



# TWO NOTES LE PREAMP SERIES

£219 Each

When is a preamp a pedal or, well, a preamp? Two Notes blurs the distinction with four new preamp-plus pedals

**Words** Trevor Curwen **Photography** Olly Curtis

**F**rench company Two Notes Engineering is best known for its Torpedo range, which specialises in cabinet modelling both in hardware and software products. One such product, the Torpedo C.A.B. is a high-end cabinet simulator in a stompbox format that can load impulse responses and features an input stage specifically tailored to accept pedal-level signals. With that as a starting point, the company believed that building a high-quality pedalboard to entirely replace a conventional valve-amplifier system was a distinct possibility and set about designing a preamplifier in pedal form to complement the Torpedo C.A.B. The result was not one but four separate preamps, all sharing the same design features, but each designed with a particular sound in mind. Le Clean, Le Crunch, Le Lead and Le Bass can all be used with a speaker simulator for a complete direct signal chain, but can also be paired with a power amp and speaker, or used for direct recording. Two Notes says

that they can also be used as a conventional dirt pedal in front of a guitar amp.

The pedals are a high-voltage design with a 12AX7 (ECC83) valve at the heart, clearly seen glowing through a glass window on top of the pedal and ventilated via a series of cut-out slots down either side. These are twin-channel pedals with separate footswitches for channel A and channel B, but with the ability to use both channels together if desired, initiated by pressing both footswitches simultaneously.

The two channels can run together either in parallel or cascaded, named by Two Notes as Cold Fusion and Hot Fusion respectively. Those two modes are selected via a small button nestling among the pedal knobs and there's a Fusion knob that determines the level of channel A that will be added to channel B when in parallel, and the level of channel A that will drive channel B when cascaded. Channel A offers a lower-gain valve stage than channel B, and features Gain and Volume knobs as well as

pre-gain Bass and Treble EQ. By contrast, the gainier Channel B features its own Gain and Volume knobs but has its EQ section post gain, adding a sweepable Midrange control to the Bass and Treble.

You can set the pedals up in various ways. You get a standard input for guitar and a standard output for the preamp sound, but also get a Thru jack to feed your dry signal to another source, perhaps an amp used in conjunction. There's also an effects loop to connect one or more pedals for blending with the preamp signal. An XLR output is included to pass the signal to a mixing desk or audio interface and is equipped with switchable analogue speaker simulation based on the Torpedo – and this is also implemented at the headphone output. There's also MIDI implementation to send Program Change messages to other gear, or have certain Le Preamp functions remotely switched.

Let's take a closer look at the foursome over the page...



1



2



3



4





## 1 TWO NOTES LE CLEAN £219

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Preamp pedal

**FEATURES:** True  
hardwired bypass

**CONTROLS:** Channel A  
(Gain, Volume, Bass,  
Treble), Channel B (same,  
but with Sweep, Mid),  
Fusion, Hot/Cold Fusion  
switch, Ground Lift,  
Speaker Sim Footswitches

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard  
input and output, XLR DI  
output, standard send, and  
return, Thru, headphone  
output, MIDI In, MIDI Out

**POWER:** 12V DC adaptor

**DIMENSIONS:** 124 (w) x  
189 (d) x 50 mm (h)

**First Line Distribution**  
**01626 853019**  
**[www.two-notes.com](http://www.two-notes.com)**

**Designed to** deliver the sort of tones associated with Fender amps, the pedal outputs pristine clean tone from channel A. It's a sweet sound that you can focus in nicely with the bass and treble knobs and is just crying out for a touch of spring reverb. The in-built switchable speaker sim does a decent tone-shaping job for headphone monitoring or direct recording, but it doesn't have the range or complexity of the IR-based Torpedo C.A.B. Channel B cranks things for a nice bit of natural-sounding breakup, while both channels together in Cold fusion mode offers some useful blends – clean with a bit of grit, or raunch with clarity.

Now, it may be named Le Clean, but the pedal can get a bit dirty, too, in Hot Fusion mode, as channel A boosts channel B and can come across like a blackface Deluxe turned all the way up with careful juxtaposition of gain and Fusion knobs. **[TC]**

**VERDICT** Fender flavour in a versatile package for direct recording or at the heart of your rig

7/10

## 2 TWO NOTES LE CRUNCH £219

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Preamp pedal

**FEATURES:** True  
hardwired bypass

**CONTROLS:** Channel A  
(Gain, Volume, Bass,  
Treble), Channel B (same,  
but with Sweep, Mid),  
Fusion, Hot/Cold Fusion  
switch, Ground Lift,  
Speaker Sim Footswitches

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard  
input, standard output,  
XLR DI output, standard  
send, standard return,  
Standard Thru, mini-jack  
headphone output, MIDI  
In, MIDI Out

**POWER:** 12V DC adaptor

**DIMENSIONS:** 124 (w) x  
189 (d) x 50 mm (h)

**The French** cop a bit of Brit style with Le Crunch – their intention being 'M' flavour. Channel A can deliver some of the glassy clean tones you'd get from Marshalls, while channel B ups the raunch factor for a more cranked-stack vibe. In front of an amp to our ears, though, the gainier sounds are overly brittle with a top-end fizz that needs sorting by keeping the treble knob really low. However, careful EQ and lower gain settings deliver usable crunch tones.

If you're just looking for a Marshall-in-a-box pedal for in front of your amp, there are more practical options, but its ability to undertake a range of tasks may make it worth your while, not least that these pedals can be gig savers – you may wish to use them as boost/overdrive/distortion pedals in your chain, but that XLR output can send speaker-simulated amp-like sounds to FOH if your amp breaks down. **[TC]**

**VERDICT** If the overall concept of these pedals appeals, try this one for some British rock sounds

7/10

## 3 TWO NOTES LE LEAD £219

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Preamp pedal

**FEATURES:** True  
hardwired bypass

**CONTROLS:** Channel A  
(Gain, Volume, Bass,  
Treble), Channel B (same,  
but with Sweep, Mid),  
Fusion, Hot/Cold Fusion  
switch, Ground Lift,  
Speaker Sim Footswitches

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard  
input, standard output,  
XLR DI output, standard  
send, standard return,  
Standard Thru, mini-jack  
headphone output, MIDI  
In, MIDI Out

**POWER:** 12V DC adaptor

**DIMENSIONS:** 124 (w) x  
189 (d) x 50 mm (h)

**Le Lead** is the destination of choice for modern high-gain tone. Clean channel A offers quite a contrast compared with what channel B is capable of. By itself, it records well and can deliver a pretty cool boost pedal for an amp, but to a player looking for high-gain sounds, it may perhaps be of more use when used in the Fusion modes to blend with channel B for adding a touch of clarity to the compressed saturation or boosting it for extra gain.

Anyone looking for rock and metal tones to combine with a speaker simulator for a complete system might like to give this a listen: channel B's swept-mid EQ is able to variously set up scooped sounds or add boost for extra body or presence. Like Le Crunch, though, when using the pedal purely as a dirt box, we find the gainier voicings bright and need to tame the fizz to get results that complement our amp. **[TC]**

**VERDICT** High-gain sounds in a form factor that lends itself to a range of scenarios

7/10

## 4 TWO NOTES LE BASS £219

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Preamp pedal

**FEATURES:** True  
hardwired bypass

**CONTROLS:** Channel A  
(Gain, Volume, Bass,  
Treble), Channel B (same,  
but with Sweep, Mid),  
Fusion, Hot/Cold Fusion  
switch, Ground Lift,  
Speaker Sim Footswitches

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard  
input, standard output,  
XLR DI output, standard  
send, standard return,  
Standard Thru, mini-jack  
headphone output, MIDI  
In, MIDI Out

**POWER:** 12V DC adaptor

**DIMENSIONS:** 124 (w) x  
189 (d) x 50 mm (h)

**Bassists have** not been forgotten in this range and Le Bass offers plenty of tone-tweaking options for shaping a DI signal or adding a bit of flavour in front of an amp. While channel A supports a typically solid bass tone with treble and bass controls to place it in the right zone, channel B has the facility to add a nice bit of growl to your bass, while focusing how the midrange content sits.

Cold Fusion mode offers more of that, mixed in with a bit of the clean sound for extra articulation, while Hot Fusion has the options for you, if you prefer your bass distorted.

It could be partnered with a cab simulator as a whole portable rig, but Le Bass also lends itself to live work with an amp, whether changing its sound or not – you can put one in the chain and have control over the sound going to FOH, while feeding your amp with the dry through signal. **[TC]**

**VERDICT** A practical pedal for bassists that can offer a range of tones for recording and live use

7/10