

STOMPBOX FEVER



Tech 21 Boost Series Fuzz, Distortion, and Overdrive

TESTED BY MICHAEL ROSS

TECH 21'S EFFECTS PEDALS consistently hew to the company's philosophy: "The more analog the better." The new Boost series pedals—Overdrive, Distortion, and Fuzz—are designed with all-analog circuitry and hand-biased discrete components. All offer Level and Drive controls for the effect and, as the series name implies, a 21dB clean boost that's controlled by its own footswitch and knob. The boost can be used alone or added post-effect to raise

the volume without increasing distortion.

I tested the three pedals with a Fender Stratocaster and a bridge humbucker-equipped Blacktop Jazzmaster through an Orange Tiny Terror, Egnater Rebel 30, and a Fender Blues Junior.

Boost Overdrive

The green graphics on the Boost Overdrive (\$145 street) hinted at a Tube Screamer clone, but this pedal proved to be its own

animal. It features an extremely wide range of drive—from the slightest give to crunchy compressed rock—and packs a low midrange bump that adds warmth without muddiness. From noon on up, the Tone control helped fine-tune the highs without ever getting harsh, but below noon the sound was too blanketed for my tastes. Turning the Sparkle knob clockwise also added top end, as well as loosening the attack and increasing touch sensitivity. This is one

STOMPBOX FEVER

of the most touch sensitive drive pedals I have encountered; by easing off on my pick attack I could play clean chords even with a fair amount of Drive engaged, and then dig in for a natural, tube-amp-type drive.

The totally transparent boost was useful to compensate for long cables and to push the front end of an amp into greater distortion, or, combined with the Drive, to give solos additional punch. In a wildly overcrowded stompbox field, the Boost Overdrive's different slant and distinctive voice should help it make its mark.

KUDOS Wide range of amp-like drive. Excellent touch sensitivity.

CONCERNS None.

Boost Distortion

Those greedy for gain will like the wide range of edgy grit delivered by the Boost Distortion (\$145 street). With Drive turned down and Sag all the way up, the pedal served up some crisp Malcolm

Young-style crunch that cleaned up well when the guitar volume was rolled down. With the Drive knob cranked you get balls-to-the-wall gain, but here it helps to dial back the Sag control to reduce fizz and noise. The Tone knob presented the treble nicely from noon and up, but below that the sound quickly became muffled. Running lots of gain can often sink a solo in the mix, but the Boost function came to the rescue, making the notes cut through bass, drums, and rhythm guitar with ease. If you want a little "more" of everything in a classic distortion box, the Boost Distortion is well worth trying out.

KUDOS Distortion ranging from classic crunch to shred mayhem.

CONCERNS A bit noisy at higher gain settings.

Boost Fuzz

Vintage style germanium fuzz pedals have experienced a rebirth among guitarists,

but to circumvent the inherent variation and instability of germanium transistors, Tech 21 used their expertise to create the Boost Fuzz (\$145 street), an analog emulation of a classic germanium fuzz. It didn't take much playing through the Boost Fuzz to discover they nailed it. With the Drive and Sag at ten o'clock, the effect exhibited the sensitivity to touch and guitar volume of the best germanium fuzz pedals. This was only the beginning, too, as the abundant highs in the fuzz made the Tone control fully useable throughout most of its sweep, allowing for a wealth of luscious tones that recalled the best of Hendrix, Trower, and Landau.

For its ability to nail classic germanium sounds with consistency and reliability, the Boost Fuzz earns an Editors' Pick Award.

KUDOS Classic germanium tones matched to modern reliability.

CONCERNS None.

CONTACT tech21nyc.com