



# Vintage Guitar<sup>®</sup> Gear Reviews

magazine

## Classic, Then Some

### The Tech 21 Character Series VT Bass Deluxe

**T**he most popular piece of gear in the Tech 21 product roster is the SansAmp Bass Driver, a piece with a proven track record—and the ultimate inspiration for the company's latest offering, the VT Bass Deluxe pedal.

A programmable DI/preamp/overdrive/emulator, the sounds and layout of the VT Bass Deluxe are traditional SansAmp, and players familiar with the company's previous programmable models will easily navigate this one. There are dual inputs, which is particularly helpful for bassists who may double on fretless or upright, or use a combination of active and passive instruments. For each input, there are three program locations determined by the first three footswitches, going from left to right. Tone tweakers take note; if you're using a single instrument, you can use all six presets. The final footswitch acts as a bank selector and to engage the effects loop.

The knob layout of the VT Bass Deluxe is tried-and-true Tech 21. Its Drive control adjusts signal gain and overdrive, and there are Low, Mid, and High controls which set corresponding EQ levels, as well as a Master Level. Tech 21's trademark Character knob

makes subtle tweaks to the array of "characters" that live within—for this box, it translates to having a flip-top, classic SVT, a raucous VB, or anything in-between at your fingertips.

The VT Bass Deluxe has parallel and emulated outputs, which can send a dry/unaffected signal back to a rig or a second preamp, for blending sounds. There's also an XLR-out for going to a recording interface or front-of-house. And there's a programmable (and assignable) effects loop.

At a recording session, the VT Bass Deluxe immediately delivered amp-like quality, even with its controls set flat, shining particularly with a vintage Precision plugged in. Turning the Character knob to 12 o'clock—where the flip-top resides—proffered Motor City soul bass tone, ideal for the session.

Digging in, the VT yielded an array of coolness. Because it's designed to render emulations of one of the classic amp lines, its bass can get

seriously furry—and quick. The Drive control will definitely drive you through a brick wall and certain 18-volt active basses require some dialing-in to get clean. Again, these are *vintage* emulations, so the grit isn't necessarily a bad thing! It just needs to be noted, because if you're looking for sparkling-clean tones, SansAmp's Bass Driver might better suit your needs.

The VT Bass Deluxe specializes in subtle breakup and overdriven tones. A hint of Drive on the P-Bass/flip-top scenario gave a Babbitt-esque vibe, and dialing up the SVT emulation and riding that Drive knob a bit quelled any worries whether any bassist using this box could hang with a stage full of Marshalls.

The more one experiments with the VT Bass Deluxe, the cooler it becomes. Though it sounds great with simple tweaks, it's more to drool over while you dig in and reveal the possibilities! — Sean O'Bryan Smith VG



#### TECH 21 CHARACTER SERIES VT BASS DELUXE

Price: \$269 (retail)

Contact: tech21nyc.com.