

# MXR MC-402 Custom Audio Electronics Boost/Overdrive £159

Stompbox gurus and pedalboard designer to the stars join forces by **Chris Vinnicombe**



The MXR MC-402 has got all the rock bases covered

## MXR, CREATORS OF

classic pedals such as the Phase 90 and Distortion+, have joined forces with Custom Audio Electronics' brain Bob Bradshaw to release this simple two-channel pedal that consists of a 20dB boost circuit and an analogue

overdrive that can be activated independently or simultaneously. This effectively gives you four available sounds if you include your amp sound. The circuit itself is hardwired true bypass and housed in a robust aluminium enclosure that includes a plastic battery hatch.

**SOUNDS:** The boost channel ranges from a transparent clean boost to a juicy overdriven roar that is great for meaty rock chords and hot bluesy leads. Switch to the overdrive and there's gain in spades; think of the kind of range provided by a Rat pedal. The MC-402's third sound is generated by activating both the channels at the same time; with the boost and gain controls revved up things can get pretty noisy and dangerous. We definitely like that a lot.

MXR MC-402	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

- **WE LIKED** Really does perform like two pedals in one box; sheer tonal quality
- **WE DISLIKED** Some may not enjoy the fuzziness in the upper gain range

## Verdict

This pedal is rather like having an MXR Micro Amp and a Proco Rat in one box, and in terms of sheer musical territory covered, everything from blues to garage punk to classic metal sounds can be generated with authority. If all the partnership's pedals are this good, they will have a huge success on their hands.

**Guitarist RATING**

★★★★★

**KEY INFO** MXR MC-402 **PRICE:** £159 **TYPE:** ANALOGUE OVERDRIVE PEDAL **WEB:** WWW.JHS.CO.UK

# Yamaha Pacifica 112J LTD £199

The best entry-level electric since the Squier Strat gets a make-over by **Simon Bradley**

Fans of Tom Morello's 'Soul Power' Strat may want to check this out

## THIS NEW VERSION OF

Yamaha's all-conquering Pacifica 112 is one of a limited run offering the all-black livery and mirror scratchplate.

With just 500 made available in the

UK the basic spec is the same as traditional options, with an HSS configuration of Yamaha pickups

controlled by a five-way lever and master volume and tone controls, in this case topped with two cool chrome speed knobs.

The dark look extends to both the headstock and rear of the bolt-on maple neck and although the nut seemed a tad too high on first inspection (it's not), the guitar plays beautifully well with the Fender-style scale length giving a comfortably smooth string tension.

We have no problem with the fact that the bridge is set flush to the body, thus disallowing any upward movement – tuning stability is vital when learning. The livery hasn't compromised the guitar's lauded playability, either.

**SOUNDS:** The pickups fitted to 112s always strike us as being of a pretty high output, which translates perfectly for rock tones – surely the arena to which this flashy guitar would be best suited. Abrasive rhythms, searing

YAMAHA PACIFICA 112JLTD	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sounds	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

- **WE LIKED** A great new look for a still excellent guitar
- **WE DISLIKED** Honestly? At this price, nothing

solos and pinched harmonics are all easy to pull off and, when required, the tone cleans up beautifully for subdued blues and associated styles.

## Verdict

The only downside here is that the 500 available examples are likely to sell quickly, so we suggest getting your skates on. If you miss out on this version, you can simply opt for a 112 in a standard finish as, whichever guitar you go for, you'll have an instrument that could easily last an entire career.

**Guitarist RATING**

★★★★★

**KEY INFO** YAMAHA PACIFICA 112J LTD **PRICE:** £199 **TYPE:** ELECTRIC GUITAR **WEB:** WWW.YAMAHA-MUSIC.CO.UK

# Vox DA5 mains/battery digital amp £109



Practise at home! Play a gig in the street! You need this amp by **Chris Vinnicombe**

## THE DA5 IS COSMETICALLY

similar to the larger AD15VT and AD30VT Valvetronix combos that impressed in issue 252. Although there's no preamp valve in the equation, the DA5 comes loaded with a host of features. 11 amp voices are accompanied by 11 effects settings that include combinations of delay, reverb, compression, auto-wah and various modulation effects. Around the back, removing a Velcro-secured panel reveals a cute six-inch speaker and grants access to the sextet of C-size

batteries required to make this a portable combo. At home, you can run it using the supplied 12-volt mains adaptor. Flexibility is further increased by busker-friendly strap buttons, a quarter-inch jack input with its own volume control for a microphone, an auxiliary input for a CD or mp3 player and a line/headphone out. There's also a power selector that toggles between 0.5, 1.5 or five watts of output power.

**SOUNDS:** It's astounding just how much level this little beast kicks out on full power. Sharing much of its tonal character with the Valvetronix amplifiers, clean sounds are dynamic and musical, and from a Stony crunch right up to thrash metal, the sheer quality of the tones on offer lays waste to the competition. With economical use of the three buttons, there's a great deal of flexibility within the effects section, allowing you to adorn your

sound with everything from subtle ambience to full-on psychedelia.

## Verdict

Whether you're after a great-sounding, lightweight amp for busking or guerrilla gigging or just a feature-loaded practice amp, there simply isn't a better all-round solution on the market. At this price, everyone is going to want one.

**Guitarist RATING**



It's fives across the board for the DA5!



VOX DA5	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
■ <b>WE LIKED</b> A faultless combination of features, performance and price	
■ <b>WE DISLIKED</b> Practice amps weren't like this when we were beginners!	

**KEY INFO** VOX DA5 **PRICE:** £109 **TYPE:** PORTABLE GUITAR COMBO **TEL:** WWW.VOXAMPS.CO.UK

# Farley's FGT1 JP guitar tool £29

If you don't employ a full-time guitar tech, you should get one of these by **Simon Bradley**

## AMONGST THE PLETHORA OF

gizmos and gadgets available today, there are certain things that should always be in your gig-bag: spare strings and picks, a few nine-volt batteries, your little black book and a guitar tool of some description.

Obviously, if you want to take a number of screwdrivers with you then fine, but if you want to give your Strat a last-minute fine-tune, scrabbling in the recesses of your satchel for that elusive 1.5 mm Allen key can be a bind.

This compact tool includes a number of tools within its handles, including four hex wrenches of standard dominations, a flat head and Phillips screwdriver plus, naturally, a pair of

snips. The latter benefits from their carbide steel construction and can be used with equal convenience on bass as well as

electric and acoustic. There's also a rather vicious-looking acoustic bridge pin puller and the whole caboodle fits snugly into its own rather cool nylon web carrying bag.

**IN USE:** As befits all similar items, actually using keys and screwdrivers that are mounted at one end can take some getting used to, and you do have to be careful not to apply too much pressure with the thinnest Allen wrenches. Again, with the screwdrivers you may find you'll need to tighten the

holding screw that runs through each, thus securing them to the handle... for which you'll need another Phillips 'driver'!

## Verdict

The snips work very well and, although we wouldn't be too keen on allowing the bridge puller anywhere our new Taylor, this is a tactile and compact unit that does exactly what you'd expect without ever excelling.

**Guitarist RATING**



It's the Swiss Army Knife of guitar tools



JP GUITAR TOOL	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
In Use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
■ <b>WE LIKED</b> The compact design; very efficient snips	
■ <b>WE DISLIKED</b> Nothing sets it apart from similar items	

**KEY INFO** FARLEY'S FGT1 JP GUITAR TOOL **PRICE:** £29 **TYPE:** COMPACT GUITAR TOOL **WEB:** WWW.JHS.CO.UK