

Review: Tech 21 Character Plus Series

Tech 21 NYC is known for its excellent analogue [SansAmp amplifier- and speaker-simulations](#) that have made playing guitar (or bass, for that matter) live without a physical amp possible, long before the advent of digital modellers or impulse response technology. Tech 21's range of [ultra-compact Fly Rig multi-effects](#) builds on the company's SansAmp technology to provide the gigging musician with a whole signal chain that fits in a gig bag's side pocket.

Tech 21's new [Character Plus](#) range approaches a very similar theme from a slightly different angle. Each of the four Character Plus pedals (*current price in Finland 369 € each*) offers the guitarist a timeless, classic amp and stomp box combination. The Character-knob, which is what gives the four pedals their name, lets you swipe through a wide variety of different permutations of the chosen amp, and the twin-channel layout makes it easy to dial in, say, a rhythm and a lead sound to switch between.

The EQ section is shared between both channels of each pedal, which may look a little limiting on paper, but proved to be pretty unproblematic in real-life use.

The Character Plus Series pedals each sport 1/4" phone jacks for input and output, if you want to run the pedal as an effect in front of your physical amp, with a balanced XLR-output provided to connect the pedal to a mixing console or an audio interface.

After spending some time with this quartet comprising Tech 21's SansAmp Character Plus Series, I feel that the main point behind these pedals is how amazingly well they work. You get maximum useable sound with practically no fuss whatsoever. The Character Plus pedals put virtually no obstacles between hearing the sound in your head and committing this sound "to tape". A few little knob tweaks and you're ready to roll.

Sure, if you want to experiment with different microphone types and placements, a physical amp or digital modelling software will let you do that, but there's always the danger you might lose the "creative spark" before everything is set up.



The Tech 21 SansAmp Character Plus Series is all about getting things done, smoothly and easily, without sacrificing your tone.

The **Tech 21 Screaming Blonde** is the series' Fender-flavoured offering. The Character-control in each channel sweeps through different Fender-style sounds – from "Tweed" to "Blackface" – and also has a bearing on the channel's gain structure.

The Scream switch activates a Tube Screamer-style overdrive that has been optimised to work seamlessly with the Screaming Blonde's amp channels, making this pedal a great choice for anything from function bands to Texas or Chicago Blues.



Click here for Sound Sample:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl13Zyv9dlw>

The **Tech 21 Mop Top Liverpool** references the Beatles in its name, and both the name as well as the diamond cloth pattern graphics hint at a Vox-style SansAmp-circuit. In contrast to the other three Character Plus pedals, the Mop Top Liverpool features two slightly differently voiced channels. This means that the pedal makes any typical AC30-sound available – from the Shadows all the way to Rory Gallagher or Queen – especially as the additional Boost-section is actually also two boosters in one.

Counterclockwise from 12 o'clock the booster adds a mid-range boost, while clockwise will add a treble booster to your circuit. A pair of frequency shift buttons makes the Liverpool Mop Top even more versatile.



Click here for Sound Sample:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gPila-XKts>

The **Tech 21 Fuzzy Brit** takes proceedings well and truly into classic Hendrix territory by bringing two channels of Marshall-style goodness and a switchable Fuzzface-type fuzz effect to the table.

Again, the Character control gives you a whole range of different, but equally classic, versions of Marshall-thunder from "Beano" all the way to "Ladyland", and beyond.

The Fuzz-circuit is based on a silicon Fuzzface, but with the added advantage of a Tone-control, which lets you tame any excessive top end response.



Click here for Sound Sample:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSgfkYhbO10>

The **Tech 21 English Muffy** takes things firmly into 1970s Rock territory by featuring the classic combination of a Hiwatt-stack and a Big Muff Pi. Even though this combination is clearly aimed at David Gilmour fans, this hard rocking SansAmp also works a treat for Who-style power playing.

The Character-control takes you from clean tones (7-10 o'clock) to crunchy Rock tones (upwards of 11 o'clock) with the highest Character settings adding an upper-mid boost.

Different Big Muff iterations can vary quite considerably in sound, but the Tech 21 version sounds fat and creamy.



Click here for Sound Sample:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP769rtPbWI>