

1 STACKED POTS

WHILE THE lack of an LED on the knobs might make navigation impossible in a dark environment, stacking the gain and level knobs saves on space

2 SPEAKER EMULATED OUTPUT

THIS SOCKET adds a great deal of functionality for tracking guitars and adds up to a great option for those of you looking to record your work

3 EC8883

THE WARM flow of a valve is the heart and soul of the HT-METAL's tone that's so hot you could cook a steak just by wafting it in front of your amp's speaker



AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Valve distortion pedal

EFFECTS: Clean boost, overdrive/distortion

CONTROLS: Level, Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble, Infinite Shape Feature, two-channel footswitch, Clean/OD

SOCKETS: Input, output, speaker emulated output

POWER: DC adaptor (supplied)

CONTACT: www.blackstaramps.co.uk



BLACKSTAR HT-METAL

£179

Holy Moly! Has Blackstar just gone and put together the ultimate distortion pedal?

WHEN TG was sent this extreme gain pedal from Blackstar, we took precautions. Upon opening the box we called TG's Ed Mitchell to borrow his safety goggles; pets were ushered outdoors, tarp was laid down. Blackstar means business with the HT-METAL, capitalising on endorsements with dudes such as black metal titan Ihsahn and Dimmu Borgir's Silenoz. All signs point to some thermonuclear gain action.

The HT-METAL is a two-channel/three-mode distortion pedal. There are two channels on

available with this ferocious offering, but you'll find that Channel One has a Clean/OD switch that enables you to use the pedal as a boost in Clean mode and dial in some hot bite as you turn the gain clockwise. Reminiscent of the limited Gus G signature HT-BLACKFIRE distortion that TG fell in love with last year (the HT-METAL now supersedes it as Blackstar's official entry for the title of The Ultimate Heavy Metal Distortion Pedal.

It takes a minute or two to get used to the two stacked pots controlling gain and level, the

fattest of which controls Channel One while the skinny one on top controls Channel Two. The control panel is laid out like a Blackstar amp with Gain and Level, Bass, Middle and Treble, plus the patented Infinite Shape Feature (ISF). The ISF control works like a Trans-Atlantic tone translator, changing the character of your tone from a tight American sound when turned fully counter clockwise to a mid-rich British tone when fully clockwise.

Punching in Channel One's Clean mode is like sticking your tone on a hot radiator, adding layers of warmth and just a little break-up when the gain is cranked. Blues players may be surprised that a pedal built for blood and thunder can also do sweet. Channel One's OD mode is all about throaty, expressive crunch and, depending on where you set the ISF knob, you can even get some nice 'n' sleazy American rock tones or a blue-collar AC/DC bark.

Navigate your way to the high-gain stages of Channel Two and besides realising that the HT-METAL's USP is its ability to turn your signal into a gnawing

musical chainsaw, you get the feeling that Blackstar is actually underselling this – the HT-METAL is more than just a pedal for musical extremists. Indeed, its comprehensive sweep of not just useable but great, inspiring tones should be put upon all players.

Sure, for many it will be difficult to look past the moody exterior and the extremity of Channel Two. Sheesh, there is more gain here than you would ever really need (enough to saturate your tone) and it's obviously perfect for metal. If your wardrobe is 100 per cent black and you use words like necro and brutal to describe your mum's cooking, this one's for you. But we'd like to think there's something for everyone here, because the HT-METAL is truly one of the finest distortion pedals we've ever stepped on.

Jonathan Horsley



The HT-METAL is more than just a pedal for musical extremists

SUMMARY	FEATURES	VALUE FOR MONEY	BUILD QUALITY	USEABILITY	OVERALL RATING
	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★