

# Quicktest

**Welcome to** Guitarist's regular round-up of the best of the rest of the gear that's passed through our hands this issue



## JMI Rangemaster £199

JMI send in the clones

CONTACT: JMI PHONE: 01132 438165 WEB: [www.jmiamplification.com](http://www.jmiamplification.com)

Probably the most feted of all treble boosters, the original 1960s Dallas Rangemaster has inspired numerous emulations in stompbox form, but this latest clone from JMI reproduces the original in all its squat, metal-boxed glory, complete with a single NOS OC44 Germanium transistor. Designed to sit atop your amp, the Rangemaster has a guitar input, captive output lead just over two feet long, a simple on/off switch and a single knob to set the boost.

### Sounds

While it will have an effect on a clean amp, thickening it up and adding a bit of trebly grit with higher settings on the boost knob, the Rangemaster really comes into its own when used with an already overdriven valve amp, boosting certain frequencies while simultaneously driving the amp harder – the result being a gloriously crunchy sound, rich in harmonics. Originally designed for use with darker

sounding British amps such as the Marshalls of the era, it's especially effective in that role (check out Clapton's Bluesbreaker sound). But we think it's really good driving a brighter-voiced cranked Fender Super Champ further into overdrive heaven with a fat singing lead sound, where the harmonics can be teased out with ease – great stuff!

### Verdict

There are plenty of booster pedals that may be a more practical option onstage, but the Rangemaster has the mojo – it sounds great and looks cool. With only 100 being made in a limited edition run, you'll need to grab one fast. [TC]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Great sound; accurate looks

**We dislike:** Not exactly practical for onstage use

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



## Tascam US-100 £92

An audio interface tailor-made for guitarists

CONTACT: Tascam UK PHONE: 01923 438888 WEB: [www.tascam.co.uk](http://www.tascam.co.uk)

Some audio interfaces can stream multiple channels of audio simultaneously, but if you only ever intend to record one mono or stereo instrument at a time, or just practice using software amp sims, a simple two in/two out unit such as Tascam's new US-100 USB 2.0 interface is all that you'll need. With a dedicated Hi-Z guitar input on the front panel, the US-100 is laid out with guitarists in mind, but is capable of taking any sound source you wish to throw at it, as the back panel sports XLR and 6.4mm jack microphone inputs as well as phono sockets that can be switched to take stereo line-level signals or even the RIAA output from a turntable – great if you want to transfer any old vinyl to digital formats. Audio output is via the rear panel phono line output or the mini jack headphone socket on the front.

### Sounds

The US-100 is class compliant, so you don't need any special

drivers to connect to your computer. Input and output levels are easily set by a pair of front panel knobs, while a third knob sets the balance between the input signal and what you're hearing back from the computer, so you can instantly set how much of your dry guitar you can hear when recording to counteract any latency delays.

### Verdict

Solidly built and with decent sound quality, this is an ideal interface for connecting your guitar to a computer, while additionally being capable of many other tasks. [TC]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Simplicity of design – all a guitarist needs is on the front panel; inexpensive; versatile connectivity; robust aluminium construction

**We dislike:** Nothing at this price point

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

# Sonic Research Turbo Tuner ST-200 £119

An affordable multi-featured strobe tuner

CONTACT: MM Music PHONE: 02380 339668 WEB: www.sonic-research.com

With a small footprint, the ST-200 is ideally sized for inclusion on an already crammed pedalboard but, thanks to its accuracy and expansive features, it's just as useful on your set-up table.

There's a single on/off footswitch, mono in/mono out (muted, true bypass) and mains adapted or battery power (with low-power LED indicator). The red LED display, when in chromatic mode, shows the note, while a surrounding circle of LEDs race in a clockwise (sharp) or anti-clockwise (flat) direction. When the circular display stops rotating, or very nearly, you're in tune.

That alone would be more than enough for most of us, but

the ST-200 also offers user-editable open tuning modes, flat tuning (down six semitones), reference pitch change, and a total of five tempered tunings can be inputted.

### In Use

Below the screen are two push-buttons that scroll you through the six different tuning modes: chromatic, guitar, bass and three custom settings (factory set as standard guitar, drop D and six-string bass). All except the chromatic mode can be programmed for special open tunings (with up to nine strings) and/or a custom temperament, where each string's pitch can be 'offset' – a principle that's used to

'sweeten' standard equal temperament. All of the modes, bar chromatic, display the string number and not the note.

### Verdict

The ST-200 proves highly accurate, quick and responsive. The ability to load in up to five different tempered tunings – none of which are programmed for you – raises the game into a far more sophisticated tuning sphere. Not everyone will want or need that feature, and swapping modes isn't that stage-friendly, but at this price it's unique. [DB]



### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Size; accuracy; user-inputted tunings; price  
**We dislike:** A Buzz Feiten preset would be useful

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

# Tech 21 Boost DLA £219

If lo-fi's your bag, you need to hear this beauty

CONTACT: Rocky Road PHONE: 01494 535333 WEB: www.tech21nyc.com

Tech 21's revamped Boost DLA pedal has been upgraded with a few extra, but important, features. The basic pedal remains the same: all metal casing, not overly heavy or large and ideal for your pedalboard. The six rotary controls – mix, feedback, tone, time, level and flutter – will be familiar to most, the pedal's name coming from the 9dB level boost on the level control. The new features for this model, however, add a tap tempo footswitch plus two smaller push switches: 'trails' and 'triplets'. The tap tempo works like any other, and with the triplet engaged you're into instant Edge-like rhythms or that cleaner country bounce-back effect. The trails push-button lets you decide if you want the delay to stop when you hit bypass or the repeats to naturally fade.

### Sounds

With its advertised 'lo-fi analogue technology' don't expect to find pristine digital delays. Even with the tone fully up there's a warmth and richness here that sounds so right with a single-coil guitar and a cleaner or slightly crunchy valve amp. The delay time maxes out at 1,000msec, but the control doesn't rush things, so setting slapback and small room ambience is relatively easy. Flutter adds some modulation to the delays and the level boost has enough kick to lift a solo part, but may not (depending on your sound and where you place it in your set-up) replace your standard clean boost. Anyone who's familiar with classic analogue delay pedals won't have a problem getting the best out of this – and that includes evoking

all manner of mayhem from the feedback and time controls – just watch those speakers!

### Verdict

With a great feature set of highly musical, usable sonic options, this old-school sounding delay should be high on your list. [DB]



### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Tap tempo, triplet and trails features; the sound, sound, sound...  
**We dislike:** It's not cheap, but quality rarely is

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



## Coopersonic Dirtbox £85

Former bike makers offer a different type of pedal power

CONTACT: Coopersonic PHONE: 01159 178575 WEB: www.coopersonic.com

Coopersonic is an independent, Nottingham-based firm whose first pedal, the Valveslapper distortion (complete with thrust, balls, tits and ass controls!), has found its way onto the pedalboards of Arctic Monkeys and Spiritualized among others. The latest pedal is the Dirtbox transistor overdrive (this time with level, dirt and bite controls): a solidly-built, medium-sized pedal running from a 9V battery or a standard power adaptor.

### Sounds

Coopersonic says the Dirtbox is designed to have a sound lying somewhere between the Colorsound Overdrive and Lovetone's Big Cheese – not bad parents for an unruly child in our book and this one is

certainly capable of throwing a tantrum. There's an enormous amount of gain, while juxtaposition of the level and dirt controls serves up varying amounts of distorted sound from fairly mild overdrive to full-on fuzz – especially raucous with the bite turned up. That knob either boosts the low-end or the top, adding quite strident treble boost in the last segment of travel, so is well capable of dialling in just the right sound for your amp.

### Verdict

With the majority of boutique builders in the US, it's a nice change to see home-grown talent not only making a go of it, but creating a pedal that has its own distinct character. Buy the box and dish the dirt. [TC]



### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Hand-built quality; versatile range of sounds  
**We dislike:** Removing four screws and baseplate to get at the battery

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

## Chrome-Frets £12.99

String conditioner and fretboard prep all in one package

CONTACT: Chrome Frets PHONE: 07769 642656 WEB: chromefrets.co.uk

Richard Hincliffe's Chrome-Frets package includes a spray bottle of Teflowax, applicator pad with chamois leather and blue micro fibre faces, and a small washable polishing cloth, along with full instructions.

### In Use

The key to the product is the Teflowax – “a liquid blend of mineral wax, cleaning solvent and PTFE polymer coating sometimes known as Teflon.” Spray a few squirts onto the leather face and run up and down your strings. You then rub the strings with the opposite blue pad. Then take the blue cloth and rub that up and down the fingerboard between the strings and finally wrap it around each string to clean underneath.

Its gunk removing abilities are first class – we've been

using it regularly over the past months on various guitars and each time that post-gig 'haze' is removed, strings seem to last longer and, importantly, your guitar feels good to play.

But that's not all. By spraying a little Teflowax onto the cloth and rubbing up and down the 'board again, it'll nicely clean dulled frets and condition the 'board itself. And if you like the feel of lubricated strings, spray a little Teflowax onto the felt pad on the bottle cap and apply to the strings, wiping off any residue; the Teflowax can also be used (sparingly) to lubricate nuts and saddles before you re-string.

### Verdict

Follow the instructions included, avoid applying to

worn bare maple fretboards, and you have yourself a neatly conceived string and fingerboard conditioner system that works a treat and will keep your strings feeling and sounding new for much longer. A real no-brainer. [DB]



### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Concept and execution; clean instructions  
**We dislike:** Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



## Belcat Tube-20R £229.95

An affordable Fender-inspired amp from Belcat

CONTACT: Gear4Music PHONE: 08431 550800 WEB: www.gear4music.com



**Belcat** will be a new name to most players on our shores, though the brand has recently struck a UK distribution deal with Gear4Music.

On test here we have the Belcat Tube-20R – an all-valve 20-watt RMS, single-channel combo with slick sixties TV-front styling, a vintage-style grill cloth and durable black vinyl covering.

The Tube-20R's chrome control panel mirrors that of the Hot Rod Deluxe, one of Fender's best known modern amplifiers. It continues on this path by offering a similarly straightforward feature-set – there's a master volume, gain, reverb and a manually switchable boost button, while the EQ section offers treble, middle and bass controls.

Inside, Belcat uses Russian-made Electro-Harmonix valves – the same grade valves employed by many high end manufacturers. This should add to its tonal quality and reliability. There are two 6BQ5 power valves – an alternative to the EL84 – and three 12AX7s in the preamp stage. Alongside this is a custom-designed Celestion 12-inch speaker.

### Sounds

The Tube-20R has that modern Fender sound down to a tee: lush and expansive spring reverb with sweet clean tones that blend a sprightly top end with a comfortable mid-range. The Tube-20R has more bite and grit than you'd expect – the overall tone is more mid-Atlantic than Fender Tweed –

and it's very evident with the boost control, which is warm and cutting, yet highly usable for classic and heavier rock.

### Verdict

This is a well-priced, well-built and attractive 20-watt amp more than capable of small-to-medium sized gigs, while offering good Fender-y tones with plenty of gain on tap. The absence of a footswitch option

for the boost control, however, is undoubtedly an issue for gigging musicians. [DD]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Build; Fender-inspired tones; looks

**We dislike:** No footswitching options for the boost control

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

## Tonefreak Severe £149

A severely good distortion from the Californian firm

CONTACT: Guitar Guitar PHONE: 0191 222 0466 WEB: www.guitarguitar.co.uk



In **issue 322**, we awarded Tone Freak's Abunai 2 overdrive our Guitarist Choice award.

So impressed were we that we had to have first dibs on its latest distortion, the Severe. The bronze-finished, hand-built pedal is Tone Freak's answer for heavy distortion, but actually offers a whole spectrum of gain tones.

The Severe has a three-way toggle switch that offers asymmetrical, symmetrical and no-clipping options. There's also a three-way 'brite' switch that dictates the level of brightness available from the tone control – especially useful for those with varying amp set-ups. Additionally there are level and gain controls, plus a bright blue on/off LED. Power is via a single 9V battery or a 2.1mm centre negative pin power adaptor (not included).

### Sounds

With the gain control creeping over halfway, the Severe delivers a tight, musical distortion that will set sparks flying for heavy rock and metal players alike. It possesses a sweet American overdrive core, and cuts like a muscular British amp on 11, which sets the scene for incredible metal rhythm versatility and brooding Van Halen-style soloing. There's no flubbing-out in the low end or definition loss with lower tunings. But attenuate the gain and we get one of the most musical American-indie overdrive tones around.

### Verdict

A distortion that offers players of a heavier persuasion an all-encompassing and musical option for their rhythm and lead styles. Try one! [TC]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Build quality; incredible high-gain abilities; musical American-style crunch; price

**We dislike:** Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★