

**DANELECTRO COOL CAT PEDALS** £29.99 TO £49.99  
EFFECTS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GAVIN ROBERTS

# Danelectro Cool Cat pedals

## £29.99 to £49.99

A new range of Dano stompboxes aims to provide boutique sounds at budget prices **By Trevor Curwen**

**D**anelectro has always excelled at putting out perfectly usable products at really affordable prices. Those sixties hardboard-faced guitars with their lipstick tube pickups might have had an air of corner-cutting austerity about them, but they were playable tone machines and the same is true of the contemporary models. Parallel with its guitar range, the company has had a wide selection of effects pedals available for the last few years and has now unleashed a whole new affordable range, known as the Cool Cat pedals.

There are nine pedals in the family, with prices from just £29.99 up to £49.99. Three of them are modulation pedals while the remaining six offer variations on the overdrive/distortion/fuzz theme. There's also a dedicated pedalboard designed to hold five of the little blighters.

Danelectro's philosophy behind the Cool Cat range is to offer the kind of facilities and sound quality that you'd expect to find in an expensive 'designer' pedal, but at a price that anyone can afford. The range was designed by Hank Linderman who can normally be found in studios turning his hand to session guitar playing, engineering and production. His input has resulted in Danelectro making the pedals much more roadworthy, with metal bodies and metal input jacks. He has also introduced true bypass switching, plus some features that aren't found in the equivalent pedals of some other makers – most notably the extra tonal variability.

From a visual standpoint the design of the Cool Cats is unique. The units have a metal casing about 25 per cent wider than a BOSS compact pedal, but have a much lower profile, with a curvy shape and cosmetic features that reference fifties-era American automobiles – as seen in some previous Dano pedals. Each pedal has its own uniform colour scheme broken only by the

controls, jacks and legends and by a sticker with the pedal name and the Cool Cat logo. In true Dano fashion this is just the wrong side of cool. The full logo is of a silhouetted Elvis type holding a guitar. On the pedal body this manifests itself as just his head that looks, unfortunately, like a Rorschach test inkblot.

The metal input and output jacks and 9V power socket all sit ergonomically on the front face of the pedal, as do the control knobs, tucked away under a slightly protruding lip. These control knobs are a mixed blessing. Their position makes them less likely to be accidentally moved by your feet, which at the same time also makes them harder to adjust on the fly. It's also not always easy to see exactly where the white marker-line lies, particularly because they're quite small and when playing you're generally looking down on the controls from above. So while they're great if you like to set the controls and leave them, they're rather frustrating if you don't.

Also quite annoying is the fact that some knobs on several of the pedals are dual-concentric, with inner and outer rings controlling separate functions. Now, the dual-concentric controls are a great idea that adds a massive amount of versatility in a confined space, but the downside is that they can be fiddly to adjust as the outer and inner rings tend to move as one. Dano recommend that you turn both knobs at the same time, till the outer one is where you want it, and then move the inner one. However, further adjustment of the outer ring can cause the inner one to move unless you use both hands, which is a bit fiddly.

If you don't want to run the pedals from a power adaptor, battery access is relatively painless via a clicked-in plastic plate on the pedal bottom. While turning on the effect requires a solid touch to activate the 3PDT switch. Let's plug in...

### Sounds Tremolo £44.99

The Tremolo pedal has two distinct sounds, selected by switch. Soft is designed as a typical amp tremolo, with speed and depth controls, while Hard is more of an abrupt on/off, square wave tremolo, with variable speed only. Both are very usable sounds – the Hard sound effectively chops up your audio in a way that can sound great when the speed is synced to the music. However, it's the warm throb of the Soft setting

that will appeal most to the purists. Reminiscent of a vintage Fender amp, Soft mode has speed and depth variation that goes from a slow deep pulsing, to a fast warble and all points in-between, all melding organically with your own tone.

### The Rivals

**BOSS** sets the standard with its Compact pedal range and has a stompbox to suit almost every need, albeit in a higher price range. If you're on a really tight budget **Behringer's** pedals cover similar ground to the Cool Cats, and you can pick many of them up online for £17! The **Line 6 ToneCore** range uses digital modelling to offer a wide range of sounds commonly found in the POD series. Street prices start from around £50.

Each pedal has a defined role and excels at it, although some are versatile enough to be used in several roles







The dual-concentric knobs add lots of versatility, but can be very fiddly to adjust.

### Vibe £49.99

It doesn't have the full array of controls to qualify as a Univibe clone, but the Vibe pedal gets pretty close to those sixties and seventies sounds. This is because it's based around similar light-triggered circuitry, so combining it with distortion, either before or after a fuzz pedal, gives a phasey Hendrix or Trower flavour. With its Intensity, Speed and Mix controls this modulation pedal can provide a wide variety of sounds, including a shimmering rotating speaker emulation and the sort of wobbly pitch vibrato found in vintage Magnatone amps. As well as the obvious modulation, there's a slight increase in brightness and loudness that gives instant impact when the effect kicks in.

### Metal £44.99

Metal is what it says on the tin and this pedal can certainly do it, but it's a lot more versatile than that, courtesy of a 3-band EQ that can zero right in on the distorted tone that you need. If it's high gain that you want, this pedal does it – it's capable of a higher amount of distortion than the rest of the range and can transform your

amp into full-on metal mode. Essential for certain metal sounds, the Mid knob is extremely effective in scooping the flab out of the midrange, but all three tone knobs contribute to the overall sound and when set to lesser amounts of distortion, you can conjure up the character of various vintage amps.

### Fuzz £39.99

With careful juxtaposition of the volume, tone and fuzz controls, the Cool Cat Fuzz offers plenty of variation on the fuzz theme. From liquid sustain with the tone turned down, to more raucous and edgy with more of the top-end dialled in – there's a pretty good Neil Young lead tone on tap, for example. Everyone has their own idea of what perfect fuzz sounds like and this probably wouldn't suit anyone looking for that sixties buzzsaw rasp, even with the tone control maxed. This Fuzz has got a thicker sound, fairly close in character to a Big Muff, and it cleans up very nicely when you turn the guitar volume down.

### Drive £29.99

Drive is a typical overdrive pedal, piling on extra gain and distortion

'A Marshall in a stompbox' was the immediate response on hearing the Distortion pedal fired up

to your sound. You can set the tone control so that there's little tonal change when you kick the pedal in, but the knob's main function seems to be for adding more sparkly presence when needed, ideal if you're going to be using the pedals for solos that cut through the mix. With a volume knob that has bags of range to keep your level the same or boost it when you kick the effect in, it's possible just to add a touch of the drive knob to dirty up your clean sound for those crunchy rhythms, add a bit more for blues, or max it out for a deep, thick distortion with plenty of low-end.

### Transparent Overdrive £39.99

The Transparent Overdrive doesn't lay it on as thick as the Drive pedal. This is a pedal for adding subtle amounts of extra drive to your amp without messing with your tone – although the treble and bass controls have

both cut and boost available to let you do that if you wish. What you get is about the same amount of overdrive as a Tube Screamer but with more volume available, should you need it. In fact, there's enough extra power on tap to make this equally usable as a clean boost, but you can turn up that gain for a little edge and bite for big crunchy Townshend chords. A great choice for adding a 'second channel' to a mostly clean amp.

### Distortion £44.99

'A Marshall in a stompbox' was the immediate response on hearing the Distortion pedal fired up. An instant favourite, the distortion is rich and voiced like a cranked Plexi, but there are plenty of tweaks available at the top and bottom end. The pedal features dual-concentric treble and bass controls, which have a flat centre position with cut and boost available to left and right respectively. This pedal also

covers classic rock territory and will even get heavy enough for some metal players as the low-end increases with the amount of gain. What's more we even found useful tones for country, Duane Allman style slide and sustaining Santana leads in this versatile little box.

### Metal II £39.99

With a similar amount of gain to the Metal pedal, the Metal II cuts down on the tone controls so doesn't have the same tonal versatility, but is much simpler to set up and use if you just want a great metal sound. Instead of the tone knobs, you get three switchable degrees of scooped midrange – Off lets the whole sound come through, Lo is a moderate scoop for eighties big-hair rock and Hi is a more extreme scoop for a modern metal vibe. Nicely responsive to your picking, a light touch pays off and the harmonics just fly out from under your fingers.

### Chorus £49.99

Versatility is the name of the game here, as this pedal can conjure up many variations on the tried and tested chorus theme, plus a

passable rotary speaker sound at its faster speed setting. This is all due to an EQ knob and a Mix knob set alongside the standard Depth and Speed controls. The chorus sounds are rich and full, but if there's too much chime you can use the EQ to cut sparkle by rolling off the top-end of just the effected sound. Turning the mix control up to full gives you more extreme modulation sounds, but classic chorus works best blended with the dry sound and you can add really subtle amounts of effect here. There are few things worse than leaving a chorus pedal switched on throughout a gig, but you could probably get away with it with this one.

### Verdict

Danelectro has already done the 'cheap as chips' pedal thing with the FAB series, but the Cool Cats, although still relatively inexpensive, are a distinct move away from those plastic fantasies. Instead Dano aims to provide sound and facilities that professional players would be comfortable using – something that these pedals have achieved. While the physical design of the



### Cool Cat Pedalboard £59.99


Designed to hold, protect and carry five Cool Cat pedals, the pedalboard looks like a miniature tweed guitar case in moulded plastic. The two sides come apart and pedals slot neatly and firmly into place, held down by cylindrical plastic rollers that trap

the front lower edges. Four tiny jack leads connect the five, which are powered by a 9V adapter and it all sits firmly on the rubber-footed bottom.

So while it might look a bit cheesy, this is actually a very neat and practical solution.

pedals won't appeal to all, there's no doubting the facilities and the sound quality compare very favourably with pedals that cost a whole lot more.

While we might have our favourites among them, there aren't any makeweights or clunkers. Each pedal has a defined role that it excels at, although some are versatile enough to be used in several roles. If you're looking for distorted sounds, for instance, the Transparent Overdrive, Distortion and Metal pedals all have enough tweakability to make them suited for plenty of different musical genres.

Overall, it must be said that Danelectro has hit it just right with the Cool Cat range. If you're looking for that boutique sound, but you don't want to break the bank, one or more of these very reasonably priced pedals could be just what you need. Maybe they should have called 'em Credit Crunchers instead! 



### Tremolo CT-1

**PRICE:** £44.99

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Tremolo pedal

**CONTROLS:** Speed, depth, hard/soft switch

**CONNECTIONS:** 1/4-inch Input jack, Output jack

**POWER:** PP3 battery or 9V adapter (not supplied)

**JHS 01132 865381**

**www.jhs.co.uk**

### The bottom line

**We like:** Reasonably priced, innovative features on some pedals, overall sound quality

**We disliked:** Fiddly dual-concentric knobs

**Guitarist says:** A robust range of pedals that offers some great sounds and, in some cases – the Metal, Transparent Overdrive and the Distortion – real tonal versatility, all at affordable prices

### Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★







### Vibe CV-1

**PRICE:** £49.99  
**TYPE:** Modulation pedal  
**CONTROLS:** Mix, speed, intensity

#### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Metal CM-1

**PRICE:** £44.99  
**TYPE:** Distortion pedal  
**CONTROLS:** Volume/bass (dual-concentric), treble/mid (dual-concentric), gain

#### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Fuzz CF-1

**PRICE:** £39.99  
**TYPE:** Fuzz pedal  
**CONTROLS:** Volume, tone, fuzz

#### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Drive CD-1

**PRICE:** £29.99  
**TYPE:** Overdrive pedal  
**CONTROLS:** Volume, tone, drive

#### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Transparent Overdrive CTO-1

**PRICE:** £39.99  
**TYPE:** Overdrive pedal  
**CONTROLS:** Volume, treble/bass (dual-concentric), gain

#### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Distortion CD-1

**PRICE:** £44.99  
**TYPE:** Distortion pedal  
**CONTROLS:** Level, gain, treble/bass (dual-concentric)

#### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Metal II CM-2

**PRICE:** £39.99  
**TYPE:** Distortion pedal  
**CONTROLS:** Volume, distortion, hi/lo/off switch

#### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Chorus CC-1

**PRICE:** £49.99  
**TYPE:** Chorus pedal  
**CONTROLS:** Mix/EQ (dual-concentric), speed, depth

#### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★