



BOOST PEDAL ROUND-UP

The humble boost pedal is pretty much the simplest guitar effect there is, but even within the myriad options out there lurks a great deal of variety, and a wealth of possibilities. First, there's how much boost is on tap, with 20dB or more not being uncommon. Then there's the circuit topology – is it based around an operational amplifier, for a cleaner tone, or JFETs, for a warmer, thicker sound? Finally, there's the EQ profile to think about. The reason that so many players use overdrives with the drive rolled off as boosts is because they tend to have decent EQ profiles, if not good tone controls as well. We've rounded up a diverse group of boost options to cover all these bases, so let's jump right in and warm up those tubes...

Monty's More! £150

MONTY'S MORE! IS MORE

The Monty's More! is based around two discrete JFET boost circuits, each offering a tidy 15dB of boost on tap, with an effects loop in between, so you can boost your pedals and your amp. The nifty nut-secured pots for the boost level also ensure that your feet don't knock the controls for six onstage. Into a clean amp, there's some serious spank with a bridge pickup, and not too much mud on the neck. Moving to a distorted amp, it makes the amp drive even more characterful, injecting more fun into our jam session – although the two circuits need careful output balancing to be useful together.

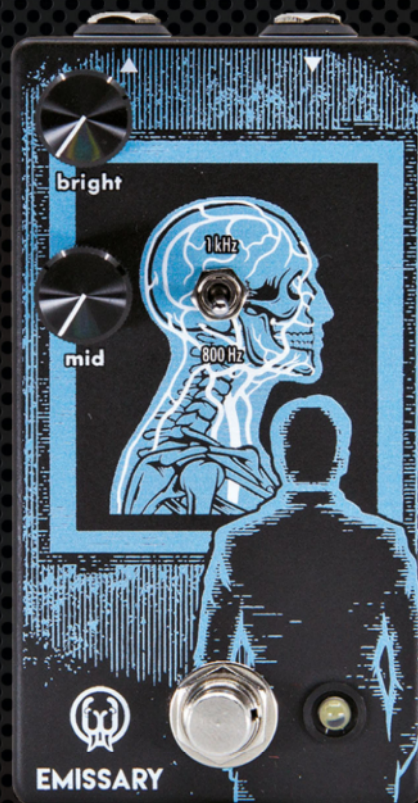
SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

TC Electronic Spark Mini £39

SPARK OF GENIUS

The Spark is a go-to for a reason, and cranking it up to about 2-3 o'clock on a clean amp, it's easy to see why. Tele single coils are fatter, and the higher-output pickups of a Les Paul are chunky without being overbearing. It's thick, yet pretty modern, with some 'air' being added to the top-end. Into the gain channel of our test Marshall, we find bridge pickups quickly veer into metal territory, while neck sounds are still punchy, yet warm enough for snappy solo work. Rolling back the guitar tone delivers a bluesier feel, showcasing a broad sweep of possibilities from a pedal with a single control.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★



Take your tone to 11 with these brilliant boosters

Laney Black Country Customs Steelpark

£129

POCKET LANEY POWER

The Steelpark has several modes on offer – we found that the ‘no preamp’ purple mode sounds a lot like the Spark, and so stuck to the ‘mid boost’ orange mode for the most part. With drive at about four, and volume around six-and-a-half, this pedal really rips, especially when its dedicated treble and bass controls are used to tone-shape around your amp and guitar. It’s punchy and thick on the bridge, and with a dirty amp on the neck was pure Swervedriver. It stacked well with the other boosts we had to hand, and was as tight as anything when run into the distortion channel of our tube amp.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

Walrus Audio Emissary

£164

PARALLEL PUNCH

The Emissary is an interesting concept, a parallel boost combining a JFET-based treble boost circuit and a mid-boost circuit with a specific target frequency, which can be toggled between 800Hz and 1kHz. For our taste, we found the bright at noon, mid at 2 o’clock and toggle set to 1kHz was a winning setting with both single coils and humbuckers. Into a clean amp, it was sharp, punchy and compressed, while into a distorted amp it gives you the kind of thick, tube drive tones that alt-rockers will love. That mid-boost is handy to push solos through a mix, too. All in all, a lot of fun.

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

AT A GLANCE

BYPASS

Morel, Spark, Emissary: True bypass
Steelpark: Relay bypass

POWER

Spark, Emissary: 9V power supply
Steelpark: 9V battery, 9V power supply
Morel: 9-18V

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