



HIGH-END DISTORTION PEDALS

The last few years have seen a complete explosion in boutique fuzz, overdrive and distortion pedals from smaller makers in every corner of the world. When TG were a lad, you'd be hard-pressed to find a distortion pedal that set you back more than three figures. But these days even a humble filthbox can cost as much as a cheap guitar, and with so many different distortion pedals available at hugely different price points, the sheer choice available can be overwhelming. So, this month we're looking at four distortion pedals from top line manufacturers. Cheap they are not, but these pedals should be thought of as investments – they're high-spec and serve almost as an additional channel to your amp – offering medium to heavy amp-style gain. Strap in, we're drivin' dirty...

Bogner Burnley

BURN BABY, BURN!

£149

Reinhold Bogner was on the frontline of the high-gain amp revolution, and here he's teamed up with studio desk pioneer Rupert Neve. The Burnley is a 100 per cent analogue distortion, equipped with Neve-designed transformers, and the promise of "fire-breathing pandemonium" – a promise slightly at odds with its clean, modern looks. The standard controls are joined by a fat/tight switch and it can be powered from a battery or power supply. Tonally, it's less molten metal and more aggro rock monster, but it cleans up nicely for overdrive and semi-clean sounds. Meanwhile, flipping to Fat and upping the gain screams for chunky power chord riffs. Dynamic, versatile... what else do you want?

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★

Mesa/Boogie Throttlebox

PUT YOUR FOOT DOWN

£185

The Throttlebox offers a step onto the rung of the Mesa/Boogie gain ladder at a snip of the price of buying a Boogie amp. There's a whole pile of gain on tap here, giving you the flavour of the classic Dual Rectifier 'red channel', plus a mid-cut control to help keep things tight. It's not all super-hairy distortion, though – the lo/hi switch sets a different gain range, so you can coax out more 'classic' sounds. The output is a tad lower than the other pedals here, but it hardly matters in practice. You're essentially getting one-and-a-half channel options, so it's a great fit for single-channel amp users.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★



Upgrade your gain to premium with these amp-in-a-box distortions

Friedman BE-OD

£199

YOUR PLEXT'S ON FIRE!

The BE-OD pairs down Friedman's Marshall-inspired BE-100 amp to pedal form. Control-wise, it's the most preamp-like here and there's an internal gain trim pot, too. Maxing out the gain, you'd think it was already turned up full, but a quick look inside reveals that it's factory-set to halfway! In truth, cranking it past three-quarters is too much, but it's a nice addition. Pinning our colours to the mast, the Friedman is the best all-round distortion here. It's defined bite and increased output is very noticeable and the tight control does exactly that – removing flab – and the BE impressively retains its character across the gain spectrum. For £199, this will let you in on one of rock's best-kept secrets.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

Diezel VH4

£279

GIVE ME FUEL...

The Diezel VH4 is the amp that's fuelled James Hetfield, Matt Bellamy and Billy Corgan with some of their angriest tones and this VH4 pedal brings you those same tones at just over 10 percent of the head's ticket. The VH4 has the most original sonic character on test. It sounds like itself, with a gravelly edge of 'air' present across its entire sweep. At first it feels like there isn't as much gain as you might expect, because it never veers into 'fizzy pedal' territory, and with such a defined character comes a lack of versatility – there's no escaping the throaty aggression. It's ruddy huge though – both in tone and physical stature. It does its thing, and does it impeccably and unapologetically.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Distortion pedals
BYPASS: All true bypass
POWER REQUIREMENTS: Bogner – Battery/PSU, Mesa/Boogie – Battery/PSU; Friedman – PSU only; Diezel – PSU only
CONTACT: Guitar Guitar (Bogner, Diezel, Friedman) 0800 456 1959 www.guitarguitar.co.uk Westside Distribution (Mesa/Boogie) 0844 326 2000 westsidedistribution.com