

Quicktest

Providence FDR-1F Flame Drive £299.95

Even more refinement, if you want it

CONTACT: Guitar XS PHONE: 01227 832558 WEB: www.providence.jp

This is the first in the new upmarket F Series range from revered brand Providence, as the 'Free The Tone' range is phased out. We get VNS (vitalized noiseless switching) to eliminate pops when turning on and off, while DCG is double-contact-grounding on the jacks for improved connection and reliability. You also get the Vitalizer circuit which is a super-plush buffer that, unlike 'normal' buffers, responds to input impedance in a similar way to the input stage of a good valve amp, according to designer Yuki Hayashi. The most obvious result is no tone sucking when the effect is turned off, while clarity and dynamics from the guitar are exceptional, even with long cable runs.

Inside, everything is soldered directly to custom PCBs, but metal fixings and the switch protector minimise the risk of damage. The all-important IC chip is disguised with plastic.

Sounds

It's softer around the edges than the rock-rhythm loving Sonic Drive; it's less mid-heavy and has the impression of more gain than the blues-leaning Stampede OD, perhaps because it retains a sizzly, Marshall-like edge. It's not as overtly 'rock' as the Heat Blaster, naturally. It'll clean right up when you roll the



guitar's volume back so your guitar never, ever gets lost in the pedal. The 'bass boost' switch is useful for fattening single coils, or adding extra low-end resonance if you're using a little amp/cab.

Verdict

A superb overdrive, but only the truly tone obsessed will justify the extra outlay over the S Series for the extra sonic integrity. That might just be you. [MT]

The Bottom Line

We like: Range of overdrive; rich harmonics; clarity
We dislike: Only the price

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Electro-Harmonix 44 Magnum £109

44 watts in the palm of your hand

CONTACT: Macari's PHONE: 0207 836 2856 WEB: www.ehx.com



In Use

When used by itself, the Magnum's clean tone is perfectly acceptable and – into our Orange cab loaded with four Celestion Vintage 30s – there's enough headroom before break-up begins. Set the volume anywhere past 12 o'clock and it begins to overdrive, but not in an especially musical way and, at full blast, the drive is overly flabby and indistinct. A significant improvement comes when pedals and effects are used to help the tone, be it smoothing it with a Tube Screamer or augmenting it with the likes of the Line 6 M13.

Verdict

As an eminently portable safety net for your temperamental vintage amp, the 44 Magnum could prove indispensable. The intrinsic tone isn't especially impressive, but feed a pedal or two through it and it's certainly very usable. Buy one, slip it into your gigbag and never be stymied again. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Portable; works well; adequate headroom
We dislike: Doesn't sound great by itself

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitar Tech GTE005 Active Volume Pedal **£49.99**

Being quiet has never been easier

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

This is a unique volume pedal in that it includes independent minimum and maximum level pots as well as a dedicated fixed-level output for connection to a tuner. The untidy plastic strip on the treadle and inconsistently-bent chassis wings let the construction down somewhat, but the pedal seems robust enough. It rests on a quartet of removable rubber feet and the battery compartment is also located on the bottom panel.

In Use

The pedal uses a special MAG-POT system based around a magnetic sensor rather than a traditional

potentiometer at the heart of its operation, which will certainly extend the pedal's life. The treadle is smooth and nicely balanced, which equates to a satisfactory volume swell, and the only criticism we have is that the fade-down to no signal can be a little abrupt. The MAG-POT system is quiet and unobtrusive and, most impressively, the two level controls allow the pedal to be set as a genuine and stable boost for solos from minimum to maximum levels, which is simple to pull off every time.

Verdict

For everything from Alex Lifeson-style swells to silencing

your noisy rig on the fly, the GTE005 has your back. None of the similar units that we're aware of made by BOSS, Ernie Ball or Morley provide independent minimum and maximum volume pots in this way – the GT005 is among the most versatile volume pedals we've played. [SB]



Guitarist CHOICE

The Bottom Line

We like: The minimum and maximum level pots

We dislike: The faux diamond strip on the treadle

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

SNARK by Qwik Tune SN-1 guitar and bass tuner **£14.99**

The SNARK gets a little brother...

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

Classed as a guitar and bass tuner (as opposed to the original SN-2's description as an 'all instrument' tuner) the SN-1 is effectively the same machine but with a more limited frequency range. Not that that should bother guitar and bass players. The only other difference is that there's no mic mode (really only necessary if it won't fit on your headstock), just vibration mode. And thanks to the well-designed rubber grip clip, it fits on all the guitars and basses, acoustic and electric, we had to hand. The tuner head, which rotates 360 degrees, houses the circular LCD display and unlike some headstock tuners, can be positioned exactly where you need it.

Other features include pitch calibration from 415-466Hz, a

tap tempo visual metronome, and a transpose function that keeps the readout E-E even when you're using a capo on the first four frets.

In Use

With the same 'engine' as the SN-2, the SN-1 is just as good. There's a clear read-out with fast pitch identification on a variety of guitars, basses and even our ukulele. Superb.

Verdict

The SN-2 has proved invaluable for practise and gigs, and has good – if not exceptional – battery life. The SN-1 trims off unnecessary features, comes in a more palatable black as opposed to red hue, and saves you just about the price of a set of strings. A no brainer! [DB]



Guitarist CHOICE

The Bottom Line

We like: Speed and accuracy; extra features

We dislike: Nothing, and it's cheaper than the SN-2, plus a little easier on the eye than its big brother

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★