

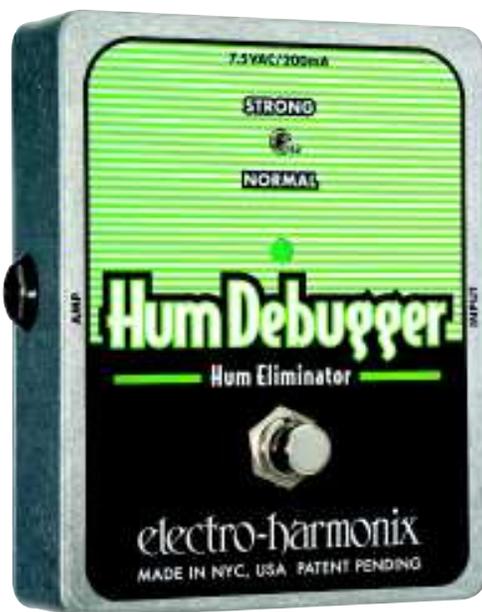
Quicktest

Welcome to Guitarist's regular round-up of the best of the rest of the gear that's passed through our hands this issue

Electro-Harmonix HumDebugger £64

A problem-solver pedal...

CONTACT: Hotrox PHONE: 01159 873163 | WEB: www.ehx.com



In use

Normal mode eliminates the usual amp-induced hum, and clean sounds don't suffer any really obvious adverse side effects. However, these do become apparent after switching to strong mode, including a slight delay and some modulation, the latter adding a watery wobble to speedy string bends. Things tend to worsen further

The HumDebugger is intended to eliminate the annoying and sound-ruining interference that can often plague pickups, especially single-coils, when working in close proximity to amplifiers, computers or under stage lights.

The construction is typical of many recent Electro-Harmonix effects, employing a basic but beefy die-cast metal casing. The sole control is a mini-switch selecting 'strong' or 'normal' modes. The latter removes odd harmonics from the signal's hum content, while the strong setting eradicates the even variety as well. The necessary mains power supply is included and E-HX repeatedly stresses only this specific type should be used.

under dirtier conditions or when using other pedals.

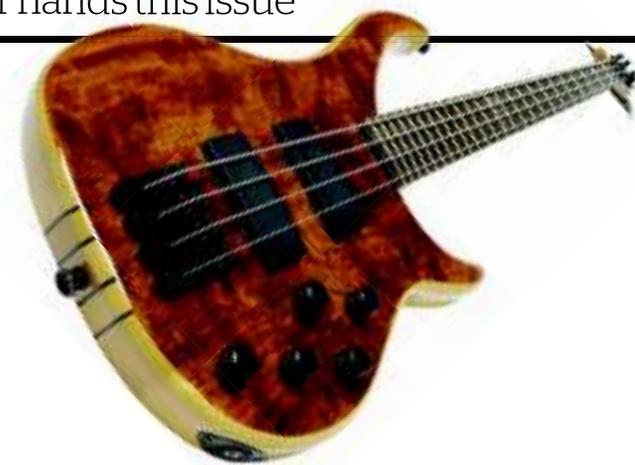
Verdict

Although not a complete aural cure-all, this pedal could come in useful if hum problems are proving to be a real pain. Normal mode is quite effective with straight clean sounds, but the strong option is best left well alone. [PD]

The Bottom Line

We like: Easy operation; effective normal mode
We dislike: Very apparent adverse side effects in strong mode

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Peavey Cirrus 4 BXP Bass £422

Peavey's market leader gets an Asian brother

CONTACT: Peavey PHONE: 01536 461234 | WEB: www.peavey.co.uk

Although Peavey has an excellent new series of USA-made Cirrus bolt-on basses, for those of us less financially able the BXP Indonesian-made versions offer similar spec with outstanding value at almost a £1,000 cheaper. You still get a good instrument – this through-neck bass features active circuitry, twin Custom VFL soapbar pickups, black hardware and sealed-gear tuners. Each string has its own individual bridge for ultimate adjustability and through-body or surface stringing. Exotic wood tops mean the BXP4 looks good too with veneer over the body and on the headstock.

Sounds

Smooth to the touch with oil-finished neck and good overall balance, this bass looks and feels great. That's particularly welcome here as the Cirrus has a 889mm (35-inch) scale length and although more significant for a five-string

bass, it does give the range its own sound characteristics. The three-band active EQ allows maximum sound variation from the twin pickups and, although clear in voice, the individual volume controls ensure perfect blended sounds and added grunt as required. Overall the delivery remains fat, strong and confident.

Verdict

The Cirrus is one of Peavey's best bass designs to date and this BXP4 version offers a wallet-friendly introduction. But it's far more than just a cheaper alternative – this is an instrument built for the rigours of life on the road. [RN]

The Bottom Line

We liked: Smooth, curvy lines; punchy delivery; all-round performance
We disliked: Nothing!

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Samson Expedition XP308i £509

A super-portable three-in-one PA system

CONTACT: Korg UK PHONE: 01908 857100 WEB: www.samsontech.com

This 300-watt Samson PA crams a host of features into an impressively made, minimal size single package. Weighing a total of 16.8kg, two small but sturdy moulded plastic cabs slide together for single-handed transport and each partners an eight-inch woofer with a one-inch titanium tweeter. One cab also accommodates all the connecting cables, while the other contains the detachable mixer. This houses two 150-watt power amps and features four mono and two stereo channels, each with volume and two-band EQ controls. The first four also have switchable digital reverb plus XLR and line-level jack inputs, while the

others employ phono and jack connectors. The master section includes monitor out and a speech/music switch to select the most appropriate EQs contour. You also get phantom power and an iPod dock.

In use

The XP handles small bar-type sound reinforcement, maintaining good projection and clarity on recorded music, vocals and instruments, but full bands with loud drummers will need more power. The EQ controls are effective, but reverb is in fact just a short repeat echo and not very usable.



Verdict

This complete, ultra-manageable mini PA system is best suited to solo performers or duos, and it certainly sounds bigger than its meagre measurements suggest. [PD]

The Bottom Line

We like: Design; big sound
We dislike: Cabs don't lock for transport; poor reverb

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

GearSkinz amp cases £varies

The happy medium for amp transport?

CONTACT: GearSkinz PHONE: 0845 257 7155 WEB: www.gearskinz.co.uk

The majority of amp slip covers offer scant protection, while full flight cases are too bulky and expensive. What to do?

Enter GearSkinz, which on first impressions remind us of LeBlond drum cases. They're custom built in the UK from a heavy duty polypropylene outer with riveted joins and foam lining. There are three versions: Lite (from around £65), Standard (pictured, from £115) and Plus (from £150) which increase in protection levels, the latter with multiple straps, separate bottom 'tray', a mix of 5 and 12mm foam lining, riveted double-thick side seams and metal strengthening rods.

In use

We received the Plus model. One excellent part of the design is that the amp's handle takes the weight; were it on the case

itself it would almost certainly break in time and put excess pressure on the Velcro straps that hold top to bottom. As it is, we can't break it in normal use, and believe us, we tried. It adds minimum bulk to your amp and so shouldn't significantly affect your specific vehicular packing regime [Yes, I'm OCD about this too - Ed]. For cost reasons the Lite version without the base tray and 2mm foam lining is likely to be the most popular, but do check the website to see what suits you best.

GearSkinz won't replace a full flight case for heavy road use, but assuming that your gear isn't moved by angry gorillas, this is a brilliant medium protection solution. [MT]



The Bottom Line

We like: Good design, not too bulky; excellent protection
We dislike: Price (though they are UK-made)

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Planet Waves Tru-Strobe £110

The latest in floor-based tuning convenience

CONTACT: D'Addario UK Ltd PHONE: 0191 300 3000 WEB: www.daddario.com

Many tuners on the market these days offer the user a strobe display, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they're genuine strobe tuners – the most accurate of all string-tuning devices.

Here Planet Waves has taken its tank-like pedal design and introduced this all-new strobe tuner. With a circular backlit LCD display, the letter of the target note appears in the centre and, as you tune, the block ring that covers the circumference of the pedal spins in relation to how far away from the desired pitch you are.

The Tru-Strobe offers a number of modes, all of which are accessed via the dedicated button. Most notable of these is the Detuning facility, which

goes all the way down to Baritone levels, and a wide choice of Buzz Feiten-based options that include jazz guitars (to take a wound third into account), acoustic and bass. Obviously this is only relevant if your guitar is equipped with the aforementioned BF system.

In use

As you'd expect the tuner is very accurate but we have doubts as to whether the display has enough contrast and legibility to use on a dark stage, or indeed at a sunny outdoor gig. When compared to other pedal tuners that bristle with super bright, primary-coloured LEDs, the Tru-Strobe's LCD isn't as conspicuous, however attractive the rest of the dark chrome livery.

Verdict

The main downside with strobe tuners is that they can be almost too accurate, which can make standing there waiting for the display to settle something of a chore, not to mention a gig-stopper. Also, the BOSS TU-3 (£79), TC Electronic PolyTune (£75) and Korg Pitchblack (£79) are all impressive tuners at more attractive prices, making life difficult for the Tru-Strobe. The Buzz Feiten modes, the ultra accuracy and indeed its weight and sturdiness make it great in the studio and also for repairs/setups, however. [SB]



The Bottom Line

We like: Accuracy; very easy to use

We dislike: Price; LCD display

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Orange Crush PiX CR35LDX £193

Pick an effect and peel off some licks...

CONTACT: OMECLtd PHONE: 0208 905 2828 WEB: www.orangeamps.com

This 35-watt combo is the most powerful of Orange's Crush range of guitar practice amps, and alongside the classic livery, impressive construction and front panel symbols (hence the PiX prefix) is the provision of a total of 16 digital effects.

These are selected via an infinite rotary pot and include two choices of chorus and flanger, tremolo, plus a single vibrato, as well as four types of reverb and a further quartet of delays. The final option combines a hall reverb with a delay of its own. Aside from the FX level none of the effects are editable whatsoever, so you're saddled with preset values for the modulation rate and depth settings, reverb tails, delay feedback and so on.

The amp also includes a chromatic tuner that's an accurate and visible addition to the ensemble, even though it doesn't mute the internal 12-inch speaker. There are also connections for headphones and a CD/mp3 player.

Sounds

Aside from the frustration of being unable to mix a slow chorus with a nice reverb, the effected sounds are pretty good. For example, the slow flanger is a dead ringer for Foo Fighters' Breakout and the spring reverb is perfect for those Dick Dale moments, even though the overdrive itself is rather disappointing to our ears as it lacks the character Orange is so famous for.

Verdict

With the likes of the more versatile Line 6 Spider IV 30 to be found for as little as £159 in the wild, the CR35LDX will have its work cut out to rise above the crowd in this area of the market. [SB]



The Bottom Line

We like: Great construction; authentic livery; good effects

We dislike: Overdrive tones

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★