

the ToneQuest™

The Player's Guide to Ultimate Tone Report

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Celestial Tones From The Ruby

We discover an utterly magnificent new Alnico speaker from Celestion that honors the deep tradition of Ipswich...



We received a Ruby Alnico speaker from Celestion and if a more impressive looking speaker has ever been made we haven't seen it. The flawless ruby red paint job speaks to you right out of the box... Well, it's a speaker... and a speaker *ought* to speak to you. The authentic sound of a Celestion conjures images of all kinds of great songs, inspiring and inspired players, and stunning tones. Did Tommy Bolin use Celestions? We know he used a Marshall 100 watt amp early on and later, a Hiwatt. We sometimes think of him when we are mining Celestions because his tone and deft slide fills were magic. It was *Teaser*, recorded in 1975 that lit a fire in us and we played those great Bolin songs in bars and clubs throughout the southeast and eastern seaboard. You can find most of his essential recordings on YouTube.

The '70s defined the zenith of hard rockin' music that was played over the airwaves from coast to coast, and Celestion speakers were an essential ingredient in those celestial tones. The Celestion Radio Co. and Celestion Ltd. were formed in 1927 and the company's motto was "The Very Soul of Music." That tradition remains alive and well today in Ipswich and their latest Ruby speaker embodies everything that has made Celestion speakers legendary.

We loaded the 35 watt Ruby in our 40 watt Fender Blues Deluxe and for reference we compared it to a 50 watt Celestion Alnico Gold. No, you needn't be concerned about using a 35 watt speaker in a 40 watt amp... at least not a Celestion. The Gold sounded slightly cleaner, predictably rich with vivid overtones, beautifully defined treble and thundering bass response with no surrender. It is a formidable speaker.

To our delight, the Ruby sounded different, but no less impressive. At 35 watts, the overall sound and volume were easily equal to the Gold, but the Ruby revealed a subtle break up and mild distortion characteristic that was entirely appealing. When we say "subtle" we mean that the sound of the speaker through our 40 watt amp on 5-6 produced a bit more harmonic distortion that was clearly audible in taught chords, but it was just enough to make the sound more intriguing without being obtrusive or overwhelming. Well, actually, it was addictive. Imagine clean distortion if you can—because the tones emanating from the Ruby are utterly seductive and clear as a bell. It's that little extra push that makes all the difference to us, and because of this the Ruby is destined to remain in the Blues Deluxe. This speaker is so toneful and chewy that we find that we don't have to turn the amp up as much to acquire a solid hard rockin' sound with glistening sustain, gorgeous harmonics, smooth treble, anxious mids, and bottomless yet rock solid low end. It's the perfect rock and blues tone. No grit, grind, sand or raspiness whatsoever... just a huge porcine tone that lifts chords to celestial heights and plants lead lines with authority and mild sustain. The Ruby is the perfect enhancement for mid-powered amps, and while this speaker reveals beautifully overdriven tones it also excels with cleaner rhythms, vividly enhancing rich chords, and solos with lush clarity and a tactile response that leaves you feeling completely connected to your guitar. You can feel and hear this speaker responding to every nuance in your pick attack and the overall tone is weighty, bright yet smooth with a subtle midrange push. It is indeed the essential and unmistakable sound of rock & roll. We wouldn't hesitate to mount this speaker in a lower powered 15-20 watt amp as well provided the bell cover fits your cabinet. The depth is about 6 ½ inches, it fit our Blues Deluxe easily, and it will fit in your Deluxe, too. At \$289 the Ruby isn't cheap, but given the gripping, soulful tones flowing from our amp, it's worth even more. Quest forth... TQ

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