

Hermida Zendrive \$150

The perfect blues tone in a box? Not far away at all... by Simon Bradley



The Zendrive overdrive responds to the 'attack' of your playing

THE LAST TIME A PEDAL CAME out of nowhere and hit our tone button bang on was the beyond excellent Klon Centaur way back in issue 250. We can now add this gorgeous stompbox to our

list, as the Zendrive from Alfonso Hermida is a unit so full of toneful overdrives that players such as Robben Ford, Carlos Santana and Brad Paisley have added one to their rigs.

As with all pedals of this ilk, it's less a mere 'guitar effect' and more of a musical instrument in its own right as it responds to the severity with which you strike the strings. What's more, the voice pot, the Zendrive's ace in the hole, offers tonal colours reminiscent of amps from a Fender Bassman all the way to spongy EL34 Marshall territory. It's small enough to fit into a cluttered gig-bag and the steel chassis hides a nine-volt battery beneath its base plate.

SOUNDS: It's quicker to outline what the Zendrive can't do rather than go into detail concerning the positives: if hard rock or metal is your milieu, then stay away. Everyone else be prepared for an aural experience of the highest

| HERMIDA ZENDRIVE | TEST RESULTS |
|------------------|--------------|
| Build quality | ★★★★★ |
| Features | ★★★★★ |
| In use | ★★★★★ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |

- **WE LIKED** The sheer breadth of musical tones available
- **WE DISLIKED** No UK distributor as yet

quality as the drives, both subtle and forceful, are so good you could be set for life. It even offers a clean boost too.

Verdict

Although only available online right now, we suggest you take the plunge and buy one, especially if blues is your thing: we're only just into 2006 and we're hard pushed to imagine what's going to impress us more this year.

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

KEY INFO HERMIDA ZEN DRIVE **PRICE:** \$150 **TYPE:** HAND-MADE OVERDRIVE PEDAL **WEB:** WWW.HERMIDAAUDIO.COM

Alpine MusicSafe earplugs £13.99

Protect your hearing and your career in music. Pardon, etc? by Simon Bradley



Plug in, tune up, rock out, safe in the knowledge that your ears are protected

OH YES, A LOUD GUITAR CAN BE the most exciting sound in the world, but if you've ever come out of a rehearsal or gig with a ringing in your ears, that's not necessarily a good sign.

Our ability to hear comes basically from three tiny bones – the ear ossicles – that connect the outer ear cavity with the ear drum itself. The bones vibrate and these vibrations are interpreted into sounds we can understand by a structure called the cochlea. All well and good, but although the humble lug 'ole is a resilient organ, it can be damaged – sometimes permanently – by regular and prolonged exposure to loud sounds: your cranked amplifier being one example.

To avoid damage, we strongly recommend investing in a set of earplugs, and the good news is that technology has come on sufficiently to ensure that use of plugs doesn't impair your actual hearing to anything more than a subtle degree: gone are the days of filling your cranium fins with Blu-tac and putting your trust in luck.

IN USE: These MusicSafe plugs offer two pairs of attenuation filters that offer varying degrees of protection, two plugs that can be easily trimmed to size and

| MUSICSAFE EARPLUGS | TEST RESULTS |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Build quality | ★★★★★ |
| Features | ★★★★★ |
| In use | ★★★★★ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |

- **WE LIKED** The great price and efficiency of performance
- **WE DISLIKED** Makes your ears seem like they're nailed on... nothing else

a specific carrying case to boot. Needless to say, although minimal music loss is to be expected (hi-hats and super-low bass at the opposite ends of the aural scale), we can report that we were very pleased with the plugs.

Verdict

At £13.99 if bought online (or around £20 from an actual store), these are great value for money and, regardless of what music you listen to or your band plays, you owe yourself a set of quality earplugs... like these!

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

KEY INFO ALPINE MUSICSAFE EARPLUGS **PRICE:** £13.99 **TYPE:** EARPLUGS **WEB:** WWW.SENSORCOM.COM

Planet Waves Pro-Winder tuner £8.99

Another entry to the 'Why didn't I think of that?' book of great ideas by Simon Bradley

STRING WINDERS HAVE LONG been a vital part of a guitarist's tool bag, and if you've ever had to go back to winding machine heads manually you'll know just what a chore it is. And you have to do it six times!

Trust Planet Waves – the purveyor of all manner of top ideas and designs – to include into a lengthened winder a strobe tuner, a set of snips, a string puller and a bridge-pin puller. Genius.

The tuner is set into the base of the actual winder and operates via the vibration of the strings. You can use one

of two modes – Sweep or Strobe – and, thanks to a perfectly clear display based around two LEDs, you can tune during the re-stringing process. The Pro-Winder tuner comes with a lithium battery and the tuner turns itself off after four minutes of inactivity.

IN USE: As long as there's contact between the winder head and the tuning peg of the string you're tuning, the Pro-Winder works perfectly. A series of note letters are written in a circle, and a green LED will illuminate that closest to the pitch of the string. A separate red LED will orbit the circumference as you tune, coming to rest when you're there. The tuner can also be calibrated from 435-445, and it works on acoustics too.

★★★★★
Guitarist CHOICE



Verdict

As with the majority of Planet Waves gizmos, we can't recommend this highly enough. The string winder is dead: long live the Pro-Winder tuner!

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★

Winder, tuner, snipper and pin-puller – the Planet Waves Pro-Winder has got the lot

| PRO-WINDER TUNER | TEST RESULTS |
|---|--------------|
| Build quality | ★★★★★ |
| Features | ★★★★★ |
| In use | ★★★★★ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |
| <p>■ WE LIKED The ergonomic and contemporary design</p> <p>■ WE DISLIKED That it can't actually play the gig for you too...</p> | |

KEY INFO PLANET WAVES PRO-WINDER TUNER **PRICE:** £8.99 **TYPE:** GUITAR TOOL WITH TUNER **WEB:** WWW.PLANETWAVES.COM

Planet Waves Cable Station solderless pedalboard kit £49.95

Does this spell an end to signal loss and spaghetti? by Chris Vinnicombe

IF YOU'RE ANYTHING LIKE US, even when you've spent an eternity perfecting the right combination of guitar, amplifier and stompboxes, you'll still be guilty of utilising the cheapest possible sealed patch leads to wire the whole thing together. The new Cable Station from Planet Waves provides everything that you need to give those long-suffering effects the luxury treatment they deserve. The kit comes with 10 right-angled gold-plated jack plugs, 10 feet of quality, shielded cable and a handy cable cutter.

IN USE: Our relatively stripped down pedalboard features just a tuner, MXR Microamp, Rat and Line 6 delay so we only need to assemble three patch leads. It's worth noting that due to the thickness and durability of the supplied cable, you lose a little mobility and flexibility compared to thinner, cheaper leads, so be sure to judge the length with care. Once cut, simply twist the cable ends into the plugs and turn the screw in the side of each plug until it locks in. Powered up, our 'board not only looks more dapper than before, but there's an audible improvement in high-end fidelity and dynamic response.

Verdict

Some argue that solderless cables are more open to the adverse effects of the elements, but after several gigs with the Planet Waves system, we've no complaints thus far. As the kit only provides the plugs for 10 leads, players

with more sprawling pedalboards or rack systems may find that they need to invest in extra plugs. But if you want a neater pedalboard without tonal degradation, this is among the best solutions we've seen.

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★

Preserve your precious tone with the Cable Station pedalboard lead kit



| CABLE STATION | TEST RESULTS |
|--|--------------|
| Components | ★★★★★ |
| Performance | ★★★★★ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |
| <p>■ WE LIKED Tangible tonal improvement; cutting tool produces neat results</p> <p>■ WE DISLIKED Players with big boards or racks need more plugs</p> | |

KEY INFO PLANET WAVES CABLE STATION **PRICE:** £49.95 **TYPE:** SOLDERLESS PEDALBOARD CABLE KIT **WEB:** SHOPOFTHEWORLD.COM