

# Quicktest

on the disc

## Providence Sonic Drive SDR-5 £199

A new top-end boutique overdrive

CONTACT: Guitar XS PHONE: 01227 832558 WEB: www.guitarxs.com



The Providence Sonic Drive SDR-5 is the latest model from the boutique Japanese maker to get a tonal makeover. It replaces the well-regarded SDR-4 and comes with several upgrades. These include an upgraded FAT switch; a new double-contact grounding circuit (DCGC) that gives two points of contact to the ground circuit, a heavy-duty footswitch, plus a potentiometer design that ensures the pot's shaft can't be forced into the SDR-5's housing.

The SDR-5 is dead simple to use, with only level, tone and drive controls, while the new FAT function is operated via a mini-switch to the right of the tone dial. It runs off of a 9V power supply or battery and as with other pedals in the Providence range, the multi-function bright blue LED indicates battery replacement by dimming itself once the output falls past 7mA.

### Sounds

As is typical with Providence products, the SDR-5 provides fast attack and extraordinary string definition. Lower gain settings allow you to plough through bar chords and apply lush rhythms with a tight, yet rich harmonic twist. Turning up the gain delivers smooth lead distortion with a musical and expressive character. The clarity remains, however, with a notable absence of ragged edges or overly cloying mids and bottom, which can rob lesser pedals of dynamics.

The FAT switch beefs out the bottom end which is useful for girth if you're playing at low volume, but will more likely be used in for bigger single-coil tones and out for keeping humbuckers clear and defined.

### Verdict

Like every Providence pedal, the Sonic Drive is superbly engineered but it doesn't come cheap. Pair it with a quality valve amp, and it'll open the door to some of the classiest, most dynamic and natural sounding drives around. [DD]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Range of classy overdrive tones; musical feel; build-quality

**We dislike:** Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

## Planet Waves NS Capo Tuner £44

A tuner built-in to a capo? Ingenious!

CONTACT: D'Addario UK PHONE: 0191 300 3000 WEB: www.daddario.co.uk



when shifting capo positions, rather than tuning up from scratch.

### In Use

When the capo is in place on the neck, the display is in just the right place. There's no way of adjusting the fascia, but no need – it's conveniently sited. It's wide enough to fit six- and 12-string electric and acoustic guitars.

### Verdict

If you use a capo, you'll know that the act of even placing it on the neck involves some kind of tuning tweak in most cases. The NS Capo Tuner addresses that by offering you instant chromatic reference to the note to which you're closest. It can't mute your signal, of course, and it does require that your guitar is pretty much in tune to begin with. It's ideal for committed capo users who don't have an existing pedal or headstock chromatic tuner. [SB]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Concept; construction; ease of use

**We dislike:** No note display; concerns over accuracy

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

## Roland R-05 **£210**

The latest compact recorder from Roland comes with extras

**CONTACT:** Roland UK **PHONE:** 01792 702701 **WEB:** www.roland.co.uk

The 'stick it in your pocket and record anywhere' digital recorder genre has seen several new models lately, with a trend towards really light and slim designs from Yamaha, Tascam and Zoom.

Roland has yet to go down that route; instead their latest, the R-05, is a solidly-built cigarette packet-sized unit that feels very comfortable in the palm of the hand, with controls neatly laid-out for easy access and a very clear display.

There are onboard editing functions, reverb to add to your recordings and useful practice features, such as changing

tempo without changing pitch, loop playback and so on.

### In Use

Placed on a tabletop, held in the hand, or attached to a stand via the onboard threaded hole, the R-05 makes excellent recordings through its onboard mics. With its very logical control panel, operation is easy and you can get recording in a matter of seconds from turning the unit on. For worry-free recording, the convenient Rehearsal mode helpfully ensures that you won't overload the input and there's even a pre-record function that captures the two seconds of audio that precedes you pressing the record button.



### Verdict

With so many contenders in the palm-sized digital recorder arena, it may be hard to make a decision. But the R-05 is a rugged, unfussy to use machine for capturing the moment, and you get some very useful practice facilities too. **[TC]**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Solid build; easy operation; long battery life  
**We dislike:** An included mains adapter would be nice

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★

## Guitar Tech GT2000 & GT2500 clip-on tuners **£15.99 & £14.99**

A metronome, tuner and stopwatch combo

**CONTACT:** JHS **PHONE:** 0113 286 5381 **WEB:** www.jhs.co.uk

Clip-on tuners are just the ticket should you have an aversion to using the common floor-based unit. And although these two new units from Guitar Tech are more than usable with electric guitars and basses, they really do come into their own when used with acoustic instruments.

Typically attached to the headstock so you can see it from a playing position, both units have hinge joints that are fully adjustable and the sprung clips are stiff enough to ensure a secure grip and rubber pads.

### In Use

The GT2000 is by far the more versatile of the two, as it's fully chromatic and the LCD display is always likely to be visible.

Simply pluck a note and the closest note is displayed along with a 'needle' that doubles in size at the central notch to denote that you're in tune. It's quick and easy to use and, most importantly, is accurate.

The more mundane GT2500 allows you to tune just the six specific strings – 1E, 2B, 3G and so on. The display, which comprises a series of white and green running dots, guides you towards the nearest relevant note and although you can drop the calibration down half a step – there's no chromatic functionality here.

### Verdict

Clip-on tuners are cheap and actually work, which is the most

important consideration. We have no particular issue with the GT2500 but, for an extra pound outlay, the fully-chromatic GT2000 is the only choice here. **[SB]**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Easy to use; compact; nice price  
**We dislike:** Nothing. For the money go for the GT2000

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★





## Eastwood Airline Ukulele £279

Now we're talking – a uke designed for plugging in

**CONTACT:** Eastwood **PHONE:** 905-702-8291 (Canada) **WEB:** www.eastwoodguitars.com

The last couple of years have seen a resurgence in the popularity of the ukulele with many bands using them live, even if it's just for one song. But acoustic ukes aren't the loudest of instruments, so trying to mic one in such a scenario can be an engineer's nightmare. Electro-

acoustic ukes can still be a bit tricky, so how about an electric uke? Eastwood seems to think that's a good idea, as it's just released this Airline Ukelele.

### Sounds

Beautifully made with a lightweight hollow body (and

its own gigbag), the Airline uke features an active pickup system and strap buttons that let it hang on you nicely, without any worries about needing to hold on to the uke's body. Although it has no soundhole, it's loud enough for practice without plugging in

and sounds cool through a guitar amp. When connected to a mixing desk or PA via a DI box, what you get is very close to the natural sound of an acoustic uke with plenty of variation available from the volume and tone knobs. It's a practical choice for recording too – especially for quiet passages where a sensitive mic on an acoustic uke can pick up a lot of extraneous sound.

### Verdict

This is a very nice instrument indeed. The Airline is a cut well above the budget ukes that many UK music shops carry these days and is an extremely practical choice for both gigging and recording. [TC]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Great sound; 17-inch scale; strap buttons

**We dislike:** Why no low battery indicator?

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★

## The Wishbone mic placement system

£44.95

A clever new means of amp mic'ing

**CONTACT:** Madison & Fifth **PHONE:** 01858 446782 **WEB:** www.madisonandfifth.co.uk

The Wishbone is a simple USA-made mic bracket – the wishbone bit simply pushes into your combo's top handle (it's designed to fit handles over 5.5-inches wide and you get a couple of extra foam attachments if it's a little loose). Attached to that wishbone via a knuckle joint is the boom, another straight piece of anodised aluminium rod with a threaded end to take your mic holder and mic.

The knuckle clamp gives full left to right and forward/backward swing, it's also easily and firmly tightened.

### In Use

Yup, it works! Seriously, for on-stage use it's far better than

the usual soundman's trick of hanging a mic over your amp and allows very specific placement. It's ideal too in the studio – especially where space is short and a full mic stand can be easily knocked out of place. It's excellent for 1 x 12 combos, although an optional longer boom would give more placement choice for 2 x 12s.

### Verdict

It folds up and will easily fit in a gigbag's pocket or your leads case and anyone needing to quickly but effectively mic an amp live or in the studio should have one. Various other types are also available for stacks, smaller-handled combos and even a bass drum. [DB]



### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Simple to use; useful piece of kit

**We dislike:** An optional longer boom would be nice for larger combos

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★

## Van Damme Silver Series Lo-Cap 55 cable **£71.46 (3 metres)**

A cable with claims that are both measurable and audible

CONTACT: 0207 700 2777 PHONE: VDC Trading Ltd WEB: www.vandamme.com

“Ours sound better than everyone else’s!” So says every cable manufacturer, presenting a wood-for-the-trees situation for us punters. Well then here’s a thing – a cable that explains why that sound is different, not necessarily ‘better’.

There are two burning issues when it comes to guitar cables. The first is minimising extraneous noise (the vast majority of quality cables have that sorted) and the second is audio integrity, which is the biggest bone of contention.

To the point: Van Damme’s Lo-Cap 55 cable delivers 55p/F per metre, which is low in capacitance terms, and this therefore has minimal effect on high-end roll-off. Additionally,

there are Flat-Cap (90, £53.58) and Hi-Cap (125, £55.41) versions available.

### In Use

If your guitar has regular single coils or humbuckers (especially vintage types, but not active pickups) the Lo-Cap 55 cable has a discernible tonal effect. We A/B’d it with regular George L’s, Planet Waves and Whirlwind leads of the same length using the new Fender Hot Rod Deluxe (reviewed on p104). Trebles are noticeably clearer and stronger – partly what we expected – but the more surprising revelation is the clearer, more solid bass. A simple difference, and plain to hear in studio conditions.

### Verdict

With foamed polyethelene insulation, bare silver-plated pure oxygen-free copper wire for the conductor and second screen, this is a classy cable. The Lo-Cap 55 will be overkill in the sonic melee of pub and

club gigs, especially if you have a pedalboard. However, if you’re recording with top-quality gear and you want the most information to get from your guitar to your amp, with minimal colouration and signal degradation (not everybody does), this cable comes very highly recommended. [MT]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Does what it says it does: clear tone: great quality  
**We dislike:** Only the price, but they are made in the UK

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist  
**CHOICE**



## Dunlop Robert Trujillo Icon Series Bass Strings **£33.99 (four-string), £40.99 (five-string)**

Meaty metal ropes from Metallica’s bass man

CONTACT: John Hornby Skewes PHONE: 01132 865381 WEB: www.jhs.co.uk

If you’ve found your regular strings sound a bit unbalanced and need a bit more meat to improve your delivery, then these Trujillo bass strings could well be the answer. Trujillo currently holds down the groove in Metallica, so he obviously knows a thing or two about playing hard rock and has experimented with various strings over the years. Available in four- or five-string sets these roundwound sets are gauged to provide maximum mid-range punch and a solid bottom-end.

### Sounds

Naturally you expect loads of clarity from any new strings, but this Trujillo set definitely does offer superior balance of

delivery as you move from string to string. The extra mass also seems to provide extra punch to ensure that you can still be heard over the wave of sound produced by an overdriven guitar. The bottom-end remains robust and proves ideal for getting down to some really dirty rock.

### Verdict

It never ceases to amaze just how much a small adjustment to the diameter of a string can make to the overall sound of a bass, but here’s the evidence in action. Although designed with heavy rock in mind, we found this particular combination of gauges to be beneficial to many styles of bass playing. [RN]



### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Unusual string gauges really works  
**We dislike:** There’s nothing wrong with the product, but quality costs

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★