

DELAY PEDALS**1 DIGITECH TIMEBENDER**£316 WWW.DIGITECH.COM

WE SAID: DigiTech has brought a truly innovative and musical delay processor into the arena. You should definitely check this one out!

★★★★★

2 BEHRINGER DD600 DIGITAL DELAY£45 WWW.BEHRINGER.COM

WE SAID: You get 11 different modes, including a reverse mode for tripped out psychedelic weirdness. Heavy.

★★★★★

3 DIGITECH DL8£161 WWW.DIGITECH.COM

WE SAID: The Looper part of this pedal is a gas. We played with it for hours and we also loved the Beatlesque reverse delay.

★★★★★

4 AKAI E2 HEADRUSH£129 WWW.AKAIPRO.COM

WE SAID: The E2 is a three-pronged attack combining tape echo, delay and looping. KT Tunstall loves it, and at this price so can you.

★★★★★

5 DAMAGE CONTROL TIMELINE£399 WWW.DAMAGECONTROLUSA.COM

WE SAID: The rich valve-processing, variety of sounds and build quality had a real effect on us.

★★★★★

**MINI VALVE AMPS****1 MARSHALL CLASS 5**£335 WWW.MARSHALLAMPS.COM

WE SAID: Marshall faces competition, but if you're happy with its features, you'll get a great quality, UK-made product from a heritage brand.

★★★★★

2 BLACKSTAR HT-5£299 WWW.BLACKSTARAMPLIFICATION.COM

WE SAID: The HT-5 sounds every bit as good as Blackstar intended, and you get some high-end features that justify its price tag.

★★★★★

3 VOX AC4TV£218 WWW.VOXAMPS.COM

WE SAID: There's no sound like the roar of a Vox breaking into overdrive and the AC4 proves this brand is the daddy for British flavoured bite.

★★★★★

4 BLACKHEART KILLER ANT£196 WWW.BLACKHEARTENG.COM

WE SAID: Starting off warm and jangly, the output gets fat as you twist the volume. We love it.

★★★★★

5 PEAVEY VALVE KING ROYAL 8£154 WWW.PEAVEY.CO.UK

WE SAID: Whichever way the dials are pointing, this combo offers a level of attack at odds with its appearance.

★★★★★

**BUYER'S GUIDE**

A round-up of the best kit from the last year

ELECTRO ACOUSTIC GUITARS**YAMAHA NTX 700**£535 WWW.YAMAHA.CO.UK

1 WE SAID: From strumming chords with a pick, to fingerpicking and drop D pedalling, playing this guitar is extremely fun, and has a strangely creative effect too. Die-hard classical guitarists would probably be better off looking at the sister NCX range, but the NTX 700 offers a different acoustic sound at a mid-level price point. In short, we love it.

★★★★★

FENDER TIM ARMSTRONG HELLCAT£325 WWW.FENDER.COM

2 WE SAID: The acoustic qualities of the Hellcat make it a very playable instrument, but it scores highest when you plug it in. If you're a gigging electric/sometimes acoustic player who wants an affordable additional guitar then the Hellcat is for you.

★★★★★

FRESHMAN APOLLO 2 OCB£399 WWW.FRESHMANGUITARS.CO.UK

3 WE SAID: If you're in the market for a reasonably priced, killer sounding, mid-range electro acoustic, this baby ticks all the boxes. Its playability is superb; from open chords to rocket fuelled bluesy lead breaks, this guitar lets you play with ease.

★★★★★

TANGLEWOOD TSM1£1,199 WWW.TANGLEWOOD.CO.UK

4 WE SAID: The auditorium-shaped body is comfortable to play and delivers a great balance of low end and the elusive sparkle that comes from a totally solid acoustic. Strum harder for a punchy boom that remains tight at high volumes.

★★★★★

FAITH SATURN CUTAWAY ELECTRO£659 WWW.FAITHGUITARS.CO.UK

5 WE SAID: The flawless finish reveals the skill and professionalism that's gone into building this guitar. Its appeal is not only in the looks department though – the Saturn is also very comfortable to play with its smooth neck and cutaway body.

★★★★★

HOT TO BUY ELECTRO ACOUSTICS

When buying an electro, consider playability, comfort (on a strap too) and sound quality. Plug it into a good quality, full range amp in the shop. The preamp will be the key to shaping your live sound, so look for one with a multi-band EQ and phase switch. Try a few different electronic systems – piezo, mic, etc.

