speaker. That's the current black frame. It's not designed to be a Jensen, but Gerald just never got around to changing his ad.

The Kendrick speaker has a bigger magnet, deeper cone, tighter voice coil gap and higher power rating than the Naylor. The Kendrick speaker is more efficient than the Naylor-that is, for the same power in, you get more volume. The Kendrick has more headroom on the clean side, too. The Kendrick has a deeper, tighter bottom than the Naylor speaker. Hey, sounds like the Naylor's getting blown away! Don't count on it!

The Kendrick has a big bold Texas tone. It's a bit fussy in that it works with the amps, cabinets, and guitars it likes and rejects what it doesn't like. In the Kendrick 2112 road test 1 mentioned the Black Frame didn't like my P-90 Jr. The Naylor isn't fussy like that. In fact, in the 2112, the sound of the Jr. through the Naylor beat the sound I got with that rig and the 25 watt Celestion. I could hardly believe it, me being a Celestion head and all.

Again, using the 2112, the Kendrick Black Frame had a bigger, bolder clean sound with more headroom. The Naylor had a sweeter, warmer clean sound with a very strong Jensen vibe. It did break up sooner but that's what Jensen's do and do well. What you have then are two different animals. As I said in my Celestion speaker articles, speaker choice is a matter of personal tastes. If you want a new speaker that sounds like a Jensen, the J. F. Naylor is the clear winner in the 12" class. If you're looking for something different in a 12" American sound and aren't into Jensen's, you might find you'll like the Kendrick better. Of course, I must mention the blue Vox Bulldog is back-my personal all-time favorite.

It looks like 1993 is a vintage year for guitar speakers and Joe Naylor has certainly done his part. The new kid on the block is a real contender.

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