



OVERDRIVE ROUND-UP

Overdrives are as overdone as they are classic, with every circuit modded, improved, redesigned and re-imagined almost to death. By 'overdrive', we're primarily speaking of pedals that use soft clipping and volume gain to achieve their tone, with the most legendary example being the Ibanez Tubescreamer. With so many different possibilities in tone-shaping and clipping available within the framework of an op-amp amplification circuit, it's perhaps inevitable that most new releases are minor tweaks of what has come before. Nevertheless, there's still lot of innovation possible, particularly when builders bring a wholly novel circuit to market. Here, we've picked a few recent releases that are hopefully a little out of the ordinary, to see if they stack up.

Snake Oil Effects The Very Thing

£149

TUBESCREAMER-ESQUE

Much has been made of Snake Oil's connection with Rob Chapman, while their kitschy art and names scream fad – but what do they sound like? Well, The Very Thing is a Tubescreamer-like boost, which excels when driving our Marshall-voiced open-ended 5W valve amp into saturation. The drive range on the pedal itself is somewhat limited, but it does clean up well. Popping the back off, we find a well-known variant of Jack Orman's stripped-back Tubescreamer circuit, already the basis for several boutique drives. If you've got a decent tube amp already, then this is a solid option.

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

Origin Effects Revival Drive Compact

£315

THE REVIVAL, REVIVED

The full-fat Revival Drive, with its myriad of options, had us somewhat bamboozled when we first encountered it, so this simplified version is music to our ears. Although we still needed the manual, it wasn't as hard to get started and the tones are out of this world. Admittedly, subtle sounds aren't usually our thing, but this pedal is incredibly impressive in terms of its versatility. The presence control allows for a wide range of articulation, while the blend control keeps the gain level manageable at all times. That said, there isn't all that much gain on offer, full-stop.

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



With thousands of variant models on the market, TG is here to help you pick an overdrive pedal off the shelf, right now.

EHX Operation Overlord Nano

£85

PATIENCE NEEDED

The Operation Overlord is an interesting beast. When we first plug it in, with all the knobs at 12 o'clock, we find it to be very different in timbre from the overdrives we're used to, much more mid-forward than the norm. In terms of the voicing, it feels more geared to a keyboard or electric piano. However, while the bass, mid and treble pots give you fine-grained control over the tone, the voicing never sat quite right with our setup. The gain range is so-so, until you switch it into boost mode, where it comes into its own. It's relatively picky, and required careful dialling in.

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

Snake Oil Effects Marvellous Engine

£149

THE OUTSIDER

Okay, when we said these were all overdrives, we might have told a slight lie. Popping off the back of the Marvellous Engine reveals it's a ProCo Turbo RAT circuit with some mods, making it technically a distortion, although it has some decent low-gain tones as well. At the higher end of the gain spectrum it gives the amp a decent workout even with the volume down, and stays relatively articulate throughout. The one major change to the original circuit is a voicing control that can add in additional clipping; more akin to a presence control, but it does open up some additional sonic options.

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

AT A GLANCE

BYPASS:
Origin: buffered bypass
Snake Oil: true bypass
EHX: buffered
POWER:
9-volt psu (all pedals)
CONTACT:
Origin: www.origineffects.com
Snake Oil: www.andertons.co.uk
EHX: www.ehx.com