



TUBE SCREAMERS ROUND-UP

The Ibanez Tube Screamer is the single most important overdrive pedal ever made. Famed for its odd-order harmonics, mid-hump and versatility as a drive or boost, it's been reissued in countless iterations by Ibanez, and has also been widely cloned and modded elsewhere.

In the early 1970s, when Susumu Tamura designed the visionary op-amp driven, symmetrical-clipping circuit that would become the TS808, he probably did not foresee its staggering popularity; after all, his original brief was simply to come up with an overdrive pedal to rival the Boss OD-1 and MXR Distortion+. Today, we've brought together a selection of the most cutting-edge versions of the Tube Screamer family tree to show that there's still plenty of life left in this workhorse design...

Ibanez NTS Tube Screamer

£239

OUT WITH THE OLD

As the name implies, the goal of the Tube Screamer was to sound like an overdriven tube amp. Thanks to incorporating Korg's Nutube vacuum tube into the circuit, this is now a reality. As you play, you can see the tube responding to the attack, and the resulting sound is thick and harmonically rich, if a bit wooly at higher gain levels without some EQ-ing at the amp. Obviously, it lends itself to blues licks, but even into a dimed Mesa, it proves a great tool for the metal player when used as a boost. There's a mix knob for dialling back in clean signal, but we didn't really need it.

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

KHDK Ghoul Jr

£139

SAD BUT TRUE

A prolific TS9 user, Kirk Hammett's signature Ghoul Screamer was a solid boutique take on the original. The Ghoul Jr brings that to a smaller form-factor, and slims down some of the options from its bigger brother. Used as a drive, it's the tone you'd expect, but it's a different set of options that set this apart. Switch the style knob from classic to dynamic in the centre position, and voice to classic in the middle, or mid-boost in the down position. Then bring gain all the way down, level all the way up, and tone over at 2 o'clock. Stick in front of a cranked amp on the gain channel for thrash heaven.

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



The Tube Screamer is the most successful overdrive of all time. Is there still innovation possible with this classic design? We find out...

Maxon ST9 Pro+ £175

KEEPING IT REAL

When he devised the TS808, Susumu Tamura was working for Maxon, the OEM manufacturer that built the Tube Screamer for Ibanez until 2002. Since the split with Ibanez, Maxon has capitalised on the popularity of the TS with a TS808 and TS9 reissue, while the ST9 is an ‘updated reissue’ of the 80s Super Tube Screamer model. The additions are an ability to switch up to higher-headroom 18V operation, and a dedicated mids pot. The flexibility is a plus, but changing the headroom involves a shift in the character of the pedal’s compression. It’s spiky, but tameable with your tone knob.

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

JHS Bonsai £219

CHOOSE YOUR BLUES

Incorporating the classic TS808 and TS9, the TS10 favoured by John Mayer and six other TS variants, including the famous Robert Keeley mod, the Bonsai is a smorgasbord of drive tones. Saturated, rich leads are found the easiest with single coils and one of the classic settings, whereas rhythm sounds with humbuckers lend themselves towards the Keeley mod setting, whether it’s blues, grunge or metal you’re playing. Funnily enough, we found ourselves mainly sticking to the 808 or Keeley settings despite all the options, but that’s probably just a testament to how good the original circuit is.

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

AT A GLANCE

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- POWER**
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