

ANNUAL PEDALMANIA ISSUE
27 STOMPBOXES REVIEWED!
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Lo/Rez Mono Lisa Overdrive
 \$189 street

Calling this pedal an "overdrive" tells only part of the story, as what we have here is a powerful fuzz circuit with selectable tremolo. The Bias knob varies the fuzz sound from spitty and buzzy to quite round and meaty, and the Level control can unleash a huge amount of output. Pressing the left-hand footswitch turns on the fuzz, while the right-hand switch activates the tremolo. There's nothing subtle about it either, as the fuzz is modulated in a tight, staccato fashion that sounds very intense when you crank it through a loud amp. The Rate knob adjusts the speed (indicated by a pulsing LED), and you can also control speed with an optional expression pedal. The Depth knob varies the intensity of the modulation, and the best sounds occurred with it turned up halfway or higher. Lastly, the Mono Lisa has a mini switch in the center that toggles between a full-range or a much skinnier sound. On whole, this pedal doesn't exactly replicate what you'd get by running a Tonebender into a Fender vibrato channel, but if you're looking for a spotlight effect, it's a great candidate. lorenz.com —ART THOMPSON

ModKits DIY The Aggressor
 \$75 direct

Want to craft your own distortion pedal? Depending on your electronics-fabrication skills, this new kit can make you look like a boutique builder, as everything is wired point-to-point on terminal strips. The kit includes a pre-drilled metal enclosure and all the parts. All you have to provide are hand tools, a soldering iron, and solder. The Aggressor has Gain, Volume, and Tone controls, along with a mini-toggle switch that shifts the mid-frequency response: You get a darker, more scooped sound in the down setting, and a brighter, mids-forward tone in the up position. This pedal is capable of a wide range of meaty distortion—from edge-of-breakup to quite saturated—and the Tone knob has ample range to accommodate single-coil and humbucker guitars, and is voiced to provide plenty of bass. The only weird thing about our test sample (which we did not build) was that the Volume control never went fully to zero, and only increased loudness in the last part of its rotation, sort of like a switch. That's apparently intentional in the design, however, and other details of this reasonably priced pedal include a true hard-wire bypass and an LED indicator. modkitsdiy.com —ART THOMPSON



Red Panda Raster
 \$249 street

This insanely cool pedal is essentially a digital delay limited to 750ms of delay time, with a pitch shifter inserted into its feedback loop. Sounds simple enough, right? But it is the ways in which the two effects interact that result in the Raster's distinctive sonic soundscapes—from standard delays and modulation effects (though dripping with personality) to awesome ring-modulation and runaway self-oscillation sounds. Highlights include extraordinary climbing arpeggiated delays (alone worth the cost of the pedal), tuned (+/-12 semitones) and micro pitch shifting, several flavors of phase-shifting, quasi-"barber pole" flanging, cool comb-filtering, synth-like feedback streams and other electronic textures, and fantastic reverse-delay effects with envelopes that closely mimic an actual reversed tape. And those are just the sounds there are names for. Connecting an optional expression pedal allows continual control over pitch shifting, and patching a fuzz pedal in front of the Raster opens up entire universes of additional aural possibilities. Despite the Panda's inherent whack factor, I found that even the most out-there sounds were typically more musical than annoying, not that "annoying" sounds don't also have their uses (sound designers take note). The only bugaboo I encountered were bits of digital noise and other artifacts on a few settings, but those are hardly deal breakers. The Raster is easily one of the most innovative and inspired pedals I've encountered in some time. Hats off to Red Panda! redpandalab.com —BARRY CLEVELAND

