

ROUND UP

Victory V4 Preamp pedals

The amp maker's new stompboxes offer all-valve tone at your feet

Words Nick Guppy **Photography** Phil Barker

British amp builder Victory is well known for its modern rock designs, which have become weapons of choice for a wide and varied artist list, including James Bay, Graham Coxon, Richie Kotzen and the incredible Guthrie Govan. Many amp manufacturers diversify into pedals at some point and Victory has just taken this step with the introduction of three preamp pedals that emulate the front-ends of its Sheriff, Countess and Kraken amplifiers. Here we're looking at the all-new V4 Sheriff and Countess models.

Both pedals have smart looks and solid construction, with tough steel boxes and

a protection bar to safeguard the controls. Inside, five high-quality boards hold the electronics, with first-class layout and wiring. The V4s run off an external 12-volt DC supply, and need at least 800ma of current – internal power is stepped up to around 300 volts DC, so keep out of beer-spilling range. There are four valves: a miniature EC900 triode and three NOS (new old stock) Mullard CV4014 pentodes – high-grade military spec versions of the EF91, a popular small valve in the 1950s. The CV4014s date to 1981 and Victory is so confident in them that the warranty on these valves is extended to two years.

The controls and connections are identical and familiar. Bass, mid and treble knobs and a three-position bright switch take care of the EQ, with separate gain and volume controls for the channels and channel-active LEDs. Two footswitches select bypass and channel, while around the back a row of jack sockets take care of all the connections.

These V4s are best described as preamps and pedals. They can plug into the front-end like regular drive pedals, but if your amp has an effects loop they can add two extra footswitchable channels as well as your amp's existing sounds thanks to clever design and trick relay switching. **G**



V4 The Countess

The V4 Countess pedal is taken from the Countess heads originally designed for guitar supremo and Victory artist Guthrie Govan, and just like the other amps of the same name, there's a big difference between the two channels. Channel 1 is bright and spanky, with a lot of headroom that lends itself to effects, while Channel 2 is fat and warm, with a huge reservoir of gain to tap into. Even guitars with low-output single coils will sing and sustain when Volume 2 is turned up beyond halfway. And yet this channel doesn't turn to mush like many high-gain circuits, keeping its definition and a distinct harmonic bite, even at quite extreme settings. The V4 Countess's noise levels are impressively low, too. Best suited for modern rock and metal styles, this one is going to please all Guthrie fans. **G**

VERDICT Wide, airy cleans and a huge lead sound make for a pedal that can cover any modern rock style with ease



V4 The Sheriff

Like the Sheriff heads, the V4 pedal is inspired by the classic Plexi tones that powered many a guitar hero to fame in the 70s and 80s. Some of these early non-master volume heads were modified with extra gain stages, becoming the ancestors of today's modern high-gain channel-switching designs. On this pedal, there's less difference between the two channels: Channel 1 has enough gain to produce a serious crunch at higher levels, while 2 kicks in a serious boost that's great for all kinds of solo work. This pedal has a wide dynamic range and excellent response that allows experienced players to vary overdrive effects with picking strength. All kinds of picking squeals and feedback jump out of the speaker at proper volume levels, making the Sheriff a perfect partner for classic rockers who like to push the envelope now and again. **G**

VERDICT A cracking overdrive pedal that considerably expands any amplifier's capabilities



Tech Spec

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: All-valve preamp/boost pedal, with 1x EC900, 3x CV4014

FEATURES: 2 channels with bypass

CONTROLS: Bass, mid, treble, volume 1, volume 2, master 1, master 2, bright switch

CONNECTIONS: Input, through, loop in, loop out, effect out, remote switch, all on 6.5mm jack

POWER: 12V DC (adaptor supplied), 800mA minimum

DIMENSIONS: 225 (w) x 140 (h) x 79mm (d)

Guitarist CHOICE

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