

Mad Professor Stompboxes £149-£179

Mad Professor tweaks its effects specs and stomps the prices - good news all round, right? *by Ed Mitchell*

You may recall that back in issue 320 we had a look at six Mad Professor effects pedals. Suitably impressed, we raved about the features and sounds of models such as the Deep Blue Delay and Little Green Wonder, but choked a little at price tags that ran from £205 to £275. They were hand-wired, but...

Well aware that the only grumbles it has received regarding its pedals were sparked by the prices, the Finnish company is now offering a number of its stompboxes in a PCB (printed circuit board) format, with the pots, switch and jack sockets mounted on the board. The use of PCBs has brought the price of the pedals down by a fair margin. That's great, but has tweaking the spec impacted on the brand's hard earned reputation for great tone?

Little Green Wonder

Whenever you see an overdrive pedal in a green box, or referencing the word 'green' in its model name, it invites comparisons with an old bogie-

coloured classic from Ibanez. The Little Green Wonder features three controls: volume, drive and body. The first two do exactly what you'd expect, while the body control is the LGW's standout feature. Crank the control up and it acts as a treble booster; turn the control anti-clockwise and it boosts the bass and low mids. No bass sucking antics here, unlike another pedal we can think of.

Moving swiftly on, Mad Professor suggests that the Little Green Wonder is something of a multi-tasker. Of course its day job is as an overdrive pedal, but the company also suggests employing it as a booster pedal or to calm down an overly bright amplifier or raspy sounding fuzz.

Sounds

The Little Green Wonder produces a warm, valve amp-

style overdrive. This is no high-gain monster that covers a multitude of sins, it's more about allowing the tone of your guitar, and the dynamics of your playing, to shine through. It seems to us that how you use the body control depends on what guitar you're playing. With a Tele and the control fully anti-clockwise to fatten up the tone with some added bass, we get a great tough Tele rhythm vibe a-la Keef and The Boss. Switching to our humbucker-loaded Strat, the extra sizzle activated when cranking the body control all the way up is much appreciated. It's a great way of tuning this pedal to suit your personal guitar and playing style. Few overdrive pedals are this versatile or addictive.

Ruby Red Booster

The Ruby Red Booster is, you got it, a booster pedal. It's not

The Little Green Wonder is about allowing your guitar tone and playing dynamics to shine through

The Rivals

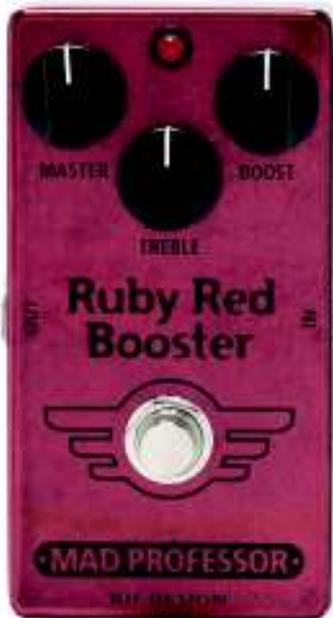
Other great overdrive pedals include the **Carl Martin AC-Tone** (£179), the **Emma OnoMATOpoeia** (£159) and the mighty **Klon Centaur**, if you can actually find one. For boosters look at the **Xotic AC Booster** (£169), the **AmpTweaker TightBoost** (£149) or the **Retroman Beano**. Hand-built, it costs £109 and you'll need to ship it from the US. For delays, options include the **BOSS RE-20 Space Echo** (£209), the **T-Rex Replica 2** (£239) and the **MXR Carbon Copy** (£205) - are all worthy of a repeat performance.

just a clever name. That said, the Ruby Red can be used as a regular booster, a treble booster and even as an overdrive pedal. Which is groovy, but that's not all it can do. You can also use the pedal as a buffer to prevent treble and volume loss when you have a whole shop's worth of gear on your pedalboard, or ridiculously long Albert Collins-style cables. The buffer is activated by a switch inside the pedal that offers a choice between 'true bypass' or 'buffer on' in bypass mode.

The Ruby Red has three controls: master, boost and treble. Like the other pedals, its components are protected by a tough metal case and access to the battery involves removing four screws. Awkward.



The Little Green Wonder is both versatile and addictive



The Ruby Red is ideal for replicating seventies overdriven tones

Sounds

We test the Ruby Red's mettle by putting it through a small valve-powered stack, which doesn't exactly have the most satisfying clean and overdriven tones around – can the Ruby Red help? Deciding to go a bit old school, we add a touch of gain on the amp and use the Ruby Red to boost the signal. The difference is incredible, with organic and harmonically rich overdrive flowing from the amp's speaker cabinet. It's ideal for classic sixties and seventies-style blues and rock tones – think the Beano album, Led Zep, even Rory Gallagher.

Deep Blue Delay

Mad Professor's delay pedal has three controls: level, delay and

repeat. But level isn't a volume control – it regulates the ratio of the clean guitar signal to the amount of delay effect. The delay control offers a sweep of delay times from 25 milliseconds all the way up to 450 milliseconds. The repeat control is exactly what you'd imagine it to be, and it runs from a single regeneration to infinite feedback.

Mad Professor has designed the Deep Blue to replicate the warm sounds of classic tape-based echo units of the sixties. To enhance the old school vibe, there are no provisions for noise reduction. The intriguing part of all this is that the Deep Blue is actually a digital pedal, although the direct signal path is analogue.

The sheer dynamics of the Sweet Honey make it one of those pedals you have to own before you die

Sounds

Plugging in, we get the vintage thing right away. Inspired, we decide to run a Sun Studio-style rockabilly test. The fact that we nail the sound we're looking for so quickly gives you an idea of how user friendly the Deep Blue Delay is. If you play rockabilly or roots-inspired rock in the vein of Creedence Clearwater Revival, you'll love the authentic vintage warmth of this pedal.

Avoiding clichés can be tough when using a delay, but the

Deep Blue inspires creativity. Setting the pedal for a single repeat adds some cool ambience to high gain rhythm and lead parts that you'll miss with the pedal switched off.

Sweet Honey Overdrive

Few modern pedals have created the type of buzz (in a good way) that surrounds the Sweet Honey Overdrive. This highly regarded pedal is designed to offer valve amp-style overdrive that reacts to the dynamics of your playing. Again, this pedal has three controls, in this case we have volume, drive and focus. The functions of the first two controls are easily deciphered. The focus control is an overall EQ that also affects the amount of overdrive. Turned all the way down, the control offers a bassier tone while cutting the overdrive level a bit. Cranked up, the focus control acts as a slight treble booster while enhancing the overdrive.

Sounds

The sheer dynamics of the Sweet Honey Overdrive make it one of those pedals you have to own before you die. Like a great valve amp, it cleans up when you ease off your attack on your



The Deep Blue Delay aims to capture the sound of classic tape echoes





The Sweet Honey is a wonderfully responsive overdrive



guitar's strings and then unleashes glorious harmonically rich overdrive when you dig in. The pedal sounds tight in all settings and the integrity of your guitar's tone is never compromised.

When it comes to application, the Sweet Honey is best suited to classic blues and rock sounds although it will go heavier when combined with an overdriven amp channel. It works equally as well with humbuckers and single-coils, although we particularly enjoyed thumping out huge-sounding bottom end riffs on our humbucker-loaded Strat.

Verdict

Mad Professor will still make you a hand-wired version of all these pedals if you wish. The thing is, based on the quality of the sounds on offer from these

lower cost factory models, we don't think you need to splash out all that extra lolly. We'd be surprised if many people could *really* hear the difference between the hand-wired and circuit board jobs anyway. Utilising a PCB construction has not diluted any of the wow factor that you equate with Mad Professor pedals.

All four pedals in this review meet our expectations, and then some, but the two standouts for us are the Sweet Honey and the Deep Blue. The former is the most likely to become a classic – the way it reacts so well to the dynamics of your playing makes it a real keeper, our pedalboard is missing it already.

Obviously, £149 (or £179 in the case of the Deep Blue Delay) is still a fair old chunk of change for a single pedal. That said, if you're particular about what goes in your signal chain, you'll be hard pushed to find better sounding stompboxes at the price. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Old-school simplicity; killer tones across the board

We dislike: Still a little pricey for some?

Guitarist says: This isn't just another stompbox range. Mad Professor has put a lot of thought into the function and tone of its pedals and now that they're more affordable, even more of us can feel the love



Mad Professor Little Green Wonder

PRICE: £149
ORIGIN: Finland
TYPE: Overdrive pedal
CONTROLS: Volume, drive, body
CONNECTIONS: Input, output
MIDI: No
POWER: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
OPTIONS: None
Hardrockin' Distribution
07870 564001
www.mpamp.com

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Features ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Mad Professor Ruby Red Booster

PRICE: £149
ORIGIN: Finland
TYPE: Treble booster/overdrive pedal
CONTROLS: Master, boost, treble
CONNECTIONS: Input, output
MIDI: No
POWER: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
OPTIONS: None

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Features ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Mad Professor Deep Blue Delay

PRICE: £179
ORIGIN: Finland
TYPE: Digital delay pedal
CONTROLS: Level, delay, repeat
CONNECTIONS: Input, output
MIDI: No
POWER: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
OPTIONS: None

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Features ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Mad Professor Sweet Honey Overdrive

PRICE: £149
ORIGIN: Finland
TYPE: Overdrive pedal
CONTROLS: Volume, drive, focus
CONNECTIONS: Input, output
MIDI: No
POWER: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
OPTIONS: None

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Features ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

