



I remember when I first tried out an overdrive pedal with a 12AX7 valve inside it. I thought to myself, "This has to sound good. I mean, it's got a valve in it!" What a disappointment. Yes, valves do sound great in the preamp of an amplifier, but it's boosting them that creates the issue.

Let me explain. If you take a transistor-based overdrive pedal and stick it straight into a mixing desk to hear what it actually sounds like, you will hear how sharp and raspy the frequencies it produces are. But, when you put the same overdrive into a valve amp, the little glowing bottles of love take these unpleasant, raspy signals and shape them into big fat tone.

Conversely, if we get a preamp valve to distort, the output is going to be warm, not to mention loud. Put this signal into the front of your

amp and the results, more often than not, can sound like mush.

COURTING THE JESTER

So as much as I loved the idea of a great-sounding valve-based overdrive pedal, I had almost given up hope. After trying at least 20 different examples, none of them sounded as good as my trusty old transistors punching the crap out of the front end of my vintage amps. Then I heard a rumour, a faint whisper among those who know much but talk quietly, and before long, at my feet was this, the Kingsley Jester. Seconds in, I knew I had found something very, very special indeed.

The party piece of this incredible pedal is the way it interfaces with your amplifier. It's unbelievable, like having an extra two channels in your amp. And just like a good valve amp,

PAWN STARS

IN PART TWO OF OUR SERIES ON THE BEST OF THE CURRENT U.S. BOUTIQUE CROP, A JESTER THAT AIN'T FOOLING AROUND...



you can control so much of its sound with small adjustments to your guitar's volume control. Two 12AX7 preamp valves are used to do the work of the two different sections of the pedal. The first is the overdrive side, which has three different stages of valve gain, from mild to wild, and a comprehensive EQ stage so you can fine tune to perfection. The other side is a boost, with three different voicings and a master boost level so you can kick it in for solos. At its heart, the Jester is still a preamp, but it has the output characteristics of a stomper, which is why it works so incredibly well.

THE AUTHOR

DAN'S THE MAN



Dan Steinhardt has a 200Gb hard drive instead of a brain, where he stores endless FX and electronics knowledge.

He's the boss man of TheGigRig Ltd (www.thegigrig.com) and we're honoured to have him contributing to the magazine.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I PAY?

Simon Jarrett of Kingsley Amplifiers builds these pedals one at a time by hand using point-to-point wiring with specially chosen high-grade components, and he does it all for US\$375, which is a stunning price considering the work that's involved.

It's no surprise then that, now the word is out, you will have to get in line and wait your turn, and you could be waiting a while. The Jester is big, heavy, takes AC power only... and is also the best-sounding valve-based OD pedal ever made. Try one and tell me I'm wrong. **GB**



IMAGES: JAMES PROFFITT