Quicktest

Mighty Bright Two-LED USB Light £13.50

Lighting for your laptop...

CONTACT: Mighty Bright **PHONE:** 0121 702 2840 **WEB:** www.mightybrightuk.co.uk

Mighty Bright makes a wide range of LED gooseneck lights that are perfect for illuminating music, or indeed your pedalboard, onstage or in a dim rehearsal space. They pack easily into your kit bag and run on batteries.

The latest addition, however, is a dead simple two-LED USB light which, obviously, needs no battery power and just plugs into your USB socket. The bendable gooseneck is around 254mm (10-inches) long, and there's a simple switch on the head that houses the LEDs.

In Use

Plug into to your USB, switch on (you have choice of two or one LEDs for less light) and you have bright but focused light that really doesn't disturb others. The gooseneck is rigid enough to hold the head wherever you need it. To be honest though, we can already see our laptop in the dark, can't we? Indeed, but we've already used it to illuminate notes both in the studio and on-stage while working with a laptop and its especially useful for those of us of advancing years whose sight is perhaps not as sharp in low lights as it used to be.

Verdict

If you've not already discovered Mighty Bright and you have to use a pad or simple notes on-stage or in rehearsal then you really should investigate these lights. This USB light seems somewhat less essential, but it's still been put to very good use. Why be left in the dark? **[DB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Idiot proof; no batteries to forget
We dislike: Less useful for musicians than the standard Mighty Brights

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★☆

Diamond Bottlenecks from £9.95

Guitarist GOLD

More slides from UK bottle blowers...

CONTACT: Diamond Bottlenecks **PHONE:** 01384 399460 **WEB:** www.diamondbottlenecks.com

Diamond Bottlenecks' has made some new additions to its range of slides. First up is a 'pill bottle' slide based on the famed Coricidin glass – not the more common pyrex – cold cure bottle used by Duane Allman. "After many years of searching, we stumbled upon a company making soda-lime (bottle) glass pill bottles that we could convert easily into the ideal, pinky-sized, pill bottle slide," explained DB's founder Ian McWee. "The internal diameter is 18mm, with a full slide flat playing surface above the lip section of 60mm. For added comfort we drill a tiny 'breather hole' in the roof to prevent stuffiness and vacuum inside the slide." It costs £9.95.

There are also English lead crystal glass tone bars – endorsed by Bob Brozman – designed for Weissenborn and acoustic/electric lap-slide players. "These are mid-weight bars offering a smooth, warm tone with plenty of sustain." says McWee. The Brozman signature, available in various sizes, costs £24.95; the more colourful Flags Of The World bar is £35.

In Use

Full and liquid sounding, the pill bottle is a perfect gap-free finger fit, the best of its type we've encountered. The crystal glass tone bars are lighter than the usual chromed metal bars, but with a beautiful molten tone that's smoother than metal and fuller than ceramic.

Verdict

If you're a slide player and DB isn't on your radar, then it should be. The finest glass slides you can buy. **[DB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Everything!
We dislike: They can be rather addictive...

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

HardWire HT-6 Polyphonic Tuner £99

Guitarist CHOICE

A challenger to the PolyTune's crown?

CONTACT: Sound Technology **PHONE:** 01462 480000 **WEB:** www.hardwirepedals.com

Once TC Electronic released its PolyTune and changed the face of onstage guitar tuning forever, it was only going to be a matter of time before other companies added a polyphonic tuner to their rosters. A year on, DigiTech is first on the scene with the HT-6.

In Use

The HT-6 has five tuning modes – you can set it for standard guitar tuning, drop D and four-, five- and six-string basses. There's a USB socket for updates so, presumably, more may be added later. Strum your guitar and, if you are in tune, the display shows all six strings as a vertical array of LEDs – a central blue line with yellow each side. Any out-of-tune string is indicated by red LEDs to the left (flat) or right (sharp). Plucking an individual string results in the HT-6 performing like a chromatic tuner, with a choice of normal (similar to the polyphonic) or strobe displays. You can also easily set the tuner to work polyphonically for lowered tunings of up to six semitones, or for using a capo on the first six frets.

With a quoted tuning accuracy of +/- 1 cent, the HT-6, on paper, appears not as highly specified as the PolyTune, but considering that many of us are still using the BOSS TU-2 (+/- 3 cents) would we really hear that? We think not.

Verdict

It's quick, accurate and easy to see on a dark stage – all you need from a stompbox tuner. There are now two polyphonic choices – take your pick. **[TC]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Solid build quality; quick response; display; works with capos
We dislike: It's a bit bigger than a TC PolyTune

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★☆

Shadow SH E-Tuner

approx £45

The ultimate stealth tuner?

CONTACT: Barnes & Mullins **PHONE:** 01691 652449 **WEB:** www.shadow-electronics.com

The display is rather small and hard to see

Let's face it, there's no shortage of guitar tuners on the market, but mounted in a slightly over-sized humbucker ring, this one is unique. Both black and cream rings are available for guitars with flat fronts, curved tops or vibratos. Installation is easy enough; the main electronics are housed in a humbucker magnet-sized box, which fits under the pickup. You poke the battery connect cable (with push fit connector) into the control cavity along with a hook up wire that needs soldering to the volume pot so the tuner can sense the strings even with the volume turned down. Connect the battery holder – a 3V disc type (with a quoted life of 2,000 tunings) housed is in its own little plastic pouch – and there you have it.

In Use

There's a small push button next to the display that turns it on, the note indicator, in tune and sharp/flat LED indicators are very bright. Tuning is quick and accurate. However, the display is very small – if you have reading glasses, you're gonna need 'em on to see the specific note display.

Verdict

It's hard to fault the function here. Yes, it's small and for some will be hard to see, but it works. It's not the cheapest tuner out there – there are plenty of excellent headstock tuners that are less than half the price, not to mention smartphone apps – and, of course, it's instrument specific. While that means your guitar will always have its own tuner, you can't tune anything else with it. That could well be exactly what you're after. **[DB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Stealthy size; excellent function; relatively easy to fit
We dislike: Very small display; instrument specific

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★☆

Bare Knuckle Aftermath £240

Guitarist CHOICE

Two matched yet very different humbuckers

CONTACT: Bare Knuckle **PHONE:** 01326 341313 **WEB:** www.bareknucklepickups.co.uk

on the disc

The latest humbucker to emerge from the increasingly popular and well respected British pickup maker is the Aftermath. This set sits towards the upper end of the high-output contemporary scale and, although available as single units (at £125 each), both bridge and neck options are significantly tonally different, and have been conceived to give rock and metal players the best tones in both positions.

The guts of the bridge unit comprises a trio of oversize ceramic magnets, while the neck pickup uses Alnico V. The eye-catching Tyger finish – a new custom option in the BK range – is achieved using a grinder, belt-sander and the application of various acids.

"We hit upon it quite by accident and it looks great," Bare Knuckle's Tim Mills tell us. Best of all, this option is available at no extra charge.

Sounds

There's aggressive rasp aplenty from the bridge pickup, a bright, visceral tone yet smoother than an EMG-89, for example. This is a passive pickup of course, but it will satisfy rock and metal tone hounds searching for something fuller and warmer. The neck humbucker is hotter than a PAF, but still round and greasy, while the mid position is a likeable mix; good for riffing and surprisingly sweet for clean tones: a great sound.

Verdict

If you're a fan of hard rock and metal, give these a try. Yes they look great but more impressive is that they're not trying to be all things to all men. They aim directly at those genres and hit the bullseye. Superb. **[SB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Excellent and varied tones; impressive range of finish options
We dislike: Nothing. Not even the price

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★½

Peterson iStrobosoft HD £11.99

Strobe tuning on your iPad

CONTACT: A Strings **PHONE:** 0292 047 1157 **WEB:** www.petersontuners.com

For many professionals, strobe tuners have been the way to go for years, and Peterson is the company synonymous with them. After putting its strobe technology into stompboxes it's now available in the form of the iStrobosoft (£5.99) for Apple's iPhone, iPod Touch and as the iStrobosoft HD (£11.99), a new native iPad version, which we have here for review.

In Use

You can plug your guitar into the iPad using your usual input device, or use Peterson's own adaptor cable (£14) or mini capsule mic (£12), which are available separately. For acoustic guitars the iPad's built-in mic works just fine.

A chromatic tuner with all features on the main screen and no hidden menus, the iStrobosoft has glowing flat/sharp indicators and displays the note and octave with a cents display showing how far out it is. The main strobe display, with its four bars of moving bands, looks great on the iPad and can be easily seen from across a room. With accuracy to 1/10 of a cent, Peterson says that iStrobosoft offers the highest degree of precision available in a tuner app and that makes it great for not only tuning but also for making intonation adjustments if you set up your own instruments.

Verdict

For the asking price this has to be considered a genuine bargain and as long as you have your Apple device and a connector with you, you'll never be without a tuner. **[TC]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Strobe tuning for little outlay (if you already have an iPad!); highly visible display; precision tuning
We dislike: No sweetened or Buzz Feiten tunings

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist CHOICE

Guitarist CHOICE

Vibramate SR1 String Spoiler from $39.95

Restring your Bigsby in minutes! No, we're not joking...

CONTACT: All Parts **PHONE:** 0800 849 8224 **WEB:** www.vibramate.com

Bigsby vibratos can be a real pain in the backside to restring. There's a true knack to putting just the right angle of kink into a string's ball end to enable it to be teased onto the relevant pin poking unobtrusively from the central roller. Even with years of practice, the process of restringing any Bigsby guitar can take a frustrating 15 minutes – or even more if you're particularly sausage-fingered – and that's assuming that the ball end doesn't then inadvertently ping out of the array just as you're getting it up to the correct pitch...

But fret no more, for help is at hand in the shape of the latest innovation from Vibramate: the String Spoiler. This clever bracket hooks over the aforementioned pins and is held in position by the string tension when tuned up to pitch. Once you have the first string that secures the Spoiler in place, the remainder can be fitted and tuned in seconds.

In Use

We used the Spoiler with both a standard B7 and a stripped-down B5 Bigsby and found that, not only was it a doddle to fit and use, it actually seemed to assist in smoothing the operation of the vibratos.

Verdict

Available in gold and black (both $59.95) as well as this stainless steel example, we can't stress enough how useful a gadget this is and, if you own any Bigsby-loaded electric, we can wholeheartedly recommend it. We're sure we can hear Brian Setzer's guitar tech somewhere, whooping with joy... **[SB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Ease of fitting and use; price
We dislike: Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★½

Jetter Red Square £199

Two classy, complementary overdrives in a single unit

CONTACT: Coda Music **PHONE:** 01438 350815 **WEB:** www.jettergear.com

The Red Square combines two of Jetter's overdrive pedals – the Red Shift and the Helium – into a single enclosure. There's an internal switch to set which of the two comes first in the signal chain. The Red Shift side offers two different voicings courtesy of the shift switch and sports volume, gain and tone knobs while the Helium side offers volume and drive plus the lean/rich knob for tonal tweaks.

Sounds

What you get from both aspects is a natural amp-like overdrive – the Helium side offering a Fenderish flavour with a useful range of those low gain just-breaking-up tones, while the Red side has more gain and a nice fat sustain that turns more aggressively Marshall-like with the shift switch. The two sides complement each other really well (which is the whole point of putting them together) giving you plenty of tonal variation and, with two footswitches, a choice of how you utilise the pedal. Two distinctly different overdrives used separately or together, or one main overdrive with the other set to just boost it when needed? The choice is yours.

Verdict

This is one really versatile and great-sounding overdrive pedal. In our recent review of the whole Jetter range, the Red Shift and Helium emerged as our favourites – putting both together in a single box at a price much less than buying the individual pedals is a no-brainer. Excellent. **[TC]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Natural sounding; good tonal variation; separate footswitches for each overdrive
We dislike: Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★½

Guitarist CHOICE

on the disc