

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



Spidercapo **\$39.95**

Never be restricted by concert tuning again...

CONTACT: Spidercapo **PHONE:** +1845 679 3391 **WEB:** www.spidercapo.com

We guitarists sometimes need to take certain steps to get ourselves off a particularly expansive techniques plateau. A traditional capo can breathe new life into tired licks, while experimenting with tunings can be equally rejuvenating. So, consider the Spidercapo, a design that fuses these two concepts into a single unit, and may well prove to be the sweetest shot in the arm you can give to stale technique.

It includes six finger handles sited around an adjustable central bar that can be rotated onto the individual strings to apply pressure in the manner of a standard capo, but the beauty is that you can elect to keep any of the strings you choose open, depending on which handles you employ. This in turn enables you to play with specific tunings and apply them to the Spidercapo placement. Once you've become proficient, it's possible to fret notes behind the capo too.

In Use

We'd suggest that you try out some of the recommended

settings to start off with, as the first few attempts with the capo can be daunting. However, we were soon finger picking using unusual intervals and we found a good place to start was to set the capo at the third fret in standard tuning and leave the D and G strings open while clamping the remainder.

Verdict

The fact that such an item actually does what its associated literature boasts it does is a pleasant surprise, and the potential for genuinely new tonal applications is virtually limitless. Best of all, it works equally well with both electric and acoustic. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: It's a truly unique and original tool that's mind- and technique-expanding

We dislike: There's no apparent UK-based distributor at the moment

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



ER-9 Custom Protectors **£164.50**

Custom hearing protection - you need it...

CONTACT: ACS **PHONE:** 01295 266665 **WEB:** www.hearingprotection.co.uk

It's not the first time that we've written about ER custom earplugs. To be honest, we should write about protecting your hearing every month. Many of us think about it, but do we actually do anything about it? Earplugs are readily available, but few take the art to the extremities of ER.

First off you make an appointment to have a mould taken of your ear's canal. Once done, you chose the material you'd like: clear as standard, but options (plus £10) include black, yellow, white, red, blue and swirl combos or 'glitterised'. A couple of weeks later the plugs arrive.

In Use

Three filters are available: ER-9, ER-15 and ER-25. The 9s offer the least attenuation, the 25s the most, and are suggested for acoustic and classical musicians - the former being our specific bag (if you want a different, additional filter it'll cost £76.50). The plugs arrive in a

neat case with some lubricating cream and once we'd worked out which way they go in, hey presto, it's like you've got your fingers in your ears - you can still hear but someone's pulled the volume down. "The ER-9 custom moulded plug is tuned to provide a predefined reduction in ambient noise by 9dB(A), while maintaining the clarity," says ACS. We hear you.

Verdict

For low level environments these ER-9s are perfect: comfortable, subtle reduction without clarity loss, but after a busy night playing in a crowded bar you and your ears somehow feel more relaxed. [DB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Custom fit; clarity; subtle reduction

We dislike: Expensive, but then what price can you put on your hearing?

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Tone Freak Effects Abunai 2 **£149**

Guitarist
CHOICE

Get your blues-rock freak on with the Abunai 2 overdrive

CONTACT: Guitarguitar **WEB:** www.guitarguitar.co.uk **PHONE:** 0191 222 0466



Tone Freak Effects is a small, American boutique pedal manufacturer that's making a sizable impact, especially with LA session players. Indeed, enthusiastic head honcho Derek Tabata ensures tonal quality by designing and hand-assembling each unit himself. Of the seven pedals currently available, here we have the Abunai 2 overdrive: a classic overdrive with a couple of Derek's freaky modifications.

Its compact size will take up little pedalboard real estate, and the feature set is compact too; the three controls include level, tone and drive. This also encompasses a mini-switch, which offers three clipping configurations: symmetrical,

asymmetrical and no clipping, with a tweak modification for higher gain settings.

Sounds

Sonically, with its subtle clipping options, the Abunai 2 offers a fresh twist on the standard TS808 design. Symmetrical clipping decreases overall volume, counteracted by boosting the level control, leaving you with a tighter mid-range, less sizzle in the top end and no flubbing out in the bottom end – great for blues-rock playing styles.

The other selection uses three diodes in an asymmetrical configuration; making it softer, with plenty of honk in the mids that edge toward John Mayer's

bubbling lead tone. The non-clipping mode is the loudest of the three, giving classic TS808 tones but with more gain on tap.

Verdict

A freakishly good Texas-style overdrive that takes its heritage from the standard Ibanez TS808. However, the Abunai manages to add something fresh to proceedings, with SRV/Mayer blues tones and enough

gain to entice heavier rock players alike. **[DD]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Boutique looks and build; unique tonal twists; high-gain
We dislike: Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Godin Multiac Grand Concert Duet Ambiance **£1,553**

Multiac gets a new nylon-string with Fishman's microphone modelling

CONTACT: Active Music Distribution **PHONE:** 0208 693 5678 **WEB:** www.godinguitars.com

The latest addition to Godin's Multiac range is the wordily titled Grand Concert Duet Ambiance. To interpret that, it's a full nut width (51mm) nylon-string with 12-frets to the body – ideal then in theory for players used to the feel of a

classical guitar. Typically well made, it is however a lot heavier than a good concert classic and despite the relatively thinline body (60mm) that Tele-like upper shoulder does seem to add to a more electric like bulk. The neck also, while very nicely

shaped, has a textured satin finish that feels rather cheap and, on this neck style, we'd prefer a more regular uncambered fretboard.

The onboard Fishman electronics are excellent – along with the normal undersaddle

pickup and three-band EQ, we get four condenser 'mic images' that can be blended in.

Sounds

Multiacs – steel or nylon – always deliver. The Ambiance's mic images, however, really capture the studio tonality of a well-recorded, quality nylon-string. Plugged straight into an AER Classical combo with EQs flat, the four voices, with subtly different tonalities, sound excellent. For live use they're almost too pristine, but blending with the undersaddle smooths things out a little.

Verdict

We're not sure whether true classical players will take to this quite chunky-feeling guitar, but in terms of its plugged-in sound, it takes some beating. **[DB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Multiac concept; the mic imaging
We dislike: Chunky; heavy; neck feel could be improved

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Shadow SH124 Kill Pot **£17.95**

An affordable and effective killswitch for all

CONTACT: Barnes & Mullins **PHONE:** 01691 652449 **WEB:** www.shadow-electronics.com

The **killswitch** is fast becoming the on-guitar gadget of choice for hard rock and metal players, even though the method of swiftly killing your guitar's signal to produce harsh staccato effects is a long-established one.

Commercially available killswitches do tend to be few and far between. In fact we only managed to dredge up an old Jackson Custom Shop option from our dusty memory banks and we're not certain that it was ever available as a piece of retro-fit electronica of the kind we're presented with here.

The Shadow Kill Pot comprises an unlatching push/push pot that allows you to kill the guitar's signal quickly and easily. Rated at 500k, it can be used to replace either an

existing volume or tone pot on any electric guitar that offers anything close to standard wiring. Active pickups do present problem, and Shadow tell us that plans for 300k and 1 meg pots are in the works.

In Use

We dropped the SH124 into the tone position of a Yamaha Pacifica 112V, after just five minutes with a soldering iron, and found that straight away we could mute seriously overdriving chords, tap out SOS in Morse Code and produce the whole gamut of killswitch effects. The pot also has a small notch at its maximum rotation to ensure that you don't inadvertently roll off the volume or tone while in the throes of tapping.



Verdict

This is a really cool pot modification that works perfectly well, and such is its modest price and ease of installation, we would enthusiastically suggest that no rock player should be without such an innovative yet simple device any longer. **[SB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Functionality; ease of fitting; price
We dislike: Limited to 500k for now; not the most robust pot around

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Seymour Duncan Deja Vu Tap Delay **£269**

Duncan adds some delay to its range

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

A **hybrid** digital and analogue delay, the non-programmable Deja Vu is ruggedly built, with dual chassis-mounted footswitches, five rotary knobs, a mono input, stereo outputs and battery or mains adapted power supply.

The D/A Blend control scales from pristine digital delay to a relatively lo-fi bucket brigade analogue and sets the character of your repeats – this is even further enhanced via a duet of standard feedback and modulation controls. The Ratio/Delay Time control offers two functions. In Delay mode it ranges from 3ms to 2600ms (and it can be longer, around 20 seconds, if you hold the Tap Tempo); at the end of its clockwise range is loop mode

(again approximately 20 seconds): hold down the Tap Tempo footswitch to record, lift your foot off and it plays back. In Ratio mode we have five repeat sub-divisions. Bypass can either be True Bypass (where the delay trails are cut off) or Trailing Repeats.

The delays can be further manipulated via the Wet Out/Insert that can act as a direct wet out or, via an insert cable, to send just the wet signal to another processor and back into the unit. FB Insert allows you to inset a volume pedal, for example, for further control over the repeats.

Verdict

What no 'sounds'? Well, they aren't really necessary – here's

a delay pedal that does exactly what it says it does. It sounds extremely good and is hugely versatile as a conventional delay, complex rhythm generator and simple looper. We're just not sure which mode we should use. Maybe we should buy two? **[DB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Bomb-proof build; array of features
We dislike: There's almost too much to choose from!

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★





Electro-Harmonix 22 Caliber £79



The world's smallest genuine amplifier?

CONTACT: E-HX PHONE: 01691 652449 WEB: www.ehx.com



We need to clear a few things up before we get into the 22 Caliber. It's not an effects pedal, a DI box, or a booster; nor is it even a preamp. It is, in fact, a 22-watt power amp that's been squeezed into a chassis measuring a mere 110mm by 55mm and is compatible with any speaker cab with a rating of between four and 16 ohms.

Imagine it's a traditional amp, and treat it in exactly the same way. So, you plug your guitar into the input and from the output you'll need to run a speaker cable into the input of a speaker cab. Controls comprise merely a volume pot plus a bright/norm switch that adds or reduces tonal bite.

It's entirely possible to run your effects chain straight into the input and, if you require some more tonal versatility, it's likely that you'll actually need to utilise an overdrive device of some description.

In Use

Having said that, as with a traditional amplifier, the higher you wind the volume control, the fatter and dirtier the tone gets and, through an Orange 2 x 12 cab, the tone is absolutely huge. It offers that organic and wide-open overdrive that will attract QOTSA fans in their droves, but with a modern overdrive pedal in front of it, it reacts just as you'd hope.

Verdict

Although perfectly usable in its own right, we reckon this is the perfect solution to 'broken amp syndrome'. Buy one, pop it in your gig-bag and you'll never fall foul of a popped fuse or busted valve again. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Ease of use; tone; simplicity of concept; price
We dislike: Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Korg CA-1 and GA-1 £13.79 & £11.49

Two new affordable and compact tuners from Korg

CONTACT: Korg UK PHONE: 01908 857100 WEB: www.korg.co.uk

Korg's new CA-1 and GA-1 are ultra-compact tuners, with a small price tag and useful features all in a mobile phone-sized package.

The CA-1 is the chromatic model with a straightforward feature set that offers a wide range of pitch detection, A0-C8 range for use with wind, string and keyboard instruments, an indicator for major and minor thirds, a 6.4mm input jack and built-in microphone, and lastly, a fully adjustable calibration function (410-480Hz).

The GA-1 is a dedicated guitar or bass tuner with two pitch options. Its wide detection range will handle a seven-string guitar (7B through 1E) and six-string basses (low B through to high C) in bass mode. Quinta Flat tuning lets you tune one to five semitones flat for increased flexibility.

Both tuners have visual and audio tuning indicators, with an LED needle and three colour indicators (red, green, red) for backstage or practice tuning. Both tuners have sound buttons which change cycle through each push; on the GA-1, 7B, 6E, 5A, 4D, 3G, 2B, 1E in guitar mode, while the CA-1 offers, A4-B \flat , 4 notes and additional semitone intervals from C4 through C5. Both the displays are the same size, though neither feature backlit screens.

In Use

Once you've got to grips with the features, the CA-1 is easy to use, which makes it very handy for quick backstage and rehearsal tuning. The LED indicators are

smooth, while the calibration function proves very handy if there are any other instruments in a band.

The GA-1 is more basic overall but offers user-friendly functions that won't bamboozle beginners and are easy to use

for the more experienced. However, compared to the CA-1, the GA-1's LED needle seems a little clunky.

Verdict

The GA-1 is a low-priced, easy-to-use tuner that could quite easily grace your case. The CA-1 offers more accurate tuning blended with professional features perfect for home studios or rehearsals. Although in certain environments trickier tunings may be made difficult, as neither features a backlit screen. [DD]

The Bottom Line

We like: Compact size; ease of use; price
We dislike: The LED screen isn't backlit

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

