



BLUES OVERDRIVE PEDALS

An overdrive pedal is an overdrive pedal, right? Well, while that is generally about the size of it, the truth is that not all overdrives are created equal – and some lend themselves better to particular styles of music than others. For example, what works for high-octane classic rock won't necessarily cut it in a blues context, and vice versa. And with so many overdrives on the market – from both obscure boutique builders working in a shed to the big mainstream names – there's an awful lot to choose from, so how do you know what to pick? Well, here we've rounded up four sub-£100 pedals that are ideally suited to the task – they're all no-nonsense overdrives that can push your amp harder for that extra bite coupled with the sweet sustain that blues players crave.

MXR Badass Modified OD

£99

BADASS BY NAME, BADASS BY NATURE

Besides standard output and gain knobs, MXR's Custom Badass Modified OD offers plenty of tonal tweaks. In normal mode, the sound is pretty transparent but the Bump switch's alternate EQ voicing boosts lows and mids to put you in Tube Screamer territory, pushing your sound forward for more sustain. The 100Hz knob boosts or cuts around that frequency so you can really fatten up the bottom or make it lean and mean, while the tone knob dials in ice pick treble or tones it down for a smoother vibe. It's an excellent low to mid-gain overdrive with wide tonal options and rock-solid MXR build.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

Xvive Sweet Leo

£62

COOL FOR CATS

Does Xvive's latest roar like a lion? Well, maybe – but the Leo here actually refers to Mr Fender. No surprise, then that this mini pedal – designed by renowned German axe-slinger Thomas Blug – has more than just a hint of what some of those early tweed and blackface amps were famous for, with a range from a glassy clean boost, through subtle grittiness to cranked combo raunch. The tone knob offers a practical range that perfectly focuses your guitar's upper-mid presence, but the secret weapon is the Growl knob, which dials a gorgeous extra dimension of harmonic complexity into the driven sound. With oodles of nuance this is a versatile asset for any pedalboard.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★



Do you have the blues about which overdrive pedal to buy? Let us help with four affordable contenders

TC Electronic Cinders Overdrive

£49

YOU SHALL GO TO THE BRAWL...

One of a range of 13 affordable pedals that TC unleashed en masse late last year, the Cinders is designed to deliver transparent valve amp-style overdrive. Juxtaposition of the volume and drive knobs lets you dial in a wide range of sounds from a clean boost up to pretty high levels of drive of the sort that might be expected from a distortion pedal. The tone knob handles the top-end, but you'll need to tweak it at the same time as the other knobs as it's very interactive. With plenty to suit blues players looking for bite and dirt on a budget, Cinders could get your tone smouldering.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	☆☆☆☆
	SOUND QUALITY	☆☆☆☆
	VALUE FOR MONEY	☆☆☆☆
	BUILD QUALITY	☆☆☆☆
	USABILITY	☆☆☆☆
	OVERALL RATING	☆☆☆☆

Mooer Blues Crab

£58

CLAW EXTRA TONE FROM YOUR AMP

The word is that Mooer's Blues Crab mini pedal owes more than something of a debt to Marshall's much-loved 90s Blues Breaker pedal, itself designed to inject a bit of a mid-60s Marshall amp vibe into your sound. This is a low-level overdrive, one that excels at all those just-beyond-clean tones, adding an edge with an adjustable extra shading of grit, delivered via a sensible tone control. Nicely sensitive, this is a pedal where the sound can get dirtier in response to your playing: just dig in for grittiness. Sitting in front of a good amp, this is an inexpensive yet classy complement to take it up a notch.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	☆☆☆☆
	SOUND QUALITY	☆☆☆☆☆
	VALUE FOR MONEY	☆☆☆☆
	BUILD QUALITY	☆☆☆☆
	USABILITY	☆☆☆☆
	OVERALL RATING	☆☆☆☆

AT A GLANCE

TYPE Overdrive pedals
BYPASS True bypass
POWER 9V power adapter (not supplied); TC Electronic and MXR will also take a 9V battery
CONTACT
MXR
 Westside Distribution
 0844 326 2000
 westsidedistribution.com
Xvive
 JHS
 01132 865 381
 www.jhs.co.uk
TC Electronic
 0800 917 8926
 www.tcelectronic.com
Mooer
 Strings & Things
 01273 440 442
 www.moeraudio.co.uk