

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



Timber Tones wooden plectrums

£3 each

Need more wood in your tone?

CONTACT: Wild Child **PHONE:** 01273 702224 **WEB:** www.wildchilddistribution.com

Hardly a new concept, picks made from exotic woods (or indeed many other non-synthetic materials) offer a variety of subtle tonal shades, not to mention a quite specific feel and appearance.

There are currently 18 picks in the range (along with keyrings and pendants) that include well-known guitar hardwoods such as curly maple, African mahogany and ebony plus lesser used types such as zebrawood and lignum vitae. Each is well-machined, some feel smoother than others, and they are "sealed with wax ensuring a firm, non-slip grip, then treated to a generous coating of tung oil to protect against sweat and dirt."

In Use

With some subtle tonal differences between them, to be honest they all sound pretty much in the same ballpark – quite an attacking but weighty and precise sound that's noticeably different to our usual 1.5mm thick Dunlop Gator

Grip, which has less attack but also a little less weight to the sound. These are thick (they vary between 2.25-2.55mm) and stiff; if you like a little give you won't find it here. Consequently you'll hear (and feel) more difference than with thinner more flexible picks. But if you're a fan of rigid, thick 'jazz' picks you should give 'em a try; nice grip too – some more than others.

Verdict

If you like the look and feel of natural exotic wood and really are a tone-hound, you'll have fun with these. But at six times the price of a good Dunlop pick, don't lose them! **[DB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Organic woody vibe; tonal differences. They
We dislike: Too thick for some; not cheap

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

T-Rex ToneBug Distortion **£95**

A pint-sized addition to the T-Rex family

CONTACT: Westside **PHONE:** 0141 248 4812 **WEB:** www.westside.com

The T-Rex ToneBug

Distortion is the latest ToneBug stompbox to be introduced into the Denmark-based effects manufacturer's stripped-down, more affordable effects line.

Like the Overdrive and Reverb ToneBugs (reviewed in issue 317), it maintains the cute fifties retro aesthetic, solid yet with a small footprint metal chassis and neat little retro-futuristic control knobs. The controls are straightforward with only gain, tone and level controls, while the pedal's on/off operation is indicated via a perfectly visible oblong red LED above the feature-set. An easy access battery compartment houses a 9V battery, though the ToneBug also has a 9V mains adapted input around the back.

Sounds

The Distortion's incredibly interactive tone control is the key to creating various flavours of distortion here. With everything set around 12 o'clock, it displays plenty of depth and warmth in the mid-range but maintains impressive transparency for heavy rocking chord work. It nails that Foo Fighters' Colour And The Shape distortion almost to a tee – it's chewy and aggressive in the mids with a hard low-end response.

Adding more gain and increasing the tone control's



presence really sharpens things up, giving a more modern metal distortion tone. It's responsive, accurate and sustaining – perfect for brutal chugging or searing lead playing.

Verdict

For the reasonable outlay you're getting a seriously versatile distortion that's solidly built, more refined than a BOSS DS-1 and takes up little room on your 'board. Overall, it delivers distortion tones worthy of a more boutique price tag. **[DD]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Looks; versatile distortion tones; price
We dislike: Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Shubb Lite Capo SHL1 **£25.99**

Guitarist
CHOICE

A lightweight design for electric and acoustic

CONTACT: JHS PHONE: 0113 286 5381 WEB: www.jhs.co.uk

Last issue we looked at the NS Capo Lite, a unit made from thermoplastic with a clever screw-wheel design. Here we check out the lightweight version of Shubb's original capo design that's fashioned from aerospace-grade aluminium.

The lever-based operation is simple to use and is intended to recreate the same areas of pressure that a fretting hand would, and the trick to using a Shubb is to ensure that just the right amount of pressure is applied to the strings. Too much will pull them out of tune, and too little won't allow the strings to be fretted properly. A quick snap of the lever secures the capo in place, and it

comes away from the neck just as easily when required to do so.

In Use

There are a number of Shubb users among the Guitarist team and we can report that the capo deserves its place as the go-to unit in this regard. The Lite lives up to its name, with the overall performance remaining excellent despite the reduced mass. Guitars we tried it on included one of the Yamaha SG18s from last issue plus a couple of Fender Strats and the Gibson Appetite Les Paul and we have no problems of any description to report. It's well suited to the majority of acoustics too.



Verdict

There are several other brands of capo we should draw attention to, such as Kyser, Planet Waves and Dunlop, and all are of a similarly high quality to Shubb products. The choice of capo is a personal one but you really should include this unit on your must-try list. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Ergonomic design; lightweight; fair price
We dislike: Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Vox amPlug Cabinet **£21**

An impossibly cute and surprisingly toneful idea

CONTACT: Korg UK PHONE: 01908 857100 WEB: www.voxamps.com

The range of Vox amPlug headphone amps for guitar and bass now number six. They offer a compact and portable solution to sounds straight into your ears, yet the introduction of this new cabinet enables you to use your amPlug as a tabletop mini guitar rig.

It's made from 10mm hardboard and the internal three-inch speaker kicks out 0.7 watts. Powered by a standard 9V battery or optional PSU, the amPlug's jack slots into a socket set into the cab's top panel. You then plug your guitar into the input on the cabinet's side.

The amPlug's output is linked to the cab via a micro lead with volume, gain and tone controllable from the amPlug

in the usual way. When all fitted together the entire rig measures just under 15cm in height and looks great.

Sounds

Common sense tells us that a tiny three-inch speaker would only be able to provide a wasp-in-a-bottle style of sound; fortunately, thanks to the tonal quality of all amPlugs, the performance is better than we'd expected.

The AC30 amPlug still gives a discernible level of Voxy chime, although we did have to roll the tone control all the way off to counteract the extra treble, and the Metal unit gives a genuinely impressive tone that is surprisingly dynamic.



Verdict

Each amPlug costs £46 which isn't inconsiderable when added to the cab's £21. There are cheaper, more versatile, better sounding practice tools available in the digital realm, but the sheer cool factor can't be denied – who wouldn't want one sat on their table? [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Look and vibe; price; ease-of-use
We dislike: The tone, while perfectly acceptable, is an obvious compromise

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Michael Kelly Club Custom 4 Bass £425

An electro-acoustic bass with great looks and a natural sound to match

CONTACT: Rosetti PHONE: 01376 550033 WEB: www.rosetti.co.uk

With a solid cedar top and beautiful laminate burl ash back and sides, this is one attractive bass. Its quality vibe is further enhanced by a solid abalone inlay around the soundhole, wood binding throughout, a white and black coachline around the body and a Club inlay in abalone and pearl at the third fret.



The full 864mm (34-inch)-scale mahogany neck employs a two-way adjustable truss rod plus two graphite rods, a rosewood fingerboard and 22 medium-sized frets. Sealed-gear tuners and a small headstock design complete the well thought through design.

Sounds

The natural acoustic voice is warm and rich, and plugged in has a well-

balanced output from each string. The Fishman electronics, specifically designed for acoustic bass, include the onboard MKAB preamp, which is quite basic – with no tuner but four EQ sliders and a master volume as well as a battery indicator LED. All the sounds are warm and sumptuous, there's plenty of variation and thankfully no high-end harshness. Note clarity is superb but the overall

sound is 100 per cent acoustic-biased – just as it should be.

Verdict

Acoustic basses are always unwieldy but this Kelly Club is particularly well-designed and crafted and relatively comfortable in action. It sounds very good (especially amped) and although the price doesn't include a case (a £59 extra) and additional £10 will get you the the five-string version. [RN]

The Bottom Line

We like: Design; playability; strong versatile sounds

We dislike: No tuner on the built-in preamp

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Rory Gallagher Facelift £14.99

Faux aging for the indecisive...

CONTACT: JHS PHONE: 0113 286 5381 WEB: www.guitarfacelift.com

Facelift provides a wide choice of overlays that can be affixed to part of a Stratocaster, Telecaster or Yamaha Pacifica's body – typically the area behind the bridge to above the pickguard – to offer an instant custom look. The overlay can be easily removed and returned to its original packaging without leaving any sticky residue whatsoever on your guitar.

This is the third in Facelift's Signature Series – following the initial introduction of two Status Quo overlays that recreate Rossi and Parfitt's battered Teles – and is officially endorsed by both Fender and the estate of the late and great Irishman.

"The Facelift is a true image replication of Rory's prized instrument," says Rory's bother Donal. "Its weathered

appearance was gained from blood, sweat and tears during his constant touring of the globe."

In Use

The packaging actually gives an unintentionally false perception of the area covered by the Gallagher Facelift; in practice, the end result isn't quite as impressive as we'd hoped. On a Fender Strat (a vintage white Mexican seventies reissue) the Facelift lent the instrument a rather amateurish look due to the colour clash. When we tried it on a sunburst sample, though, it was far more convincing – worth bearing in mind.

Verdict

Facelifts of SRV's First Wife or Clapton's Blackie Strats are



surely imminent and as long as you use the concept merely as a symbol of your own affiliation to an artist rather than a serious attempt to transform your guitar into Rory's Strat, you'll have some fun. It's cheaper than a Fender Gallagher Tribute model too... [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Good concept; great price; officially endorsed

We dislike: Unconvincing on non-sunburst guitars

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★