

FENDER

Fender pedals

Smart, shiny and practical pedals to adorn your 'board

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Here's the second of our two-part look at Fender's new 2018 pedal range. This time we focus on the Santa Ana Overdrive, The Bends Compressor and the Level Set Buffer. If you missed our last issue, there we covered the Marine Layer Reverb, the Mirror Image Delay and the Pugilist Distortion.

Designed by a team led by Stan Cotey, the new pedals come in a rugged housing that features a curvy anodised aluminium top with a shiny metallic sheen. All can run from a 9V power adapter or battery and feature a new battery compartment with a magnetically latched hinged flap at the end of the pedal (which just pulls down and flips back when you let go of it). With offset input and output jack sockets to save space on your 'board, illuminated knobs (which you can switch off), a very Fender amp-like LED 'jewel' bypass indicator, there's definitely plenty for you to like here.



Santa Ana Overdrive

£160

An overdrive pedal with two voicings and an extra footswitch for added boost, the Santa Ana is designed with FET circuitry to deliver valve amp-style drive and it does just that. This is a pedal that has nicely expressive touch sensitivity and cleans up naturally with guitar volume. There's quite a range of tones available from cleanish boost to driven amp, shaded with a set of four EQ knobs reminiscent of a Fender amp front panel. The two amp voicings are designated American and British – the former is brighter with a sharper almost percussive chime, while the latter is darker and a practical choice in front of overly bright amps. The Boost knob can be set to either boost the drive stage where it can successfully bring in a more aggressive upper mid presence or to boost the output volume – perhaps by a slightly larger margin than we would have liked in the absence of a boost level control. **G**

VERDICT Natural-sounding overdrive and switchable boost in one box makes this a practical pedalboard proposition

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Overdrive pedal
FEATURES: True or buffered bypass
CONTROLS: Bass, Middle, Treble, Presence, Level, Drive A/B Voice switch, LEDs On/Off switch, True/Buffered switch, FS Select (Drive/Level) switch, Boost footswitch, Bypass footswitch
CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output
POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 130mA
DIMENSIONS: 100 (w) x 125 (d) x 62mm (h)

8/10



The Bends Compressor

£96

The Bends is an OTA (operational transconductance amplifier) based compressor, and follows in a long line of classic guitar compressors that have used similar technology (Ross, Dyna Comp etc), but has a Blend control so you don't have to compress the whole signal. The Drive knob turns up the compression with the LED glowing pink rather than white when you are compressing the signal. There are also knobs for release time for the compression (Recovery) and output volume, which has plenty in reserve to boost your amp's front end even when using minimal compression amounts – compression and boost together offer a natural jump to a second stage for solos.

The pedal has little hiss, adds a nice snap to your note envelope without being too obtrusive and, via the Blend knob, can add compression effects, such as increased sustain, without totally squashing your core sound. **G**

VERDICT Very well-designed this is one of the best affordable guitar compressors we've seen recently

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Compressor pedal
FEATURES: True bypass
CONTROLS: Drive, Recovery, Blend, Level, LEDs On/Off switch, Bypass footswitch
CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output
POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 60mA
DIMENSIONS: 75 (w) x 125 (d) x 62 mm



9/10



Level Set Buffer

£87

Besides the useful buffering for signal consistency, this pedal's main aim is to provide something for the guitarist who uses multiple guitars on a gig and needs to match the levels. The idea is that the default 12 o'clock position on a Level knob with up to +/-12dB of adjustment is for your main guitar and you can, say, roll it back a touch moving from the single coils of a Strat to a Les Paul with humbuckers and a higher output. There's also a high-frequency knob that works on the sparkly top-end sheen, so you can subtly compensate for dark or overly spiky pickups. The pedal is always on but the footswitch can be used to mute the signal, perhaps when tuning – a dedicated output keeps your tuner out of the audio signal path. There's also a switch that applies input capacitance to load guitar pickups – it's a subtle effect but it's a worthwhile tonal variant that may suit your set-up. **G**

VERDICT A practical utility for 'boards. Iron out level and tone disparities while improving your signal path

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Buffer pedal
FEATURES: Level and treble attenuation, Mute, tuner connection
CONTROLS: Level, Hi-Freq, Load switch, LEDs On/Off switch, Mute footswitch
CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, standard Tuner Output
POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 64mA
DIMENSIONS: 75 (w) x 125 (d) x 62 mm (h)

8/10