

FIRST PLAY



WALRUS AUDIO VOYAGER PREAMP/ OVERDRIVE MKII £245

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WHAT IS IT? A greatly updated
version of the brand's original
Klon-style pedal



Outer Limits

Walrus Audio revitalises its very first pedal, the Klon-emulating Voyager, with some tasty additions

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Phil Barker

1. The Mode knob offers five variations of overdrive texture via different diode clipping options
2. Midrange EQ is brought in with a footswitch. Meanwhile, the Freq knob sets the centre frequency in a range from 250Hz to 2kHz, and this can be cut or boosted by the centre-detented Mid knob
3. Our review pedal is finished in 'seafoam' style green with black ink and the Voyager satellite graphic, but it's also available in matt black with cream ink and a space helmet graphic

Walrus Audio started up back in 2011 with its first pedal, the Voyager Overdrive, a three-knob Klon-style stompbox that found favour with the likes of Joe Bonamassa, Ed O'Brien and Nels Cline. Now, for 2025, the company has brought out an updated version that greatly expands on the original.

The Voyager MKII sports the obligatory Volume, Tone and Gain knobs, but it supplements those with a rotary switch that offers a choice of five variations of the diode clipping circuitry, plus a footswitchable parametric mid-frequency EQ. While the Tone knob operates a low-pass filter to place the top-end where you need it, the midrange EQ section targets frequencies at the heart of electric guitar sound – the centre frequency can be set between 250Hz and 2kHz, and cut or boosted by 12dB.

The pedal is excellent in use as a clean or low-gain boost, offering a natural clarity that can be further enhanced with any tonal shifts you care to dial in and some grit from the Gain knob's lower reaches. Once you start turning that Gain up, the various clipping modes come into play for player-exploitable variations in both feel and sound.

The sound of the original Voyager pedal – and perhaps the most accurately Klon-like as it utilises 1N34A germanium diodes – is found at position 1 on the rotary switch. This is the most compressed of the five options, and there's an alternate variation of this with a little bass boost at position 2. Position 3 switches to the sound of symmetric silicon diodes, which opens up the sound somewhat and has more of a response to dynamics. The least amount of compression is found at positions 4 and 5 where asymmetric silicon diodes deliver the most driven sounds, with position 5 adding bass boost. Whether it's just-breaking-up tones or full-on drive, the five modes offer plenty of variations on the theme, while the Mid EQ can not only sculpt that further but can also be used as a switchable variation on it, maybe a presence boost for solos, that will give you two sounds underfoot.

Verdict

Any number of Klon-style pedals go beyond the original three-knob paradigm for extra flexibility, but these alternatives often offer no more than really subtle changes in tone and response. Walrus has gone well beyond that proposition here with the inclusion of its switchable midrange, which makes the Voyager MKII a very flexible drive/boost pedal. **G**



WALRUS AUDIO VOYAGER PREAMP/OVERDRIVE MKII

PRICE: £245

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Drive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass, choice of 5 clipping modes, footswitchable mid EQ

CONTROLS: Volume, Tone, Gain, Mid, Freq, Mode, Mid footswitch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 100mA

DIMENSIONS: 67 (w) x 125 (d) x 57mm (h)

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PROS Compact size; diode clipping options; footswitchable midrange; top-mounted jacks

CONS The price will put it out of reach of some players



THE RIVALS

The obvious rival here would be J Rockett's Archer Select (£299) with its seven selectable diode options; a Clipping footswitch engages your selected clipping diode but defaults to the stock diode when off. Officially the nearest thing to a vintage Klon would be the Klon KTR (£399), Bill Finnegan's very own reworking of his original pedal, handmade in the USA. For something that looks like an original Klon, albeit much smaller and eminently more affordable, check out the new Behringer Centaur (£69). In a similar price bracket is Electro-Harmonix's Soul Food (£79), which has plenty of Klon flavour.

