

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

Guitarist
CHOICE

Rotosound Nexus bass strings **£29.95**

New look, new feel, new sound...

CONTACT: Rotosound **PHONE:** 01732 450838 **WEB:** www.rotosound.com

Anything that extends the working life of a bass string is always welcome. But when it comes in a sexy black polycoat that offers a smoother feel and a powerfully unique mid-range, we figured it was about time for us to re-string our bass. Rotosound's Nexus bass strings are offered as standard four-string sets in two popular gauges – the NXB40 (.040-, .060-, .080-, .100-inch) and the NXB45 (.045-, .065-, .085-, .105-inch) and there's also a low B available separately at £9.95, should you need it.

In Use

The polycoat dressing transforms Rotosound's

standard Type 52 wrap into a brand new string that looks and feels really good. At long last it seems we have a viable alternative to its popular TruBass flatwounds. As you'd expect, these sound a lot brighter than the flats, but they do have an extra element of warmth and a fuller bottom-end compared to standard roundwounds, so they effectively sit nicely in the middle. They definitely offer a smoother playability and, on the practical side the protective polycoat provides greater resistance to wear and sweat, increasing the life of the strings.

Verdict

Here we have an exciting alternative to standard stainless steel- and nickel-wound strings, with good clarity and a powerful voice. Although the price may seem substantial, factor in the extra lifespan and they could end up saving you money down the stretch. **[RN]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Smooth feel; sound; longer life

We dislike: Different coloured silks on each string

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Providence SOV-2 Stampede OD **from €215**

A cool Robben Ford-endorsed distortion pedal

CONTACT: Providence Effects **PHONE:** +3314 340 3816 **WEB:** www.providence-effects.fr

Japanese manufacturer
Providence offers both its high-end 'regular' and 'custom' pedal ranges without major compromises in quality. Out of them all, the SOV-2 Stampede OD is of considerable interest, not least because of Robben Ford's endorsement. Our regular version is cheaper than the custom jobbie (€395) and doesn't feature that unit's Switchcraft jack sockets. Housed in a red metal case, it has three controls (level, tone and drive), boasts single-contact true bypass, runs on batteries or DC9V supply and is very easy to operate.

Sounds

With a clean amp and all dials set at 12 o'clock the SOV-2 has a vibrant distortion with low noise and a spongy, valve-type warmth. If you prefer a crunchy clean amp for rhythm and a stompbox for solos, the 'all at 12' setting does the job well. It also cleans up well from the guitar's volume with excellent glassy bridge and plummy neck pickup tones. With full drive, the thick mids and tight lows are perfect for rock styles. Pleasingly, dynamics are impressive, with playing articulations well served – machine gun picking is aggressive, while slippery legato is smoothly expressive.



Verdict

With Robben Ford championing the SOV-2 you may wonder if you can achieve his tone. If you've got the fingers, yes, but it'll appeal as much to rootsy bluesers as shred rockers. With the potential to ballpark Dumble, Boogie and Fender-type amp tones, it's one of the most impressive distortion pedals we've ever tried. **[JS]**

The Bottom Line

We like: The tone and dynamics at any drive setting
We dislike: It eats batteries for breakfast

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★





Fusion F1 gigbags £109-139

More than just a gigbag – it's a complete carrying system

CONTACT: Aria UK **PHONE:** 01483 238720 **WEB:** www.fusion-bags.com

Although carrying your guitar on your back does leave both hands free to grasp yet more of your gear, it's certainly more convenient if your gigbag provides you with a number of pouches in which to secrete your gigging paraphernalia.

These bags from UK company Fusion certainly win the prize on that score – they have more pockets than Fagin's overcoat.

The range comprises bags of varying padding thicknesses that are priced accordingly – the 10mm F4 cases start at £24, while the

these F1 examples, with 30mm of padding, are a lot more – and sizes are available to hold electric, bass, acoustic and more, not to mention a wide selection of brass and woodwind instruments too.

In Use

Where Fusion comes into its own is with the wealth of additional bags you can buy, which can be seamlessly attached to the main bag. For example, you can grab a padded bag designed to hold a laptop (priced from £39.95), strap it onto the front of the guitar bag and you're away: the whole package remains nicely balanced and therefore comfortable too.

Verdict

Fusion is keen to promote these cases' applicability for students and we can certainly imagine the halls of BIMM, ACM, et al filled with Fusion-totin' players. The only downside is that an F1 case with a couple of attachments won't leave you with much change from £200, but these cases are certainly of a good enough quality, so the choice rests with you. **[SB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Innovative concept
We dislike: They can end up being quite expensive

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Electro-Harmonix Big Muff with Wicker £72

The ultimate Muff that offers extra high-end slam. It's wicker, man...

CONTACT: Your local EHX dealer **WEB:** www.ehx.com

The latest version of what many consider to be among the very best fuzz pedals ever conceived offers two new features that may well prove to be the final stage of its tonal evolution.

By far the most innovative addition is the titular Wicker switch, that adds in no less than three high-frequency filters to the tone. Why? Well the theory is that when running the Muff at high levels the tone can become somewhat indistinct and the Wicker enables you to add a subtle yet discernible bite and rasp to proceedings.

The second feature, the Tone switch, lets you bypass the tone pot for an even more organic sound, and E-HX tells us that, with the Tone switch in but the Wicker out, the pedal is in effect a Big Muff Pi.

Volume, tone and sustain controls will be familiar to those who've used the Pi, and we should also point out the chassis of the Muff with Wicker is smaller than its predecessor – it's squarer and includes a removable base plate.

Sounds

As ever, the Big Muff provides a choice of tones that are as polarising as peanut butter, but there's no doubt that the Wicker adds a certain high-end something that definitely enables even the fattest drives to cut more efficiently.

The only downside is that, on our example at least, there's a significant drop in volume when switching on the Tone control. When tried through a set-up at gigging volume, the



difference in signal is as startling as it is unexpected.

Verdict

If you're new to the whole idea of organic fuzz pedals, you should get this. It's nicely priced, well-made and sounds great. Muff said! **[SB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Typical muff tone; Wicker switch
We dislike: Volume change with the Tone switch

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★