

ISP TECHNOLOGIES TOTALLY BLUES & FETISH £84 & £89
EFFECTS



iSP Technologies Totally Blues & Fetish

£84 & £89

Two new stompboxes to twist your sound into all kinds of angry noise *by Dave Durban*

It's some time since Guitarist featured a product from audio reinforcement specialists iSP Technologies, but the brand hasn't really enjoyed the market presence in the UK that our positive reviews might have warranted. However, iSP products are now more widely available than before and we've managed to get our hands on this duo from its small range of stompbox effects: the Totally Blues overdrive and Fetish overdrive/distortion pedals.

Outwardly, the iSP aesthetic will be very familiar to any guitar player, with its heavy-duty chrome chassis borrowing from the classic BOSS design. As such, there's easy access to the battery compartment via a

familiar thumbscrew-operated, flip-up switch cover, which contains the battery, safely stowed in its compartment.

Control-wise, both pedals share similar feature sets, each with four identical looking plastic control knobs with three labelled gain, level and tone – the only difference being the Totally Blues has a mojo control and the Fetish a fat control. Cheap feeling pots and plastic shafts accompany the flimsy plastic knobs, though they're securely fixed to the chassis, which should go some way to ensuring long-term hardiness. On/off operation for each is handled via the active/bypass switch and indicated with a simple, though not particularly bright, red LED.

Totally Blues

As the name suggests, the Totally Blues is an overdrive aimed firmly at blues guitar players and features a trio of design twists for added flexibility. Firstly, iSP has added extra amounts of gain for increased sensitivity. Alongside this, the overdrive circuit is configured for asymmetrical clipping for second harmonic enhancement. And finally, there's the Mojo control, which is designed to add depth and fullness to the signal as it's fed into the distortion circuit.

As the name suggests, the Totally Blues is an overdrive pedal aimed firmly at blues guitar players

The Rivals

The **BOSS DB2 Blues Driver** (£75) is both versatile and affordable. **Marshall's Bluesbreaker II** (£50) pays homage to the classic sixties overdrive tones, while **Tone Freak's Severe** (£149) won a Gold Award in issue 324 – it's an exceptional distortion, hand-made in California.

Sounds

We plugged the Totally Blues into a Fender-style Tweed amp with a Strat, with everything at 12 o'clock to start. The TB delivers sweet and clear overdrive in the vein of John Mayer's rhythm/mild-gain tone – it's slightly spongier in attack compared to a Tube Screamer-style overdrive, but gives you that signature bubbling blues tone with ease.

Things get pretty swampy when adjusting the mojo control, and working this in with more gain pushes you into



Is yours workin'? The Mojo control varies depth and fullness



The design of these iSP pedals is very BOSS-inspired

Billy F Gibbons territory. It's a fat-sounding overdrive with a muddied character that works well with single-coils for lead or stabby rhythms. However, it can get a little over-dark with a humbucker-equipped guitar – getting the tone and mojo settings just right is key.

Fetish

As with the Totally Blues, the Fetish has a few things going on inside that help create a more versatile distortion unit. The Fetish employs Field Effect Transistors (FET) to create a soft-clipping gain boost effect just before the distortion circuit. In addition, to help with tone shaping, the distortion circuit utilises a 4558 IC op amp, while the fat control on the Fetish is designed to boost the pedal's low-end.

Sounds

The sound of the Fetish is harder to pin down than the TB. It's got ample amounts of touch sensitivity, yet the general tonality is a lot more acute and immediate than the TB. The overdrive has a fuzzy nature that hangs around the edge of the note, while the low-end floods through the chords aiding its big stadium rock appeal. For more distorted tones, we cranked the gain and the fat control right up. Its appeal is more in the Paul Gilbert distortion area as opposed to the sustaining high-gain madness of a modern metal sound.

Used as a boost, the Fetish adds some uplift to your overdriven tone and, with the level and tone maxed and gain and fat control fully off, there's

even some old-school treble-boost fun to be had.

Verdict

When looking for an overdrive or distortion the options can be somewhat overwhelming. However, choice is never a bad thing and here iSP, with these Totally Blues and Fetish pedals, is offering a slightly different flavour to the equivalent BOSS designs, albeit at a very similar outlay.

The downside is that the control knobs and pots feel low quality, and in a market this competitive you'd expect something a little sturdier. After all, you can gig a BOSS Blues Driver for decades without so much as a whimper. Sound-wise, however, they have appealing character. **G**

The Bottom Line

iSP Technologies Totally Blues pedal

We like: Tweak-ability; bubbling tone; sensitivity
We dislike: Not overly versatile; slightly dark at times
Guitarist says: A niche pedal with a great range of less-aggressive blues tones

iSP Technologies Fetish pedal

We like: Versatility; looks; Gilbert-style distortion
We dislike: Overdrive gets a bit grainy at times
Guitarist says: A late-eighties-voiced distortion with versatile boost, treble boost and overtones



iSP Technologies Totally Blues

PRICE: £84
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Guitar overdrive pedal
CONTROLS: Gain, level, tone, mojo
CONNECTIONS: Input, output jacks
POWER: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
DIMENSIONS: 127 (l) x 67.5 (w) x 55.1mm (h)
RANGE OPTIONS: There's also the Decimator (£99) and Decimator G String (£159) noise reduction pedals
Highly Strung
01235 762000
www.highlystrung.co.uk

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Features ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



iSP Technologies Fetish

PRICE: £89
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Guitar distortion/overdrive pedal
CONTROLS: Gain, level, tone, fat
CONNECTIONS: Input, output jacks
POWER: DC adaptor (not supplied) or 9V battery
DIMENSIONS: 127(l) x 67.5 (w) x 55.1mm (h)

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Features ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★