

Quiet competence

Price: £99.95 **Tech 21 CompTORTION:** A clever combination of two of our favourite effects from the company that brought us the SansAmp

SUSTAIN IS A SOUGHT-AFTER commodity for guitarists, but it often comes at a price, with ingredients like vintage Les Pauls and hand-wired super-amps. One solution is to use higher gains or a compressor, but seekers of that everlasting note quickly find that trying both together results in the sort of noise that normally accompanies force 12 blizzards.

By designing a pedal that incorporates specifically matched distortion and compression circuits with noise reduction, Tech 21 believes it has the answer to sustain without pain.

Analogue kid

Tech 21 makes tough little boxes; die-cast metal casing, proper pots mounted to the case and silent, thoroughly stompable footswitches. One significant improvement is that the CompTORTION has an easy-access battery compartment – something we've bemoaned the lack of on other Tech 21 pedals. Taking a peek inside exposes one of the company's trademarks; instead of assembling the electronics from a fistful of usual components, most of the circuit is miniaturised within a discrete analogue chip, thereby reducing noise and the varying tolerances of individual components connected by solder joints. Add to that a status LED and a DC adaptor socket and there's little room for improvement.

Flexibility

It's the aim of Tech 21 to come up with products that are flexible but simple to use, and that certainly holds true for this pedal. Alongside the

The rivals

• Zoom 510 Dual Power Driver	£99.95
• Carl Martin Compressor/Limiter	£149
• Boss CS-3 Compression Sustainer	£59

self-explanatory 'level' and 'tone' controls, there's just a single knob to vary the level of distortion ('tortion') and another for compression ('comp'). It's a simple process of dialling in the gain level, from completely clean to a saturated overdrive, then adding the desired level of compression – from the minimum of 1:1 to a maximum of 15:1; in English that means from no compression to more squash than Godzilla's flip-flops.

To comp or not?

Both effects can be used independently as well as together. The distortion section ranges from a glassy clean up to a toasty overdrive with some pleasing blues tones along the way. The compressor is very quiet and responsive, with plenty

of range and is an extremely useful tool in its own right. The real magic, however, happens when you combine the two.

By balancing the two effects, it's possible to achieve an impressive amount of sustain, even if you're using a sound that's barely overdriven. Add more helpings of gain and you'd have Gary Moore sweating in a *Parisienne Walkways* duel. By following the sample settings in the user guide, the CompTORTION also proves itself as a worthy aide to snappy country picking or as a useful clean boost.

The gating works extremely well and keeps the noise to a minimum, although a modicum of restraint is advisable if you use both effects towards their upper limits. It might sound like a paradox, but it's more what Tech 21 has managed to leave out of this pedal (noise, signal colouration) that makes it such an effective device.

Ton of tone

It doesn't take a genius to work out that to emulate the CompTORTION you'd need a distortion pedal, a compressor and a noise gate, which would come to considerably

more than the £99.95 retail price of this unit. Furthermore, you can use both effects independently for added flexibility and all without the cost, noise or hassle of

Spec check

TECH 21 COMPTORTION
PRICE £99.95 **ORIGIN** USA **POWER** 9V battery or DC adaptor **FEATURES** Distortion and compression effects that can be used separately or together, also functions as a clean boost. On board noise reduction, level and tone controls, and high-quality, robust construction **CONTACT** Exclusive Distribution, Unit 10, Furmiston Court, Icknield Way, Letchworth, Herts SG6 1UJ Tel: 01462 481148



Two for the price of one, but thankfully no compromises

stringing two or three stompboxes together: quiet sustain comes cheap from Tech 21.

Waiter go

Some players might miss having control over all the available parameters of dedicated, single-function units, but for most of us, this simplification is a blessing, not a hindrance. The CompTORTION works like a good waiter: quietly, discretely, efficiently and with tasty results. Even when the bill comes, there's still something to smile about. This is a fine product that lives up to its promises.

Dominic Hilton



Impressive credentials, but is it better than your average comp?

TECH 21 COMPTORTION

BUILD QUALITY	●●●●●
FEATURES	●●●●○
SOUND	●●●●○
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●●
VERDICT	●●●●○

WE LIKED Solidity, simplicity, great sounds and value
WE DIDN'T LIKE Extreme settings can become a bit boisterous