

Pedalmania!

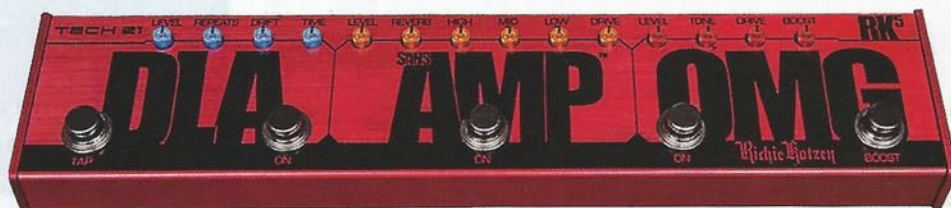


Tech 21 OMG Richie Kotzen

\$189

Developing this pedal with Kotzen took some time according to Tech 21, but given the OMG's tonal performance and excellent touch sensitivity, the R&D was well spent. Replicating the distortion tone and dynamic response of an overdriven tube amp isn't exactly black magic nowadays, but the OMG brings a cool twist to the recipe in the form of a Girth knob, which Tech 21 describes as a "specialized wide-band midrange control that's designed to enhance the 'bulk' of the guitar sound." Configured post-effect, Girth sounds like it also increases drive when turned up, though the company states it doesn't actually do that. At any rate, it's very effective for giving Marshall-like mass to the distortion, and it made it so easy to dial in a killer single-coil bridge-pickup tone. The Drive knob itself has a ton of range, and will deliver sustain for days at high settings. Still, there's always good touch responsiveness when you lighten up on the pick, or roll down the guitar volume. The massive output potential of the Level control also makes the OMG very suitable as a booster when using a lower Drive setting. The OMG also has a separately footswitchable Boost control that lets you kick in any amount of volume increase needed to get notes feeding back, or to make a solo jump out of the mix. Bottom line: Great tones and flexible EQ make the OMG a pedal to audition if you're searching for a new OD box.

tech21nyc.com. —ART THOMPSON



Tech 21 Richie Kotzen RK5 Signature Fly Rig

\$269

Tech 21's RK5 is full of surprises. Like its sibling, the Fly Rig 5 (see the December 2014 review at guitarplayer.com), it is astonishingly compact at less than a foot long. Its circuit-board-mounted knobs light up in pleasing blue, amber, and red hues when active, and, provided you're not on an outdoor stage under a bright sun, the glowing dials clearly delineate the main effects sections—the DLA (delay), AMP (SansAmp amp simulator), OMG (overdrive), and global volume boost. The only *unwelcome* surprise is no onboard tuner.

Tech 21 worked closely with soulful hard-rock virtuoso Richie Kotzen to dial in the RK5 to suit his tonal preferences, and he uses it (and a wah) exclusively for his solo and Winery Dogs tours. The OMG distortion is fierce, thick, and articulate, yet cleans up nicely when you roll back your guitar volume. The delay is clear, with a great-sounding "drift" effect you can use to dial in the chorus-y randomness of tape echoes.

While on tour with Jefferson Starship, I mostly ran the RK5 into the front of rented Marshall JCM 900 and 2000 heads set slightly dirty, and the versatile effector gave me every sound I needed. My biggest surprise, however, was when I discovered how well the RK5 works when run the *other* way it's designed to be used—as a preamp plugged into an amp's effects return. Here, your amp's preamp drive, EQ, and reverb sections are entirely bypassed, and the RK5's analog amp simulator (AMP)—including its pristine 'verb effect—takes over. I dialed in a slightly dirty sound, kicking in the OMG, DLA, and Boost sections as needed, and was stunned by how clear the tones were, how powerful the distortion was, how controllable the feedback was, and how much stage volume was available. Consider that the compact RK5 excels in just about any gigging or recording situation, and this tiny tone palette makes for an indispensable ally on the road. tech21nyc.com —JUDE GOLD

