

bassplayer

Tech 21 SansAmp Street Driver 48 review – a new Frank Bello signature amp pedal that delivers the full range of the Anthrax bassist's tones, and then some

Yes, the monstrous drive tones are unmistakable, but this impressively versatile SansAmp unit is not only about unhinged distortion that will terrify your neighbour's cat

★★★★★ By Joel McIver (Bass Player) published 4 days ago



(Image: © Getty Images)

Guitar World Verdict ★★★★★

Monstrous drive tones abound from this beast of a SansAmp: fortunately, it also supplies plenty of warm cleans for the more timid among us.

Pros

- + Huge range of clean and driven tones, from friendly to fiendish.
- + Rugged construction.
- + Stripped-down controls layout.

Cons

- None. Just be cautious when you roll on the drive...

Full transparency: Frank Bello of Anthrax is a good friend of mine and we worked on his autobiography, *Fathers, Brothers, And Sons*, together. I'm doubly pleased, then, that the signature SansAmp pedal that he's been developing with the Tech 21 team has turned out to be such a triumph. At only \$249, it should be accessible for anybody who can afford a **bass guitar**.

The goal with the Street Driver 48 – named after the music stores on New York's 48th Street where Bello hung out as a teenager – was to make a simple-to-use amp emulation pedal that gets you the full range of clean and driven tones. This goal has been achieved thanks to a four-knob interface that couldn't be easier to manage, with Drive and Level controlling the gain/overdrive and output. An active two-band EQ cuts and boosts Low and High frequencies, and two push buttons – labelled Dirt and Filth – add different kinds of distortion.



Image 1 of 2



Image 2 of 2



Let's get straight to the good stuff. The controls are all super sensitive, so roll them on with care. A rightwards spin of Drive and Level rewards you with a smooth but energetic overdrive: this can be dramatically modulated with the EQ pots, which provide a ton of bass and top end. If that isn't enough, you can mess things up still further with the Dirt button, which throws a genuinely violent, hollow-sounding distortion on top, or the rather more sane Filth option, which is more toppy and less evil.

Once you've got all that out of your system (or your significant other has yelled at you to turn the noise down) you're free to explore the more civilized sounds that the Street Driver 48 makes. Bello's own sounds – whether the toppy tones from Anthrax's mid-'80s era, or the later, more crunchy tones – are easily findable, and you can also land on excellent facsimiles of the bass sounds we associate with his heroes Steve Harris and Geddy Lee.

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What I love about this pedal is that it also works perfectly well as a clean boost, as a method of slightly warming up your tone, or as a subtle grind that will cut through the guitars: it's not only about unhinged distortion that will terrify your neighbour's cat.

The Street Driver is built to last, with a metal housing, knobs and switches, and comes with an XLR out and ground connect switch if required. A power supply with interchangeable international plugs is supplied – yes, you'd be surprised how rarely this happens – and you can use it as a regular stompbox, direct into a mixer or as a preamp before a power amp. You even get stickers and a pick thrown in. Give this pedal a test-drive with our full recommendation.

Specs

- **PRICE:** \$249 / £195
- **ORIGIN:** USA
- **TYPE:** Bass preamp/DI and drive pedal
- **CONTROLS:** Drive, Low, High, Level pots, Filth and Dirt in/out buttons
- **CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard output, plus balanced XLR output with earthing switch
- **WEIGHT:** 11 oz / 412g
- **POWER:** 9V DC
- **DIMENSIONS:** 51 (w) x 121 (d) x 95mm (h)
- **Contact:** [Tech 21](#)