



METAL DISTORTION ROUND-UP

The promise of the metal distortion pedal has always been to transform any amp into a high-gain beast. Now, if you're sticking an Amptweaker in front of a Marshall stack, you might be able to squint and feel like it's actually a Mesa or 5150, but more often than not these pedals have been bought by teenagers to run into cheap practice amps, and the effect is, frankly, underwhelming. That's the tip of the iceberg, however, and the options for fantastic high-gain pedals have never been better. Even Boss's much-maligned Metal Zone, every guitarist's first high-gain stompbox, has had a minor reassessment, and it remains popular enough that Boss have even issued a high-spec Waza Craft version. That'll show the haters – as will the rest of these high-octane stompboxes...

Wampler Dracarys £189

MOTHER OF DISTORTIONS

With a full, three-band EQ, it's easy to dial in a punchy distortion sound. Pushing the mids and treble, with the voicing switch set to 'open', we're reminded of the Marshall Shredmaster, albeit with a more intuitive mids control and a better output volume. With hotter Les Paul pickups, there's a bit of fizz to tame at the higher-end of the gain knob, and while the 'tight' voicing is useful to tame rumble, some adjustment to the EQ, gain and volume controls is needed to achieve unity volume with the pedal in 'open' mode. It shines for chord work and lead lines, but is less at home with palm-muted styles.

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

Fender Full Moon £135

BAD MOON RISING

Fender aren't messing about with their new series of compact pedals, and like its sister pedal the Santa Ana, the Full Moon is a versatile beast. It's not as full in the bass as some other offerings, but the flipside is that it doesn't get flabby until we switch to a seven-string. We couldn't find a sweet spot with a low 'A', but for six-string guitars it has a Rat-like distortion. Having a three-band EQ and a High Treble knob to bring in extra overtones makes it easy to get consistent tones when switching guitars, and the boost circuit is the icing on the cake, turning it from a mean drive to a high-gain monster.

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



Is it worth trying to cram the metal might of a 100W head into a pedal? We think so, and so do these...

Amptweaker TightMetal Jr

£149

NOT THAT JAMES BROWN

Amp tweaker is the brainchild of James Brown, the lead engineer on the Peavey 5150. With that heritage, you might be forgiven for having high expectations – and Amptweaker delivers. Compared with the original TightMetal, the Jr has a much better noise gate, lower noise floor and additional EQ options that allow it to take on some of the tonality of its FatMetal pedal. Convincing chug and powerful arpeggiated chords are easy to find with a Les Paul and a Jazzmaster. With the ‘tight’ switch engaged, the pedal will even ‘djent’. With a seven-string in hand, you can smash out Tesseract without a touch of bass.

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

Boss MT-2W Waza

£131

GET IN THE ZONE

Though it’s a divisive pedal, we’ve always been fans of the Metal Zone. With a powerful EQ section and a wide sweep on the gain control, it’s easy to dial in punchy sounds that cut through a band mix. Shooting out standard mode on the Waza version with our original MT-2, we found the newer pedal a bit thinner with the same settings; it requires tweaking to get the ‘bark’ we’re used to, and it’s quieter than the original, too. Switching to the new Custom mode is another story. It’s full, throaty and easy to control at the bass end, though we still found the EMGs on our seven-string oversaturated it.

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

AT A GLANCE

BYPASS:
True bypass

POWER:
9V DC centre-negative

CONTACT:
Wampler: First Line Distribution
wamplerpedals.com

Fender: Fender EMEA
fender.com

Amptweaker: Sounds Great Music
soundsgreatmusic.com

Boss MT-2W: Roland UK
roland.com