



Mad Professor stompboxes £205-£275

We've seen plenty of Danish effects pedals, but now it's the turn of the Finns to fly the flag for the Nordic stompbox scene **by Adrian Clark**

Mad Professor pedals hail from Finland, and are designed by Björn Juhl and his team, who also build finely tuned valve amps to exacting standards. There are 10 compact-sized stompboxes in the complete range, of which these six should give you a good overview. All of the pedals in the range have a similarly clear and practical layout, with just a single function or, in the case of the Forest Green Compressor, two variations on the same theme. Standard nine-volt battery power is the most convenient option, although you can also use a DC adaptor with a barrel-type connector. This is unlikely to be an issue with the majority of the pedals, but it's worth noting that the higher current draw on the Deep Blue Delay and Tiny Orange Phaser will probably only give about 10 hours of use from a battery.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP SOWELS

Forest Green Compressor

Compression is one of the least glamorous stompbox types, but don't discount it. A well-chosen compressor can be a useful addition to your pedalboard. The Forest Green Compressor is the closest Mad Professor gets to a multi-function pedal, with a small switch to toggle Sustain and Compressor modes. Then there are the familiar level, compression and tone controls.

Sounds

Compressor pedals come in a variety of flavours, each with different compression characteristics, and the Forest Green covers a decent portion of the middle ground. It's less subtle than the Toadworks Mr Squishy, for example, but then it doesn't quite do the extreme squashing of the Keeley Compressor. The tone control is

very useful, compressing the full frequency range in the anti-clockwise positions and subtly reducing treble in the clockwise positions. At around 50 per cent, it tightens up the bass response. The controls work in the same way for Sustain mode, but with a slower attack time to preserve some of the transients.

It's possible to squash the signal quite dramatically, but the tone control and Sustain switch enable you to tighten the sound and retain the attack. In this respect, higher compression settings would be perfect for slide guitar.

Tiny Orange Phaser

With just three controls for speed, resonance and mix, the Tiny Orange Phaser is a simple phaser in the classic 1970s style. Again, the control panel has a clever little feature of electronic intrigue, there are actually two different phase tones, accessed

via the mix control. Turning the knob anti-clockwise gives a deeper phase effect, while turning it clockwise gives a brighter, more subtle phase. With the knob at 12 o'clock, you only hear the dry signal.

Sounds

Don't expect any crazy Moogerfooger moments here, as the top end is quite subtle. The deeper phase (anti-clockwise on the mix control) is more noticeable, especially when you crank up the resonance control, but generally the pedal is better for lush textures than for extreme seasickness effects.

Mellow Yellow Tremolo

Another one for fans of more subtle 'vintage' effects, the Mellow Yellow is similarly easy to operate, with just speed, depth and level controls. Note that the level on the MYT is not a mixer control as on the phaser, but a master output control. There's quite a generous amount of extra gain available, so to save pedalboard space, you could even use the MYT as a solo boost, with or without the tremolo effect.

Sounds

Like we say, the tremolo effect is fairly subtle, but what it does, it does very well. The tremolo shape is very smooth and



reminiscent of old Fender amp tremolo; it really sounds great for slow, bluesy rhythm guitar, using lightly overdriven single-coils and a low depth setting. With the level turned right up, the extra boost is warm and balanced, and we got great results by adding a hint of tremolo with a very fast speed setting. As the Mad Professor team writes in the user manual, this is almost like having a hint of slapback echo.

Little Green Wonder

One of three overdrive pedals in the range, the LGW is designed for versatility. The drive and volume controls are self-explanatory, but the body control does more than normal overdrive tone controls. Turn the knob anti-clockwise and the bass and low mid-range frequencies are boosted, also adding a touch of treble. Going clockwise, you just get the treble boost. This is great for players who tire of the bass-removal qualities of a certain classic green overdrive pedal!

Sounds

The LGW is just a great no-nonsense overdrive. Unlike many 'vintage-alike' pedals, it doesn't go into spongy pseudo-fuzz as soon as you turn the drive control past half-way and it doesn't have any spurious quirky features that lose their novelty after a while. The pedal

is designed to have plenty of headroom, and we love how the sound remains tight and controlled across the full range of sounds. The overall tone isn't a million miles away from the TS808/TS9 family, but with a much broader frequency range, even without the body control.

If you don't need much extra distortion, the LGW is a great booster and the body control is also useful here. With the knob set anti-clockwise, you can get some great boosted tones from a Strat's bridge and bridge/middle pickup positions, while the clockwise settings are great for giving a Les Paul a touch of extra definition.

Fire Red Fuzz

There's no shortage of retro fuzz pedals around these days, so your choice boils down to whether you prefer the thin, raspy Tonebender or the thick, flutery Fuzz Face. Conveniently, the Fire Red Fuzz does a bit of both! Once again, it's a case of two obvious controls (volume, fuzz) and a tone control with hidden depths. Here, the tone control produces that mellow liquid fuzz in the anti-clockwise position, cutting the mids slightly at 12 o'clock and then producing a thinner, raspy fuzz at the clockwise end.

Sounds

Although initially wary of a 'jack of all trades' pedal, we

were instantly impressed by the range of sounds on offer. High-fuzz settings with the tone control turned anti-clockwise aren't as squishy as some fuzz pedals, but you can still get that endless horn-like sustain with a Strat's neck pickup. The middle position on the tone control is less interesting, as the mid cut makes it sound a bit too much like a regular distortion pedal. But the groovy sixties fuzz credentials return at the upper end of the tone control's range, with some cutting sounds reminiscent of The Yardbirds.

Deep Blue Delay

Although the DBD is a digital pedal, it seems to have been designed with old tape echo units in mind. The bandwidth is similar and there's no noise reduction, so the echoes decay naturally. The controls are kept simple, with just level, delay and repeat. Delay times range from 25ms to 450ms and you can go from just a single repeat up to infinite feedback with the repeat control.

Sounds

Sure enough, the Deep Blue Delay does have a warm echo sound reminiscent of tape delay, with the natural-sounding decay and degeneration. Despite the lack of noise reduction, it's a very quiet pedal, producing its vintage vibe with impeccable

The Rivals

If you need more squish, then the **Keeley Compressor** (£185) does a great job, but for more subtlety, try the **Toadworks Mr Squishy** (£119) or **Pedalworx McSqueeze** (£104). The **Red Witch Moon Phaser** (£185) isn't cheap, but it's one of the best and the **Carl Martin Two-Faze** (£118) has two independent channels. For luxury tremolo, **Moollon** do a beauty (£225), but the good old **BOSS TR-2** (£69) is pro quality and affordable.

For a more versatile overdrive and boost, the **Xotic AC Booster** (£129) is very high quality, but rather low-gain. Alternatively, the **Radial Tonebone Tri-Mode** (£269) brings a bit more grit to proceedings. There's no shortage of excellent fuzz pedals – the **MI Audio Neo Fuzz** (£90) offers a wide range of tones, and the **D*A*M MkII** (£169) does a great raspy sound, while its **Meathead** (£99) does the fatter tones.

For tape echo, both the **Carl Martin DeLayla** (£209) and the **Toadworks Redux** (£179) sound very authentic, and the **Akai Headrush E2** (£160) also features the added looper function.





crispness. With no tap tempo or accurate delay time display, it's quite old-school, but that's part of the fun. Tape and analog echo units may not have been strictly tempo-correct, but they sounded good and the same goes for the Deep Blue.

Verdict

In a heavily congested stompbox market, how do you push your lovingly constructed new product into the limelight? One way is to fill it with as many radical extra features as possible, but you can easily end up with a confusing mess if it's not done properly. The Mad Professor approach is to get back to basics and do the classic sounds very well, working on getting the best possible tone and the cleanest signal path. Oh, and if a useful extra feature happens to squeeze in, who's going to complain?

We are equally impressed by all of these pedals, although special commendations must go to the Fire Red Fuzz, Forest Green Compressor and Little Green Wonder. Those three are especially inspiring to use and somehow manage to carve out their own little sonic niches among a raft of strong competition. The only downside is the price, which is quite high, even for such an excellent level of quality. With small manufacturers, though, the overheads are higher, so just console yourself with the thought that you're supporting a worthwhile alternative to the big corporations!

The Bottom Line

Mad Professor Pedals

We like: Excellent, classic sounds; clever designs; ease of use

We dislike: They are relatively expensive for such simple pedals

Guitarist says: Simple is best? In this case, yes – if you're into tone and not twiddling. We especially recommend the Fire Red Fuzz, Forest Green Compressor and Little Green Wonder. Not cheap, but worth saving for



Forest Green Compressor

Price: £245
Origin: Finland
Type: Compressor pedal
Features: Switchable compressor and sustain switch, plus wide-ranging tone control
Controls: Level, compress, tone; Compressor/Sustain switch
Connections: Input, output
MIDI: No
Power: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
Options: None
GTR Distribution
0208 252 2554
www.mpamp.com

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Little Green Wonder

Price: £205
Origin: Finland
Type: Overdrive/booster pedal
Features: Body control offers more range than a standard tone control
Controls: Drive, body, volume
Connections: Input, output
MIDI: No
Power: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
Options: None

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Tiny Orange Phaser

Price: £275
Origin: Finland
Type: Phaser pedal
Features: Mix control selects between two phaser sounds
Controls: Speed, resonance, mix
Connections: Input, output
MIDI: No
Power: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
Options: None

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Fire Red Fuzz

Price: £205
Origin: Finland
Type: Fuzz pedal
Features: Tone control ranges between two different fuzz sounds
Controls: Fuzz, tone, volume
Connections: Input, output
MIDI: No
Power: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
Options: None

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Mellow Yellow Tremolo

Price: £225
Origin: Finland
Type: Tremolo pedal
Features: Can be used as a booster with or without tremolo
Controls: Speed, depth, level
Connections: Input, output
MIDI: No
Power: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
Options: None

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Deep Blue Delay

Price: £225
Origin: Finland
Type: Digital delay pedal
Features: Designed to sound like a tape echo unit
Controls: Level, delay, repeat
Connections: Input, output
MIDI: No
Power: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
Options: None

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★