

Supersized Distortion

Tech 21 XXL bass distortion pedal

By **Todd VanSelus**

WE ALL HAVE a hankerin' for effects, but it's rare we find one that's flexible enough to find a permanent home in our signal chain. More often than not they become nothing more than tone-sucking novelties or mere set-list paperweights.

Tech 21's XXL Bass Edition favors the intense end of the distortion spectrum. This doesn't mean light overdrive isn't possible, but if that's where your quest ends, you'll miss the XXL's magic. Tonally similar to the Big Muff's raunchy crunch, the XXL has some fuzz thrown in to round out the top. What turned us on the most, however, was how the lows break up. With many distortion pedals, the added grit is primarily in the highs, but driven hard, the XXL turns your low end into an addictively thick, obese splatter.

The XXL's innovative level-compensated tone control functions in a unique way: It's flat at maximum (knob turned fully clockwise), and boosts low end as you turn the knob counterclockwise to the midpoint (12 o'clock). Continue turning the knob counterclockwise, and it cuts highs from midpoint to minimum setting. And it does all this without changing the overall level! A touch of low cut can still be heard, but the overall thickness and punch aren't significantly sacrificed. The ability to tailor your tone from burnt bacon grease to razor-sharp



squeal enables you to mold your sound to fit a wide range of sonic landscapes.

The jewel of the XXL is the Warp control, and although its effect can sometimes seem subtle, it's important to understand that it functions differently than a typical tone control, allowing you to control the ratio of even

and odd harmonics relative to your dynamics. In plain English, the pedal does not exhibit the same compressed qualities as most distortions. If you play softly, the

effect is pleasingly overdriven. Dig in with the same settings, and you'll experience raw, howling grit. It's this flexibility and dynamic range that make the Tech 21 XXL bass distortion pedal a very musical addition to your signal chain, and distinguish it from the crowded distortion pedal pack. ■

THEDEETS

LIST PRICE \$125
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