

Quicktest

MXR M75 Super Badass Distortion

£99

Badass by name, badass by nature

CONTACT: Westside Distribution PHONE: 0141 248 4812 WEB: www.jimdunlop.com

Claiming that one single-channel dirt pedal can successfully cover tones from crunch to metal could be seen as asking for failure, but not when you have MXR's Custom Badass team on the case. With this latest Badass, they've served up wide-ranging output and distortion controls, plus a three-band EQ for extra tonal shaping. Power requirements are the usual nine-volt battery or power supply, and it's also true bypass.

Sounds

What's immediately apparent is the pedal's tight, responsive dirt across the entire gain range – according to the team behind the Badass, its frequency response reacts to the amount of gain you're using. So there's no muddy sag on low-gain open chords, and plenty of bite and compression for high-gain molten leads. The latter arena is where the Super Badass excels, and its huge rock tones are positively grin-inducing.

Then there's that three-band EQ. The pedal's 12 o'clock tone recalls gain'd-up British amps from the late 70s, but the tweakability afforded by the bass, mid and treble means that more contemporary American sounds are just a few turns



away. The mids control is central to the pedal's flexibility: up it for vintage crunch; cut it for metal aggression.

Verdict

For versatility and supreme distorted tones, the Super Badass is among MXR's greatest drive pedals. The low-gain settings might not knock the Tube Screamer off your 'board, but this is still a fantastic sounding, great value, supremely flexible distortion – and it's badass to boot. **[MB]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: With colossal dirt wherever you set the dials, the Super Badass delivers tones worthy of its name

Yamaha TRBX504 bass guitar

£484

High spec and delivery from this stylish and roadworthy bass

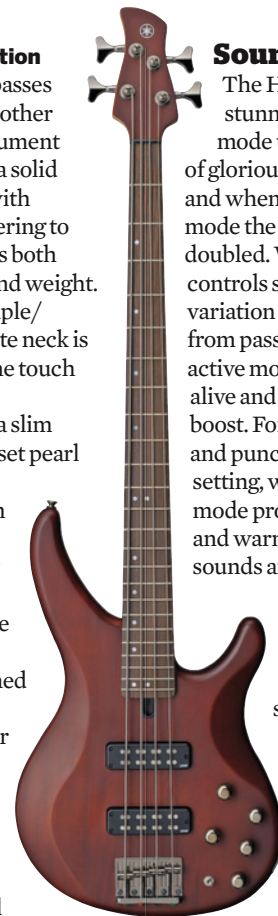
CONTACT: Yamaha Music Europe PHONE: 01908 366700 WEB: www.uk.yamaha.com

Yamaha's reputation

for making great basses continues with another well-crafted instrument that makes use of a solid mahogany body with significant chamfering to the top, which aids both playing comfort and weight. The five-piece maple/mahogany laminate neck is ultra-smooth to the touch and has Jazz-like proportions with a slim 38mm nut and offset pearl dot inlays.

The body design is typically Yamaha, meaning excellent balance and access to those uppermost frets. While the burnished chrome bridge/tailpiece allows for top loading of strings only, it's a high-mass raised tail unit and offers maximum natural sound transference from the strings to the body.

With a pair of quad-polepiece pickups and an active/passive preamp design with a battery of controls, it will come as no surprise that the prime function of the TRBX504 is to produce an array of quality tones.



Sounds

The H5 pickups are stunning. In passive mode they offer a range of gloriously funky sounds and when switching to active mode the potential is neatly doubled. With the tone controls set flat there is little variation when switching from passive to active, but in active mode they really come alive and offer both cut and boost. For dynamic attack and punch use the active setting, while the passive mode provides those fruity and warm traditional bass sounds and pickup blends.

This is a tactile and versatile bass with a host of sumptuous sweet spots.

Verdict

Versatile, full of delightful tonal surprises and all at a price that won't break the bank – what's not to like about this fine addition to Yamaha's bass range? **[RN]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Yamaha's latest bass takes some beating; great playability and a broad range of passive and active sounds



Nineboys Cigar Box Guitar £99

The three-stringed fretless box that's signalling a new trend

CONTACT: Nineboys PHONE: 01284 828933 WEB: www.nineboys.co.uk

One of the more endearing trends outside of the mainstream instrument market is the DIY world of cigar box guitars (CBGs). You'll find numerous communities online dedicated to this genre, not to mention DIY kits, plans, parts and, of course, many how-to-play videos out there.

Nineboys (which has already brought us the one-string Wedge diddley-bow) has once

again made it easy with the Cigar Box guitar. The body is made literally from a cigar box (available in two designs), a five-piece laminated wood spine runs through the box, at the bass end anchoring the three strings, while the other end forms the neck with a what looks like mahogany fingerboard and minimal headstock with three die-cast tuners. Frets? Who needs 'em.

Mind you, a few position markers on the fingerboard side would be helpful...

Sounds

With an onboard piezo pickup and volume control, the sounds are deliciously old-school and there's plenty of potential for right-hand percussion. It sounds quite hauntingly authentic with a clean, reverb'd amp sound, and with crunch it's

easy to cop your Seasick Steve licks. Feedback can be a problem, though, and it can be a lively lil' thing to control.

Verdict

Frankly, we have no idea of the sales potential for a three-string fretless slide guitar with no position markers made out of a old cigar box. But if your slide chops are in order, we have to be honest and say we had a lot of fun. Tune it how you want and join the underground. [DB]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Join the cigar box revolution with one of the few available through regular music stores. Just add slide and mojo

TC Electronic Hall Of Fame Mini Reverb £95

A tiny 'verb with unlimited potential

CONTACT: TC Electronic PHONE: 0800 917 8926 WEB: www.tcelectronic.com

We first spotted this petite reverb on Guthrie Govan's pedalboard, and now it's available to us mere mortals. The HOF Mini is one of the most compact reverbs on the market – the enclosure's too small to even display the full pedal name! However, that means you get just the one control and mono operation only, while the pedal is powered by a nine-volt power supply.

This is no one-trick pony, though, for the HOF Mini also boasts TC's innovative TonePrint technology. By default, the pedal is loaded with a lush hall setting, but through the use of the TonePrint

smartphone app, any of the full-sized Hall Of Fame settings and artist-programmed 'Prints can be beamed into the pedal. Plus, with the recently updated TonePrint Editor, you can connect the stompbox to your computer and create your own TonePrints by adjusting a wealth of hidden parameters, and even assign which parameter the pedal's single knob controls.

Sounds

Like its bigger brother, the HOF Mini's reverbs are exceptional, and with the TonePrint function there are potentially limitless options available, from

short springs to an unparalleled range of unparallelled range of modulated 'verbs. No matter how high you crank the reverberations, the pedal's analogue dry-through ensures your guitar's natural tone still shines through.

Verdict

This isn't the reverb pedal for guitarists who need a lot of sounds on the fly, but if one 'verb will do you for a gig, and you like the idea of in-depth editing using the TonePrint Editor, the HOF Mini is an inconspicuously impressive bijou reverb. [MB]



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: For those short on 'board space and keen on computer-based editing, this is an outstanding compact 'verb

Zoom MultiStomp MS-70CDR £99

A multi-effects power trio of chorus, delay and reverb

CONTACT: Zoom UK PHONE: 01462 791100 WEB: www.zoom.co.jp



With its ever-expanding MultiStomp series, Zoom has tapped into guitarists' desires for more effects crammed into smaller enclosures. In our reviews of the existing MS-50G and MS-100BT, we reckoned they were ideal as multi-function utility pedals used in conjunction with other stompboxes – and Zoom's latest effort, the MS-70CDR, seems particularly focused on fulfilling this role, concentrating its effect efforts on chorus, delay and reverb only.

You see, if you're playing into an amp and already have your dirt covered, you'll probably have no need for the other MultiStomps' amp and drive models, and this is where the MS-70CDR fits in. It has 86 types of effects (27 chorus/modulation, 26 delays, 29 reverbs, four extras), including all-new clones of effects from the likes of Strymon, Eventide and TC Electronic – models

that you won't find on other MultiStomp units.

Operating the pedal is the same as using the other stompboxes in the series. Three knobs adjust effect parameters: the first opens the menu to rearrange effects; the second opens the memory screen; and the third displays additional parameters for more complicated effects. The four buttons that surround the footswitch scroll through effects and add or remove them from your signal chain. You can have up to six effects in a chain. These can each be saved as one of 50 patches and assigned to a letter of the alphabet, enabling you to scroll through them with the footswitch.

Sounds

Like its predecessors, the MS-70CDR delivers a great effect-to-cash ratio, with a colossal range of tones from the classic to the bizarre. The

reverbs are the best of the bunch, whether they're springs, churches or caves, although the most inspiring sounds come from the more atmosphere-laden 'verbs, which include the mangled Particle and heavily modulated Space Hole for blockbuster soundscapes.

More esoteric options reside among the delay models, too: Pitch creates a rising scale trail, while Trigger Hold quickly samples your guitar for stutter effects. Old favourites such as Mod Delay and Tape Echo do a reasonably authentic job, too.

On the chorus front, again, there's a considerable array of options, from subtle shimmers to warbles verging on vibrato. For us, the sounds don't quite match the chewy, darker tonality of a good analogue chorus, but they're all perfectly serviceable tones. That said, there is a certain amount of crossover, so we would have liked to have seen a few more

modulation options in place of some of the chorus models.

Verdict

For players who want to add a little – or, indeed, a lot – of ambience to their sound, the MS-70CDR is a commendable compact option. Of course, it has its quirks: the quality of the pitch-shifted models varies, and actually bypassing the pedal isn't that straightforward – in fact, we'd advise using a bypass loop to free up the footswitch for scrolling through patches. Nonetheless, the mostly high standard of effects, particularly the CDR-exclusive models, makes the MS-70CDR a handy pedal to have around. [TC]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: If you're searching for an affordable all-in-one solution to your reverb, delay and chorus needs, look no further than the MS-70CDR



TheGigRig G2 £749

Ultimate yet simple effects and system switching control

CONTACT: TheGigRig PHONE: 01793 602452 WEB: www.thegigrig.com



We first met Daniel Steinhardt of UK's TheGigRig a decade ago. Here was this passionate Aussie ex-pat raving about great pedals, yet lamenting the tap dancing and tonal pitfalls involved in using loads of them together. Along with business partner Dave Mapleston, Steinhardt has spent the ensuing years developing innovative tools that culminate in TheGigRig's most complete control system to date: G2.

The heart of the unit is 10 separate send-and-return loops, enabling you to assign any combination of pedals to one of 14 footswitch 'presets'. Where previous GigRig switchers used separate relays for switching, G2 is boasting a 'True Bypass Matrix' that not only lets your signal bypass unused pedals, but now also unused switches.

In Use

You can have one-touch switching for entire setting changes, or you can assign any switch to 'stompbox' mode, so that it adds to whatever loop is currently active. The really surprising bit? It's all blissfully simple to operate.

There's no programming, no patch saving, no endless menus: everything G2 is doing is right there in real time, in front of you. Let's say you have your

Fulltone Full-Drive in loop five (as it is in the rig below) and you want it on footswitch one. Just hit footswitch one to make it active, then press button five in the 'effects loops' section in the middle. Hey presto, the Full-Drive is now on whenever you press footswitch one. Add or subtract any pedal in the same way to build full presets: no store, no save, just real-time what-you-see-is-what-you-get. Want to change a pedal sound? Bend down and turn the knobs!

There are many, many other functions. First, every preset switch also has optional, pre and post gain functions to tailor the input and output levels of your presets if you want.

The bank of buttons on the left does all kinds of things. Thought you 'only' had 14 preset combinations? Actually,

there are 28, courtesy of the 'bank up' switch (plus another two 'hidden presets' that you can assign to anything you like: tuner out is fave for us).

Want to run two amps? No problem – there are dual outputs (the second is isolated to avoid ground loops) and you can assign any effects preset to any combination of your two amps. Change amp channels/functions, too, if you like, courtesy of four remote jacks, individually assignable to any loop. There's also a separate volume pedal insert option, enabling you to place a volume pedal between any of the main 14 loops. You can connect your amp effects loop here, too.

Want even more effects? You can patch in another external effects device using the send and return 'insert loop' function

that, like the volume insert, you can move to any place in the loop chain. The whole thing is MIDI capable, too, as master or slave in a bigger rig. Finally, if you want your pedals tucked safely away in a rack while the switcher is out on the stage, there's a G2 Ext kit to do that.

Verdict

This is a pro tool that's currently being used by artists as diverse as Biffy Clyro, Andy Timmons and The Pixies. It ticks two outwardly contradictory boxes. First, it provides total flexibility yet is simple to use; second, it sounds fantastic without having any sound at all. It's more compact and more powerful than the company's PRO- and MIDI- series switchers, and it's more spilled-pint-proof to boot. There exists a vast tonal and price chasm between an average digital multi-effects device and a custom-built professional rig control system. G2 – with the right pedals – helps you sound more like the latter, but costs closer to the former, making it the pro-playing effects junkie's no-brainer of the year. **[MT]**

GUITARIST RATING: ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Superb switching flexibility, exceptional tonal integrity, sensible price: gold!





Electro-Harmonix 45000 and Foot Controller **£359 & £95**

A multitrack looper with tricks aplenty

CONTACT: Electro-Harmonix **PHONE:** N/A **WEB:** www.ehx.com

Electro-Harmonix may not be the first name that comes to mind when you think of looper pedals, but in a way, the US company were in right from the start with the 16-second delay from 1982, and its 2800 joined the range in 2006. The latest is the 45000 Multi-Track Looping Recorder, an update of the 2800 with the addition of a dedicated monitor output and an increase in its recording capacity. It has the ability to store up to 100 loops to a removable SDHC card. The supplied 4GB card allows up to 125 minutes of recording, while a USB connection enables transfer of files with a computer.

In Use

The 45000 is set up like a multitrack recorder featuring four tracks, each with its own fader and pan control plus a stereo 'mixdown' track. A 'loop'

in EHX parlance is made up of anything you record on the four tracks, so it's effectively up to four synchronised recordings running together. The first track you record sets the length of the overall loop and you can record freeform or with a quantize function in place to keep your timing solid. There's an onboard metronome for guidance, but EHX has also provided a selection of drum loops in 34 loop memory slots.

You can build up overdubs on any of the four tracks and, if desired, mix them down to the mixdown track to free them up for more recording. Overdubs are also possible onto the mixdown track, so there's potential for building up many layers. You also get some loop mangling facilities – reverse and half-speed playback (one octave down) are available with single button pushes. There's a speed/

pitch adjustment on a sliding scale via the tempo control.

With a headphone output among the many connections, the 45000 is very practical as a compositional or practice tool that you can place on a table in front of you, but as the unit itself has no footswitches and no display, you'll need to buy the optional footswitch if you want to explore its full potential. Connected by a standard guitar lead it offers the footswitches you need to control your loop recording and playback, including loop selection with a numerical display.

Verdict

The 45000 is pretty easy to use once you get your head around it. It's great for messing around and being creative in a similar way to how you might use a Portastudio, but although you can step through and select all

of the 100 loop memories using the main unit's interface, you have to count button presses – the footswitch opens up the way to traditional looping.

At a total street price around £450, the combination is competitive with other multiple track loopers such as those from Boss and Pigtronix, which offer fewer tracks but have footswitch control of individual tracks that some might find to be more convenient. Choosing a looper depends on whether its feature set equates to how you want to use it, and the 45000 with foot controller is a creative and versatile package that ticks plenty of boxes. **[TC]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A versatile looper that can create huge, layered compositions. In most cases you'll need the foot-controller, too