

JCM800 2203

Owners Manual





From the Chairman

I would like to personally thank you for selecting this re-issue of my all-valve, JCM 800 2203, 100 Watt, Master Volume head. My company's reputation and longevity have been built on a great many things – groundbreaking designs, skilled workmanship, reliability, flexibility, stylish looks and, above all else, great tone and feel. The continual fascination and love that many current guitarists show for our vintage amplification products is a testament to just how relevant and important such models are to this very day.

The amplifier you have just acquired is a re-issue of the JCM 800 2203, 100 Watt head that was originally launched in March of 1981 and proved incredibly popular with rock guitarists throughout the '80s. Although my JCM 900 Series replaced the entire JCM 800 range in 1991, the 2203 has remained a firm favourite with countless players – hence my decision to start making it again.

Our re-issue of the JCM 800 2203 is totally faithful to the original in terms of looks, tone and feel. At the request of many 2203 fanatics it also boasts the addition of a Series Effects Loop – a feature which makes it totally at home in the modern performance arena.

I would like to wish you every success with your new amplifier and welcome you to the large and ever increasing family of players who plug into Marshall products.



WARNING! - Important safety instructions

WARNING: THIS APPARATUS MUST BE EARTHED!

- A PLEASE** read this instruction manual carefully before switching on.
- B ALWAYS** use the supplied mains lead, if a replacement is required please contact your authorised Marshall Dealer.
- C NEVER** attempt to bypass the fuses or fit ones of the incorrect value.
- D DO NOT** attempt to remove the amplifier chassis, there are no user serviceable parts.
- E Refer all servicing to qualified service personnel including replacement of fuses and valves.** Servicing is required when the apparatus has been damaged in any way, such as when the power supply cord or plug is damaged, liquid has been spilled or objects have fallen into the apparatus, the apparatus has been exposed to rain or moisture, does not operate normally or has been dropped.
- F NEVER** use an amplifier in damp or wet conditions. No objects filled with liquids should be placed on the apparatus.
- G ALWAYS** unplug this apparatus during lightning storms or if unused for long periods of time.
- H PROTECT** the power cord from being walked on or pinched particularly at plugs, convenience receptacles and at the point where they exit from the apparatus.
- I DO NOT** switch the amplifier on without a loudspeaker connected.
- J ENSURE** that any extension cabinets used are of the correct impedance.

▶ **Note:** This equipment has been tested and found to comply with the requirements of the EMC directive (Environments E1, E2 and E3 EN 55103-1/2) and the Low Voltage directive in the E.U.

▶ **EUROPE ONLY - Note:** The Peak Inrush current for the 2203 is 38 amps.

▶ **CAUTION:** Any changes or modifications not expressly approved by the party responsible for compliance may void the users authority to operate the equipment.

▶ **Note:** It is recommended that all audio cables, with the exception of the speaker lead, used to connect to the 2203 are of a high quality screened type. These should not exceed 10 metres in length. Always use a non-screened Marshall approved speaker lead with the 2203 Head and extension cabinets.

▶ **WARNING:** Do not obstruct ventilation grilles and always ensure free movement of air around the amplifier!

 **USA ONLY - DO NOT** defeat the purpose of the polarised or grounding type plug. A polarised plug has two blades with one wider than the other. A grounding type plug has two blades and a third grounding prong. The wide blade or the third prong are provided for your safety. When the provided plug does not fit into your outlet, consult an electrician for replacement of the obsolete outlet.

FOLLOW ALL INSTRUCTIONS AND HEED ALL WARNINGS

KEEP THESE INSTRUCTIONS !

Introduction

The all-valve 2203 is one of the most highly respected and revered 100 Watt Marshall heads in the company's long and illustrious history. Evolving from the legendary 100 Watt 'Plexi' head, it was also our first amplifier to house a Master Volume (MV) control. This simple but groundbreaking feature allowed the user to overdrive the preamp valves into desirable distortion without having to turn the amp full up. This proved to be incredibly popular and practical because, as you probably know, a 100 Watt Marshall is extremely loud when on full volume! Furthermore, thanks to its cascaded preamp design, the 2203 was capable of producing a level of distortion never heard from a guitar amp before.

The very first 2203 was actually introduced to the world in 1975. The JCM800 version that surfaced some six years later, in 1981, was merely a cosmetic redesign of the original. The circuitry remained exactly the same (as the saying goes, "if it isn't broken, don't fix it!"), but the amp's appearance got much bolder with a full-width control panel (the 2203 of 1975-1981 had a shorter front panel like a 1959SLP), grille cloth over the front baffle (the original 2203's baffle was covered with vinyl), white piping, and 'JCM800' written in bold letters on the front panel, together with Jim's signature. If you're wondering about the origin of the JCM800 name, it's an interesting tale – it came from the registration/license plate of Mr. Marshall's car which was, wait for it, JCM800! The 'JCM' part of it referred to Jim's initials (James Charles Marshall), the '800' was merely the number on the plate – no more, no less!

As guitar amplifiers go, the 2203 is the very essence of simplicity – it's a one channel amp with no reverb or built-in effects and its all-valve design produces a sound that, as Mike Doyle so aptly describes in his excellent 'The History of Marshall' book, is "crunchier than a lorry running over a hedgehog!" As a result of its idiot-proof interface, distinctive roar and larger-than-life 'edge', the 2203 immediately set the standard by which all other rock amps were judged and it remained the 'industry benchmark' throughout the entire 16 years of its production life.

The unparalleled new tones the 2203 generated immediately became the sonic impetus that helped drive forward the veritable explosion of hard rock acts in the late seventies and early eighties. The JCM 800 incarnation of the amp (along with the other models in the JCM800 range, most of which were derivatives of the 2203) quickly became the mainstay of the burgeoning heavy metal scene that dominated the '80s and was the amp responsible for many of the seminal thrash metal recordings of this period. In fact, Kerry King and Jeff Hanneman of Slayer, a hugely influential band that helped pioneer the thrash genre, still use their Marshall 2203s to this very day.

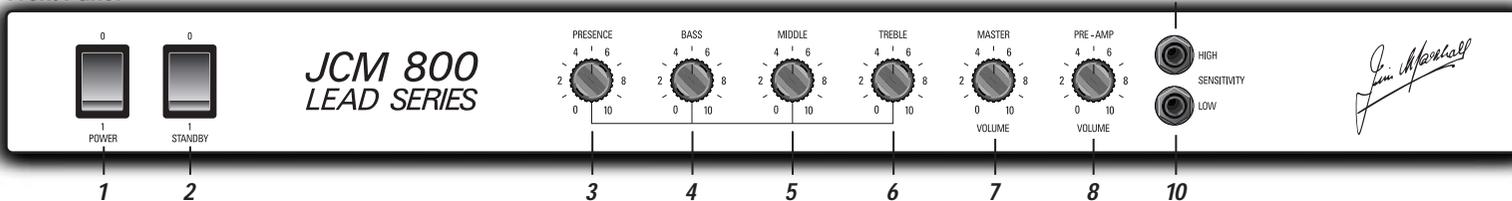
The late eighties and early nineties saw a shift towards the 'alternative/Brit pop' movement in the UK, while the US was dominated by the 'grunge' scene. The wide-ranging use of 2203s in these extremely varied musical genres is a true reflection of this amplifier's extremely versatile tonal range.

With the launch of Marshall's hugely popular JCM 900 Series in 1991, the JCM800 2203 was deservedly, but somewhat reluctantly, put out to pasture after 16 years of sonic supremacy. Despite its retirement though, the 2203 continued to be a much sought after amp and scores of players, including that brilliant fretburner Zakk Wylde (of Ozzy Osbourne and Black Label Society fame), would relentlessly hunt down old 2203s for use in the studio and on stage.

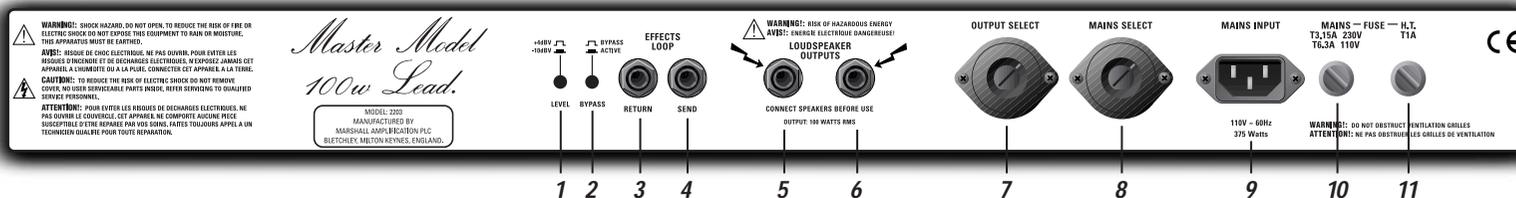
Owing to the seemingly never-ending barrage of requests we receive on a daily basis for the 2203, we've decided that it is time for us to relaunch this great amp in its most popular guise – the JCM 800. Furthermore, by popular demand, we've also given it a Series Effects Loop that features a true Bypass switch that takes the loop completely out of the circuit, thus ensuring the original tone isn't compromised in any shape or form.



Front Panel



Rear Panel



Front Panel Features

1. Power Switch

This is the On/Off switch for the mains power to the amplifier. Whenever it is switched 'On', the switch will light. Please ensure the amplifier is switched off and unplugged from the mains electricity supply before being moved.

2. Standby Switch

The Standby Switch is used in conjunction with the Power Switch (item 1) to 'warm up' the amplifier before use and to prolong the life of the output valves.

When powering up the amplifier always engage the application of the voltage required to heat the valves to their correct operating temperature. After about 2 minutes, when the valves are up to the correct temperature, the Standby Switch can be engaged. Upon doing this the H.T. (High Tension) which is the high voltage required by the output valves to pass signal (and hence produce sound) is applied.

To prolong valve life, the Standby Switch alone should be used to turn the amplifier on and off during breaks in a performance. Also, upon full power down, always disengage the Standby Switch prior to the main Power Switch (item 1).

3. Presence Control

This control operates in the power amp section of your amp and adds high frequencies to your tone, creating crispness and bite. As you turn this control up (clockwise), your sound will become more cutting.

4. Bass Control

This controls the amount of low frequencies (bottom end) in your tone.

5. Middle Control

This controls the all-important mid-range of your sound. Turning this up (clockwise) will make your guitar sound fatter and fuller. Conversely, turning it down

(anticlockwise) will reduce the mids in your sound, giving you that aggressive 'scooped' tone that is a staple of thrash and nu-metal guitar playing.

6. Treble Control

This control determines the amount of treble and makes your guitar's tone brighter as it is turned up.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The 2203's tone network is highly interactive and, because of this, altering the setting of one control can change the way the other controls behave. So, don't be afraid to experiment!

7. Master Volume

Controls the output volume of the amplifier. This allows the user to turn up the Pre-Amp Volume control (8) for maximum gain whilst keeping the amp's overall loudness at a desired level.

8. Pre-Amp Volume

This controls how hard you drive the pre-amp valves. Turning this control up overdrives the pre-amp and creates a desirable, harmonically rich distortion.

9. High Sensitivity Input

This is the High Sensitivity input of the amp – in theory, such an input is supposed to be used for low-output pickups. This said, 99.9% of all 2203 users ignore this and plug guitars loaded with high-output pickups into this input, because it enables them to drive the pre-amp even harder.

10. Low Sensitivity Input

This is the Low Sensitivity input of the amp, which was designed for hot (high-output) pickups; we would suggest you try both inputs and then decide which one is best for you.

Rear Panel Features

Effects Loop Send & Return Jacks

To increase the flexibility of your 2203 even further, you may choose to add external effects in its Series Effects Loop, which allows direct connection of either floor pedals or rack processors, with the Level switch (1) providing the correct operating level.

1. Effects Loop Level Switch

This switch offers two different loop levels to enable you to match the type of effect(s) connected to the Series Effects Loop. The higher level (+4dBV: switch 'out') suits rack processors and the lower level (-10dBV: switch 'in') suits floor pedals (stomp boxes).

2. Effects Loop Bypass

When 'out' this switch completely bypasses the circuitry involved in the effects loop to maintain the amp's absolute tonal integrity.

3. Effects Loop Return Jack

Connect the (mono) output of an external effects processor here.

4. Effects Loop Send Jack

Connect the (mono) input of an external effects processor here.

NOTE: As a rule, time based effects such as Chorus, Delay and Reverb are best suited for use in an effects loop. Effects involving distortion or Wah Wah aren't usually put in an effects loop because they sound best when they're 'before' the amp (i.e. placed between the guitar and the amp's input). This said, when it comes to tone there are no rules!

5/6. Loudspeaker Output Jacks

These are for connection to an external load, i.e. speaker cabinet(s). (See item 7). Please refer to Important Safety Instructions, page 2.

7. Output Selector

Matches the amplifier's output to the load impedance.

With all-valve amplifiers it is imperative that the amp is connected to a load whilst in operation and that the

impedance selected on the amp matches the total impedance of the speaker cabinet(s) being used. For example, if the amp is running into a single 16 Ohm cab, the amp should accordingly be set to 16 Ohms. If running into two 16 Ohm cabs, the amp should be set to 8 Ohms. If running into two 8 Ohm cabs, the amp should be set to 4 Ohms. Failure to comply with these points will result in damage to the amplifier.

Your amp should be completely powered down before the selector is turned.

8. Mains Selector

Matches the amplifier mains transformer voltage to the incoming mains voltage. Ensure that the rotary Mains Selector is set to the correct mains voltage applicable to the country where used. If you do not know the mains input voltage contact your authorised Marshall dealer.

Your amp should be completely powered down before the selector is turned. Adjustment from 230/220V to 110V or vice versa will require the mains fuse to be changed to the corresponding value as detailed on the rear panel.

9. Mains Input

Your amp is provided with a detachable mains (power) lead which is connected here. The specific mains input voltage rating that your amplifier has been built for is shown on the back panel. Before connecting for the first time, please ensure that your amplifier is compatible with your electricity supply. If you have any doubt, please get advice from a qualified person. Your Marshall dealer will help in this respect.

10. Mains Fuse

The correct value of mains fuse is specified on the rear panel of the amplifier. Please refer to Important Safety Instructions, page 2.

11. H.T. Fuse

The correct value of H.T. fuse is specified on the rear panel of the amplifier. Please refer to Important Safety Instructions, page 2.