

Quicktest



Rothwell Tornado £139

A storming JFET stompbox...

CONTACT: Rothwell PHONE: 01204 366133 WEB: www.rothwellaudioproducts.co.uk



Guitarist CHOICE

In the world of transistors, the JFET (Junction Field Effect Transistor) is regarded as the type that displays electronic characteristics most similar to those of that guitar player's favourite, the valve. With that in mind, enter Rothwell's new Tornado stompbox: made in the UK, this overdrive pedal uses JFETs throughout.

Rothwell says that the JFETs give the Tornado an overdriven sound that's much closer to the sound of a real valve amp than that found in a typical overdrive pedal. Let's plug in...

Sounds

Robustly constructed and immaculately finished, the Tornado runs from a 9V battery or standard adaptor and features volume, gain and tone controls. With the gain set to minimum, the pedal functions

as a clean boost with plenty of extra volume on tap to give your amp a real kick. Advancing the gain control increases the overdrive for a very valve-like sound, with a natural dynamic feel and a bottom-end that remains comfortably focused and tight, even at full gain settings.

Two different tonal flavours are available courtesy of the shift button, which alters the tone control's characteristics. One has a darker vintage vibe, the other a brighter sound with more mid-range scoop. In either mode you can dial-in sounds across a frequency range that complements amp tones perfectly.

Verdict

A naturally responsive overdrive pedal with a sound reminiscent of valve distortion and a tonal range that can focus on the sweet spot. [TC]

The Bottom Line

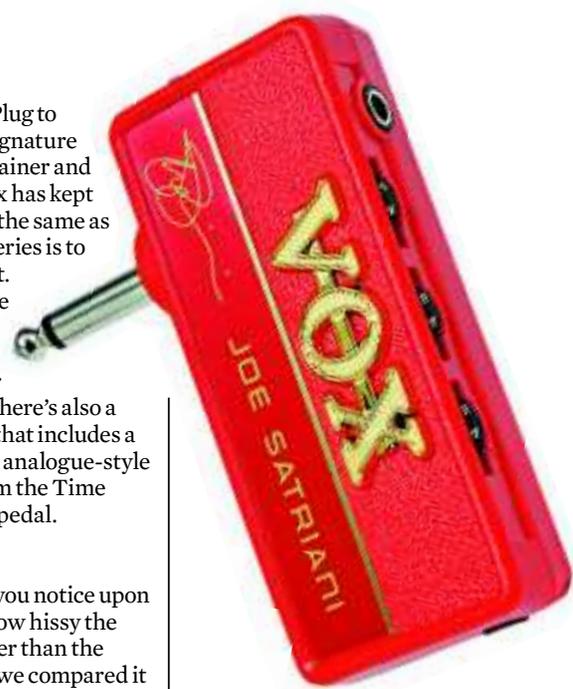
We like: Valve-like overdrive; useful focused tonal range
We dislike: Four-screw battery access

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Vox Joe Satriani AmPlug £46

Satch's huge tone in a tiny package?

CONTACT: Korg UK PHONE: 01908 857100 WEB: www.voxamps.com



Adding an AmPlug to Joe Satriani's signature range is a no-brainer and the fact that Vox has kept the unit's price the same as the rest of the series is to the firm's credit.

The drive tone here borrows heavily from the Satchurator stompbox and there's also a second setting that includes a medium length analogue-style delay taken from the Time Machine delay pedal.

Sounds

The first thing you notice upon plugging in is how hissy the unit is, far noisier than the Metal AmPlug we compared it to, even at lower gain and volume levels. The basic sound isn't as immediate either, and it bears only a passing resemblance to Satch's tones. We used the auxiliary input to play along with both Surfing With The Alien and Chickenfoot and, although the drive is satisfying enough, it really doesn't mimic Joe's tone as accurately as expected. There's too much middle for one, and any string separation is lost in the maelstrom.

Cleaning the gain up and using the delay setting is a far happier experience, and employing the neck pickup of a Strat gives a reasonably natural tone.

Verdict

As an addition to your collection of AmPlugs, the Satriani would be a worthy purchase, and if you're new to the concept, it'd be a suitable place to start. However, as a short cut to Joe's huge tone, we fear you'll need to keep looking. For completists only. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: The red livery; customary AmPlug simplicity
We dislike: Doesn't sound that much like Joe; noisy

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★ >

EMG-81 Chrome £119.99

How much cooler can one pickup be?

CONTACT: Selectron PHONE: 01795 419460 WEB: www.emginc.com

The EMG 81 humbucker is arguably the Californian company's best-known model, and although all EMG, EMG-X and EMG-HZ pickups are available as retrofit units, we're hard pushed to think of a cooler, more modern look to any humbucker than the new chrome version we have here.

The cover itself is actually highly polished stainless steel, and the active innards remain that heady mix of a high-powered ceramic core powered by a nine-volt battery.

Best news here, especially if you're a solder-klutz (as this reviewer certainly is!), is that all EMG's pickups come with the Quik-Connect system, which allows you to install the pickup without the need for melting

metal. It took us less than 10 minutes to fit the EMG into our HSS Strat and the instructions are dead simple.

Our only niggle would be that some of the connecting leads are potentially too short and there's an added risk that your guitar's existing wire access holes may not be large enough to accommodate the solderless connectors themselves.

Sounds

There are few humbuckers that are more suited to hard rock and metal – just ask Zakk Wylde, Metallica, Slayer et al – but the 81 also cleans up nicely, demonstrating a zingy high end and tight bass. That said, a tone control is a must to rein-in that treble on occasion.



Verdict

A selection of EMG pickups, including the 81, 85 and 60, are also available with a gold cover (also £119.99) and we must say we're totally sold on this unit's look, its high-octane noiseless tone and, most importantly, the ease of installation. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Modern look, ease of installation...

We dislike: ...but some of the hookup wires are short

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Fender Green Chromatic Tuner £38.78

A battery-free tuner that's green by name and by nature

CONTACT: Fender GBI PHONE: 01342 331700 WEB: www.fender.co.uk

It's such a good idea, we're surprised no one's tried it before. When you think about it, a battery-free guitar accessory is a no-brainer, and yet Fender's Green GT-1000 chromatic tuner is the first we're aware of from any of MI's big names to be completely free of those pesky little metal tubes full of lithium, alkaline and other nasty, environment-harming substances.

The tuner's power is generated from a crank handle that's rotated to build up charge. This is then stored in an internal electric double-layer capacitor. The charge, in our experience at least, lasts for a minimum of 24 hours – we charged it up at the beginning of the day and it was still tuning well the following morning – and it takes a maximum of 10 cranks of the handle to get the tuner back up to power.

The layout of the tuner part is traditional enough, with a simple display featuring the seven notes plus the ♯ symbol, and sharp or flat red LEDs either side of a central green 'in tune' light.

In Use

The unit also provides an internal microphone, allowing it to be used for acoustic instruments as well as electric, and the tuner is extremely accurate. What's more, there's also a small yet exceedingly bright bulb incorporated into the front panel, which we found could be used as a rudimentary yet serviceable torch!



Verdict

A very neat concept. The tuner works perfectly well and if the green nature of the GT-1000 doesn't grab you, imagine the cold, hard cash you'll save not having to buy a battery for it every few months. A Green '65 Reissue Twin, next? [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: It's a very commendable concept; the tuner works well

We dislike: Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★