

# WALRUS AUDIO ROUND-UP

We cherry pick a quartet of stompboxes from this boutique American manufacturer, which promises vintage tones that meet modern expectations

**BASED** in Oklahoma, Walrus Audio has a wide spectrum of artists from the across the alternative world stomping on its hand-built, screen-printed boutique effects. What's more, the company's boxes, such as the recently-launched Messner Overdrive (named after a mountaineer, no less), are creating a serious buzz in the tonehound world. What better time, then, to take a look?

Joining the Messner in this round-up are the equally-sized Iron Horse Distortion, and the larger Bellwether Analog Delay and Descent – the latter a high-spec reverb unit with an onboard octave up/down function. While the Messner and Iron Horse draw power from a single nine-volt battery apiece or a mains adaptor (an optional extra), the Bellwether and Descent can only be run courtesy of the National Grid. Again, you'll have to shell out for a mains adaptor if you don't have a suitable item knocking about. Let's see what's occurring under those unusual graphics.



## WALRUS AUDIO MESSNER £179

The pinnacle of transparency

**SPEC'D AS** a low-gain transparent overdrive, the Messner is designed to allow the tone of your guitar to shine through. It's also one of the subtlest overdrive units we've ever come across, even with the gain control at full tilt. In the 'closed' position, the mini-toggle switch engages the internal clip diodes for some extra breakup and compression. This mode responds to the dynamics of our playing beautifully, unleashing some extra bite with robust rhythm work. Think Mike Campbell's sound on Tom Petty's *American Girl* and *Refugee* for reference.

## WALRUS AUDIO DESCENT £279

Get a room... and much more

**THIS OUTSTANDING** reverb unit features three main settings: hall, reverse and shimmer. The first two are self-explanatory and you can get anything from a subtle room reverb to a virtual cavernous space. Shimmer is tougher to describe to the uninitiated, it's like an ambient throb or warble, almost like a church organ sound. Like the other modes, it can be run in conjunction with the onboard octaver with its range of plus/minus one octave. If you think the reverb on your amp is cutting it, you need to get a load of this thing.





## WALRUS AUDIO BELLWETHER £329

The ultimate 'vintage' echo machine

**AN ANALOGUE** delay with a level of on-the-fly controllability we'd only expect from a digital machine, the Bellwether is a mind-blowing piece of work. The tap tempo gets things off to a start matching the delay to the speed of your playing. What's great is that you can quickly chop your repeats into quarter notes, eighth notes, dotted eighth notes and triplets. We also like the vintage degradation of each success repeat, a warm by-product of analogue 'bucket brigade' technology and how tweaking the rate and depth controls adds some 'wow and flutter' for a pretty convincing 60s tape delay effect. That old cliché that 'we're just scratching the surface' was coined for the likes of the Bellwether. It's a monster.

## WALRUS AUDIO IRON HORSE £159

Old school brutality

**WAY MORE** hirsute than the Messner, this filthy beast secretes thick 70s-style distortion that works great for old Sabbath riffs. There's more good news thanks to a toggle switch that flicks between a trio of clipping diodes to offer different distortion tones. Experiment with the toggle, distortion and tone controls and you'll find glam riff-fuel such as T-Rex and Bowie, and a cracking stab at the Stooges' *I Wanna Be Your Dog* proto-punk sound. Addictive, versatile and just plain fun. Don't look this horse's gifts in the mouth.

### AT A GLANCE

**TYPE:** Overdrive, analogue delay, reverb and distortion pedals

**SOCKETS:** Messner: input, output, 9V power; Descent: input, left/right outputs, expression pedal (optional), remote pedal (optional), 9V power input; Bellwether: input, left/right outputs, expression pedal (optional), remote pedal (optional), 9V power input; Iron Horse: input, output, 9V power

**BYPASS:** True bypass

**POWER:** Messner & Iron Horse: 9V battery or mains adaptor (not supplied); Bellwether & Descent: mains adaptor only (not supplied)

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The Bellwether is a mind-blowing piece of work... it's a monster

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

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

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

IRON HORSE					
SUMMARY	FEATURES				
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