

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



Aria Series 10 Overdrive **£44**

Guitarist CHOICE

Upmarket overdrive at a competitive price

CONTACT: Aria UK **PHONE:** 01483 238720 **WEB:** www.ariauk.com

Although best known for its guitars, Aria also produces its own effects pedals and the latest Chinese-made Series 10 stompbox line spans nine funky-looking models, including this Overdrive.

The rectangular metal casing is sturdily workmanlike, while rear-mounted input and output jacks save on operating space. The accompanying 9V power input is a better bet than using a 9V battery, because the latter is awkwardly located inside the four-screw baseplate.

The Overdrive employs a quartet of controls: gain governs the overdriven signal, while clean determines dirt-free boost, tone operates on the overdrive side only and level sets the overall volume.

Sounds

Having independent overdrive and clean boosts means each can dominate completely or both may be progressively

blended to offer a hint of either upwards. Adding clean boost to the dirty side injects bags of beefy dynamics and reversing the process provides anything from a chewy, gritty break-up to smoothly singing sustain. The controls interact very effectively, while the level control ensures plenty of output and tone increases the upper mid-range attack.

Verdict

The dual boost ability is unusual to find on such an inexpensive pedal. It provides impressive sounds and very versatile performance, making this a real bargain. **[PD]**

The Bottom Line

We like: A great range of sounds, boost function

We dislike: Battery access

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



TC Electronic Nova Drive **£319**

Guitarist CHOICE

The latest Nova is two effects in one - and more

CONTACT: TC Electronic **PHONE:** 0800 917 8926 **WEB:** www.tcelectronic.com

The Nova Drive is an overdrive and distortion, each with its own footswitch and parameter knobs, in a single pedal. But it also adds digital control to the equation for flexibility, plus onboard memories to save the overall sound of the pedal with a single effect (or both) active.

Sounds

You can use the sounds separately or together, two selector switches determining how they interact. In toggle mode only one of the two can be on at once, while in normal mode one or both can be active - either with one chosen effect driving the other, or with the signal processed in parallel.

The overdrive and distortion sound in both of these modes can be either saved in a preset or be derived WYSIWYG-style from the positions of the parameter knobs. Bank mode allows the footswitches to select the two presets stored in

whichever of the nine onboard banks is selected.

Both the overdrive and distortion are high quality with plenty of variation on tap, but can be nicely transparent, preserving your core tone, especially as the overdrive can be mixed in proportionately with your dry sound. With all its options, the Nova Drive has the widest range of dirty tones you're likely to hear in one non-modelling pedal.

Verdict

The most flexible way that's so far been invented to put analogue overdrive and distortion at your feet. **[TC]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Sounds; routing options; mix facility

We dislike: 12V power

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Tascam US-122 MkII £139

New version of a long-established audio interface

CONTACT: Tascam UK PHONE: 01923 438888 WEB: www.tascam.co.uk

Tascam's original US-122 audio interface was one of the very first ruggedly portable audio interfaces that came equipped with a dedicated guitar input. Flash forward to six years later, and the basic premise of the original unit is as valid as it ever was. But now Tascam has revamped it, with better audio specs and a fresh look, to create the US-122 MkII.

A two-in/two-out 96kHz/24-bit interface connected to computer via USB 2.0 and powered via the cable, the US-122 MkII features XLR inputs with phantom power, plus a pair of 6.4mm jack line inputs, one of which of course doubles as a high impedance guitar input. You also get MIDI in and out for connecting synths and the like.

Sounds

With quality preamps and converters, the US-122 MkII provides really good sonic results. It's also tough enough to go anywhere that you happen to take your laptop and has large, easily grabbed controls, making hands-on operation a doddle. This means you can quickly set up the monitor mix knob to get the right balance between the computer output and your raw input sound for latency-free monitoring.

Verdict

The US-122 MkII is about as practical an audio companion for your computer as you'll find and, as a copy of Steinberg's Cubase LE4 software is included, it will provide a useful

entry point into computer recording. If you want extra facilities, the US-144 MkII (£161) adds digital stereo S/PDIF input and output for four-in/four-out operation and also provides individual volume knobs for the headphone and line outputs. [TC]



The Bottom Line

We like: Sturdy; good sound; latency-free monitoring
We dislike: It won't fit into your pocket!

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Taylor NS24ce £1,123

You might not know it, but Taylor makes nylon-string guitars too

CONTACT: Fender GBI PHONE: 01342 331700 WEB: www.taylorguitars.com

In 2009 Taylor announced its most affordable nylon-string electros to date, both based on the company's most popular GA (Grand Auditorium) shape in non-cutaway (£970) and cutaway versions, as we're looking at here.

It's a typically flawless piece: ultra clean Sitka spruce top, deep and rich brown laminate

rosewood back and sides, with 14-fret-to-the-body mahogany neck (with truss rod), slot headstock and 20-fret ebony 'board. The nut width is trim at 47.6mm, the fingerboard has side dots and is cambered, not flat, and the neck shape is slim with a typically Taylor 'C' shape. The only 'bling' to the all-satin-finished guitar is the

laser-cut soundhole rosette: smart and understated.

Sounds

Acoustically it has surprising life, resonance and projection. It's snappier – more Flamenco-sounding, perhaps, than a rounder, fuller concert classical – yet that suits percussive Latin styles, not to mention standard

strumming and picking. It's very well set-up with none of the struggle that's usually associated with a nylon-string, and tuning-wise it's very stable too. The NS-T undersaddle pickup runs to volume, treble and bass rotaries and the plugged-in sound accurately captures the life and snap of the acoustic performance.

Verdict

Not a powered-up classical, it's a Taylor with nylon strings, an exciting hybrid of steel and nylon that any steel-string player would take to. [DB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Build; playability; steel-meets-nylon style
We dislike: It's priced the wrong side of a grand for mainstream appeal
Guitarist says: One of the most successful steel/nylon hybrids we've played, ideal for percussive styles and easy for a steel-string player to handle

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Overloud TH1 £222

Amp and effects in the virtual world

CONTACT: Overloud PHONE: 0800 917 8926 WEB: www.overloud.com

Overloud's interesting new TH1 amp and effects simulation software can work in plug-in and standalone versions and uses a modular method to create its amp and effects rigs – known here as 'sounds'. There are five module types to choose from (stompboxes, expression pedals, amplifiers, cabinets and rack effects) and these can be put in either a serial or parallel signal chain in any number, any order and at any position that takes your fancy. A wide range of models can be chosen for each module, including a whopping 65 stompboxes, pedals and rack effects, 10 amplifiers and 21 cabinets, alongside 18 microphones to hook them up to. A maximum of 13 sounds can be stored in a bank and each sound can have

up to eight variations – all in all, TH1 comes with 12 factory banks, featuring 93 sounds and 462 different variations!

Sounds

The TH1 user-interface appears as six stacked horizontal panels, each one dedicated to a particular function, and is very easy to navigate. A dedicated 'sound' panel makes quick work of choosing a preset, and editing is quick and easy with an overview of the signal chain in one panel while the panel below can display individual modules.

The sounds available here are really very good and effortlessly playable. There's plenty of potential to get creative, with loads of variation in cab mic'ing and the ability to morph between two amplifiers.



Overloud TH1 is right at home on your Apple Mac

Verdict

With a bunch of authentic-sounding and playable amp and effects rigs on offer, TH-1 holds its own next to the established players. You can download TH1 for a free trial period, so check it out for yourselves. [TC]

The Bottom Line

We like: Easy user interface; sounds; amp morphing
We dislike: iLok licensing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Sonuus G2M Guitar-to-MIDI converter £79

Affordable high-trickery!

CONTACT: Et Cetera PHONE: 01706 829457 WEB: www.etcetera.co.uk

The usual route if you want to play a synth, sampler or drum machine from your guitar is to equip it with a hexaphonic pickup linked to a box that converts the pitch and dynamics information to MIDI. The Sonuus G2M, however, dispenses with that, taking the signal straight from the guitar's jack socket and converting it directly to MIDI.

Unlike a hex pickup system, which separates the info from all six strings and can be used to play chords, the G2M is designed for monophonic operation and can only be used to create single-note lines.

In Use

Connecting via MIDI to a synth, sampler or DAW allows

you to play all manner of interesting sounds monophonically – playing a chord or doublestop will confuse the system as to which note to play. Using guitar-to-MIDI conversion, it's always good to pick cleanly and accurately to minimise triggering false notes, but the G2M's note detection is really solid and any time delay is negligible. Consequently, the G2M works fine for playing MIDI notes into your DAW, perhaps for creating a bassline, and it's also great live for playing synth sounds on their own or blended with your conventional guitar sound sent to your usual rig from the G2M's 'thru' jack.



Verdict

If you're on the lookout for pitch-to-MIDI conversion and aren't that bothered about playing chords, or you're really not keen on the idea of sticking a hexaphonic pickup on your guitar, then the G2M is the perfect cost-effective plug-in-and-play solution. [TC]

The Bottom Line

We like: Easy MIDIfication with no hassle; good note detection; accurately tracks string bending
We dislike: Battery-only

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Palmer Daccapo £44

A clever new re-amping tool

CONTACT: Adam Hall Ltd PHONE: 01702 613922 WEB: www.adamhall.com

If you've recorded a guitar, but decide later that you don't like the sound too much and want to change it, there are a couple of options. The first is to scrap it and start again, or you could do what's known as re-amping. One option is to use amp simulation software as a plug-in on the recorded track, the other option is to physically send the recorded signal to an amp so it can then be re-recorded with a different tone, which is where Palmer's Daccapo comes in.

The Daccapo is designed to take care of any impedance matching issues, so the signal from a mixing desk or audio interface is at the right impedance for the amp's input.

In use

About the size of two fag packets stuck back to back, the

Daccapo has an XLR input with a pad switch for attenuating too hot levels. Output to the amp is via a 6.4mm jack socket coupled to a small knob for setting the level. The Daccapo eliminates ground loop humming thanks to the use of a transformer, but it also features a ground switch in case you need to lift the earth when connected to a particular piece of gear. This was something that proved extremely useful when sending our recorded dry guitar from a Pro Tools rig to a Fender combo, resulting in the amp being fed with a signal of excellent quality.

Verdict

If you need an interface for



re-amping, the Daccapo does exactly what it's designed for with no problems. [TC]

The Bottom Line

We like: Compact, untainted

sound quality, ground switch

We dislike: No mixer out jack

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Vox V845 £58

A wah with which to cut your teeth...

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

The history of the wah and its uses is widely available, but it's certainly true that the first recognisable wah pedal introduced into the mainstream was by the Thomas Organ Company, who owned the Vox brand, in 1966.

Vox still produces a pedal that echoes that classic design and tone, the V847, and this new unit is unashamedly intended to give players on a budget – or those looking for their very first wah – the chance to own a piece of guitar history.

The tone is intended to be the same, with the differences between the two pedals being mostly cosmetic. The V847's chrome treadle and die-cast zinc chassis is replaced here by a lighter aluminium construction daubed in black,

which leads to the V845 weighing in at 731g less than its more illustrious sibling.

Probably the most notable distinction is the V845's lack of a buffered input and, as it's best to have a wah at the front of your signal chain, this may be an issue. Still, if you're a wah virgin, this shouldn't compromise your tone to any noticeable extent.

Sounds

This wah has one of the widest sweeps of any comparable pedal out there, which allows for a wholly satisfying wacka-wacka and associated funk styles. The mid notch is especially honky, which lends itself nicely to Vai-style human voice effects – all in all, a perfectly usable wah.



Verdict

If the non-buffered input is an issue, then we suggest dropping £82 on a V847, but if money is too tight to mention, the V845 is an admirable companion with which to begin your journey towards super-wahdom. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Price; tone;

all-black livery

We dislike: No buffered input; quite light

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★