

Quicktest

Welcome to Guitarist's regular round-up of the best of the rest of the gear that's passed through our hands this issue



on the
disc

Line 6 Spider IV 15 £90.85

A bijou version of the new modelling sensation

CONTACT: Line 6 PHONE: 01327 302700 WEB: www.uk.line6.com

Line 6 always crams unfeasible levels of sophistication, features and tone into all of its products, and that extends to entry-level units such as this small Spider IV. We wouldn't expect a similar spec sheet to the impressive Spider IV 75 we looked at last issue, but even here the 15W combo offers six effects, of which two can be used at any one time, and a choice of four dedicated tones modelled on classic amps from Roland, Mesa/Boogie and Marshall.

They're accessed via four buttons on the front panel that also double as a quartet of banks into which you can save your tones, be they combinations of amp and effect or alternative EQ settings for a single amp model. There's even a rudimentary noise gate, tuner and a boost function too. Consider the obligatory CD/mp3 micro-jack input, a 'record out' that's also a headphone socket and the eight-inch speaker, and this could be among the most heavily loaded beginners' amps out there.

Sounds

The tonal limitations of an eight-inch speaker aside, the Dual Rec-inspired channels sound huge and have as much bite as a Tiger shark's mouth, while we coaxed a convincing AC/DC-style voice from Channel B's '68 Marshall 'Plexi'-inspired tone. On clean we have no complaints and the Sweep Echo effect here gives some very inspiring tones.

Verdict

Seems like we're playing the same record, but this 15-watt version of Spider IV is as impressive as its 75-watt sibling, albeit for different reasons. No home should be without one. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Great tones; portable; versatile

We dislike: The tuner's a little complex to understand

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Pro Tone Peligro Fuzz £139

Fuzz with a dangerous streak

CONTACT: Sounds Great Music PHONE: 0161 436 4799 WEB: www.protonepedals.com

Pro Tone Pedals are hand-built in Crossroads, Texas and the Peligro Fuzz is just one of the fuzzes in a colourfully finished range. Peligro is the Spanish word for danger and Pro Tone describes the pedal as a dangerous fuzz with some serious bottom end. What you get is a three-transistor pedal powered by battery (accessed via four-screw baseplate) or a standard nine-volt adaptor.

Sounds

With four knobs, the Peligro offers a wider range of options to control the effect than many of the fuzz pedals on the market. The volume knob offers plenty of gain to give your amp a kick if needed, while the fuzz knob obviously dials in more of the effect, albeit with the sound very dependent on the positions of the tone and shape knobs. Fully left, the tone knob cuts the high frequencies and adds lows for a deep rumble, while at the other extreme it boosts the mids and adds edge top

end. The shape knob actually alters the waveform, moving from a clipped, tightly gated sound (that's very reminiscent of the rasp of Maestro Fuzz-Tone) and sitar effects, through to full-bodied richness.

Verdict

Any fuzzbox that can nail Norman Greenbaum's Spirit In The Sky tone is okay by us and this one comes closer than most. Predominantly raspy and buzzy, but still capable of a more rounded tone, the Peligro can dish up a fair range of more unusual distortions courtesy of its useful interactive controls. This is a characterful fuzz that's worth an audition. [TC]

The Bottom Line

We like: Nasty and polite fuzz in one pedal; shape knob gates the fuzz

We dislike: Paint finish is a little rough

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Orange Dual Terror 30 watt class A head £493.89

What could be better than a Tiny Terror? How about two of them in one box?

CONTACT: OMEC Ltd **WEB:** www.orangeamps.com **PHONE:** 0208 905 2828

Orange's Tiny Terror has been a massive success – the combination of aggressive pricing and Orange's modern high-gain signature tone nailed exactly what many players were after. Now Orange has consolidated the range and, together with a special point-to-point hard-wired version and a bass version, it recently released the amp that many of us have been looking forward to – the Dual Terror.

Sounds

Essentially, the DT is exactly what it looks like, two Tiny Terrors in one box! There are two differently voiced channels. One has the original Tiny Terror sound, the other

channel is called Fat. The Dual Terror also has twice the output power, with a class A quartet of EL84s roasting away at the back of the chassis. There are two separate power reduction switches giving you a choice of seven, 15 or 30 watts. The gain controls are usable across practically their entire travel, giving you everything from fat juicy cleans to thick overdrive, all with that slightly boxy Orange mid-range punch that typifies Brit rock. The Fat channel offers a slightly bigger version of the same thing, with even more gain.

Verdict

As well as having twice the Tiny Terror's channels and



twice the power, we think it's quite likely the Dual Terror could end up being twice as successful as its already wildly popular sibling. It's one of the best-sounding British designs we've heard in a long time and although it's short on features, it more than makes up for it in the tone department. Aimed at any player from amateur to pro, who goes for the vintage approach and loves some

vintage British tone, we reckon that the Dual Terror is right on the money. [NG]

The Bottom Line

We like: Great range of tone from a very simple set-up

We dislike: No LED channel indicator on the front panel

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



MXR M116 Fullbore Metal £149

In a reggae band? You probably won't need one of these then...

CONTACT: JHS **PHONE:** 01132 865381 **WEB:** www.jhs.co.uk/mxr

A great metal tone should be equal parts gain, aggression and dynamics, and the Fullbore Metal provides an impressive choice of tones, even though it's hard to obtain anything other than skull-crushing overdrive.

The pedal includes a scoop button and, best of all, a noise

gate, which can be fine-tuned via an internal micro-pot, while three super-bright LEDs will illustrate the various functions on even the darkest stage.

Sounds

If you're looking for subtlety, the M116 won't be for you, but if

you want to experiment with a variety of high-gain and very expressive metal tones, you should give it a whirl. The gain control offers discernible increments of gain, while engaging the scoop pot not only drops the mids, but ups the treble and low-end rumble too.

The provision of a trio of independent EQ pots enables you to easily tailor the waves of crunch to allow your notes to always be heard and the gate pot, internally adjustable remember, is precise and as unobtrusive as any simple gate could be.

Verdict

The stripped-down metal vibe and hardy construction fits the genre to a tee and it does provide more than its fair share of tones, albeit suited just to the hardcore metal fraternity. That being said, if your amp already possesses such a tone you may feel hard pushed to justify buying the Fullbore. Still, it's worth spending some time with the pedal to prove that there's far more than just one generic tone for metal. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Great look; intuitive features; built like an ingot

We dislike: It really is just for metal. Not a thing else...

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Brace DWG1000 £159

An affordable and straightforward digital wireless system

CONTACT: Hand In Hand PHONE: 01752 696633 WEB: www.braceaudio.com

It seems to Guitarist that we've reviewed more wireless systems over the past few issues than we have at any other time during our 25-year tenure, a fact that clearly proves that the advent of digital technology has allowed a notoriously wobbly process of audio signal transmission to become available and suitable for all.

It's possible to run up to four separate DWG1000 transmitters at one time and the channels can be changed, albeit via a rather awkward and finicky process of using a bent paperclip to access the inset function button of either the receiver or transmitter. That's not all, as the channels can even be married up using a process called RF mating: a nice touch indeed.

Two skinny, stereo jack-to-phono cables are included, so that you can connect your guitar and amp up to the system, and two strap clips are also provided.

In use

The DWG1000 has a range of around 60 feet, which we found to be perfectly acceptable and we noted no discernible alteration to the tone when we A/B'd the system with a standard 18-foot cable. We do have to report that our example was especially noisy and even though we can let that slide when using high gain options, the excessive hiss did become something of a chore when using more subtle drives. That said, it's not ever louder than the guitar itself, but as soon as



you ears latch on, it's difficult to stop perceiving the hiss.

Verdict

The DWG1000 is a system that's very simple to get to grips with and – the bugbear of its irritating noise issues aside – it's at a price that everyone should be happy with [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Reasonably affordable; simple to set up; RF mating feature
We dislike: Noisy; fiddly to change channels

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Vox AmPlug Acoustic £45

Practise on an electric, sound like an acoustic

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

Where previous AmPlugs have emulated a specific amplifier model, the latest in Vox's range of miniature headphone amps that plug directly into your instrument's output jack emulates an acoustic guitar, with two distinct sounds (warm and bright) being available via a selector switch.

Sounds

You wouldn't mistake what you hear from the AmPlug Acoustic for a real acoustic guitar, but it does go some way toward it, providing a nice clear sound with some sizzling and zingy top-end. The tone control has a great deal of influence on how full-bodied the sound gets and with a blend control mixing between the original sound of your guitar and the acoustic guitar simulation there's a useful range of clean sounds

available for recording and practice – perhaps along with music from an iPod or similar plugged into the aux input.

Verdict

The AmPlug series are great when quiet/silent practice is essential, but the main reason for using one (the fact that you'll hear things louder than if you just played an electric guitar unplugged) may have limited relevance in this case – if you want to hear acoustic guitar sounds, then why not just use an acoustic guitar? If you don't own an acoustic though, one of these will provide a handy recording tool for playing acoustic-like sounds in a song, while still allowing amplified practice on electric, albeit with a clean sound only. [TC]



The Bottom Line

We like: A convenient practice aid; nice range of tonal variation
We dislike: Well, it goes without saying, but it won't replace your Martin...

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Manual Rodriguez Model A-DS £599

The Spanish guitar jumps on the relic bus. Almost...

CONTACT: JHS **PHONE:** 01132 865381 **WEB:** www.jhs.co.uk

One of Spain's best-known classical brands, Manuel Rodriguez, is the latest guitar company to jump on the pre-aged bandwagon with the Spanish-made Model A-DS (as reviewed) and the far eastern-made MR11 Caballero (£319). The standard Model A (£549) has laminated rosewood back and sides and cedar top; our 'Old Finish' version swaps the rosewood for flamed maple (laminate). But the ageing is, ahem, odd. Instead of finishing the guitar then simulating years of use, Rodriguez seems to have taken the bare wood, applied a dark brown stain directly to the wood and given it a wax polish resulting in a dulled brown finish that while not 'aged' is actually a little more appealing than it sounds on paper.

Sounds

With a rather rough, textured feel, the neck initially doesn't feel great, and with full classical nut width (50.9mm) and chunky depth it's quite a handful. The absence of any markers (face or side) isn't to our taste, but that's what classical players prefer. Yet the Model A, with its lack of plastic gloss finish, has an airy and crisp-edged percussive tone that's evocative of the true classical (more Flamenco than Concert) instrument and it records rather well, too.

Verdict

In the rarefied world of the classical guitar we fear this might be a trend too far. But when viewed from a more contemporary crossover angle, here's a nicely built, certainly ancient, if not aged, looking nylon string that could well suit a more mature player looking for a crisp classical sound without the gloss oh-so-new looks of the majority (certainly at this price range at least) of the genre. **[DB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Thin finish concept; crisp voice

We dislike: We'd prefer a more yellow/orange stain

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Mastertone Power Scaling £120

Cranked amp tone at whisper quiet levels...

CONTACT: MasterTone **PHONE:** 01895 230033 **WEB:** www.mastertone-amplifiers.co.uk

One of the holy grails of great tone is a 'cranked amp' sound, but it's hard to achieve at low volume – thanks to efficient modern speakers, even at gig levels, many 30- to 100-watt amps are barely ticking over.

Loudspeaker attenuators in between amp and speakers aren't perfect, as they alter the way an amp responds. Also, because you're working the output valves much harder, they don't last as long. Cue the smart alternative: Power Scaling – a trademarked concept originated by amp legend Kevin O'Connor of Canada's London Power. It consists of a range of retrofit modules that allow continuous proportional adjustment of a valve's operating voltages so you can adjust a Power Scaled

amp's output from 100 per cent all the way down to zero and achieve a real cranked output stage effect at any volume level.

The nature of these retrofit modules means installation is best left to the professionals, and Tony Lovatt of Mastertone is the UK's first licensed Power Scaling installer, in addition to the variety of other amp mod services the company offers.

Sounds

We tried out two converted amps, an Epiphone Valve Junior and a Fender Blues Junior re-covered in custom purple Tolex by Zilla Music. Using the Power Scaling add-on couldn't be easier: you simply turn the knob to your desired output level and balance it against the amp's volume



control. Both amps instantly sounded smoother and more dynamic at any volume level – remarkably this was maintained from full power to zero output.

Verdict

Power Scaling not only works, it works really well. If you want to hear your amp breathing properly at conversation levels and get improved recorded tone, then it may be the answer. The installed price varies depending on your amp but typically starts

at around £120. Bear in mind it's a modification that may involve punching an extra hole for a control knob, but if that's not an issue contact Mastertone for more information. **[NG]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Excellent tone and response at any volume level

We dislike: Not always reversible; voids warranty

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★