

# Planet Waves Chromatic Pedal Tuner £85

A pedal tuner chock-full of features that can double as a fashion item! **by Simon Bradley**



Looking good: style and substance are both on offer from Planet Waves

**IN THE LAST FEW** years many floor-based tuners have come on the market, most notably the industry-standard BOSS TU-2. Trust Planet Waves to come up with a similar unit that, in the words of Nigel Tufnel, is

“one cooler”. Boasting a more compact design than the TU-2, not to mention the very smart black chrome chassis, this reassuringly heavy tuner is based around a circular display with a central section illustrating the notes and a row of lights showing the tuning process.

There are two modes, Sweep and Strobe, which can be swapped between via the Mode button, plus a Calibration option that ranges from 435-445Hz: scroll between these extremes with the up/down keys.

This unit offers a single input alongside a pair of outputs: if you wish to take advantage of the amp-muting function, use the main out, if not go for the bypass output.

**IN USE:** We found that the Sweep mode was best for us, and as you'd expect, we could tune electrics, acoustics and basses with ease. It also operates without anything connected to

CHROMATIC TUNER	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
In Use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

■ **WE LIKED** The streamlined and very modern design

■ **WE DISLIKED** Not as affordable as the BOSS TU-2

either of the outputs, which is useful, and we'd happily say that the display would be easily legible under all but the brightest of stage lighting.

## Verdict

With the TU-2 at \$69 and offering similar features, it's more affordable than the Planet Waves. However, it's not quite as cool looking and that could well swing it for many of you...

**Guitarist RATING**

★★★★★

**KEY INFO** PLANET WAVES PEDAL TUNER **PRICE:** £85 **TYPE:** FLOOR-BASED CHROMATIC TUNER **TEL:** SUMMERFIELD 01914 149000

# Dunlop SW95 Slash Crybaby Wah £209

The legendary gunslinger finally gets a signature wah loaded with a secret weapon **by Simon Bradley**



I don't need your civil wah: the drive circuit makes the Slash Crybaby a beast

**SLASH HAS BEEN A CRYBABY** man for many years and there are several new features included within

the ultra-cool metallic red chassis – not least a battery compartment sited actually within the treadle itself. Accessible via a removable part of the rubber slip, the power comes from a pair of standard nine-volt batteries creating, as Dunlop describe, extra headroom and clarity.

The pedal also includes a distortion circuit that's controlled by volume and gain pots, and accessed via a small knock-switch sited on the pedal's right side. It's only operational when the wah is turned on too. Two sets each of a pair of LEDs – blue for wah and red for distortion – guarantee that you're never unsure of what's switched in and out, and as with all the Crybaby range, it could survive a drop from the top of Canary Wharf.

**SOUNDS:** In operation the drive circuit really opens the wah up nicely. It's extremely fierce by itself but, if you tailor it to your own rig and have a driving amp to begin with, it's an efficient boost for solos, cutting through

DUNLOP SLASH WAH	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sounds	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

■ **WE LIKED** The cool vibe and seriously cool drive circuit

■ **WE DISLIKED** The somewhat limited sweep

with ease. The wah itself is fairly topky and middly, meaning that the sweep isn't all that it could be, but if it suits Mr Hudson, we're not going to argue.

## Verdict

The retail price of \$209 is pretty much the going rate for a wah of this quality and heritage, and if the searing Slash style is for you, then so is this great pedal. If not, we can recommend the equally excellent Fasel-powered Crybaby Classic, yours for \$149.

**Guitarist RATING**

★★★★★

**KEY INFO** DUNLOP SLASH WAH **PRICE:** £209 **TYPE:** SIGNATURE WAH PEDAL **TEL:** JHS 0113 286 5381

# Carl Martin Hot Drive 'N Boost Mk 3 £149



The Danish company celebrates its tenth anniversary with a gift for all by Simon Bradley

**CARL MARTIN REMAINS ONE OF** the most underrated brands, and we hope that this third version of the excellent Hot Drive 'N Boost will finally put the name centre stage in the consciousness of guitarists everywhere.

The idea behind all three versions of the HDB is to get as close as possible to the compressing beauty of the drive of an all-valve amp and the Mk 3 version incorporates a complete overhaul to the internal design intended to bring that aural goal even closer.

Features such as the wave control – in

simple terms a subtle but very musical EQ sweep – and boost function, which can kick in as much as 22dB for either solos or a more aggressive drive remain from the original HDB designs.

Two switches, for on/off and boost, each have their own dedicated LED and, if you step on the boost without having the drive engaged, you have yet another useable tone at your boot-tips. Additionally, the pedal is mains-driven, which accounts for its rather squat appearance.

**SOUNDS:** This has to be amongst the very best overdrive pedals we've tried and, through either a wholly clean, slightly crunchy or cooking amp, it authenticity replicates the tone and, most importantly, feel of a driving valve amp. Soulful blues, rock and all points in between react beautifully to the pedal, and the boost option gives you a huge headroom too.



## Verdict

It doesn't really do extreme metal or rock tones – use your amp drive to really wind up the wick – but for everyone else, this is a versatile overdrive/boost you have to try.

Another superb overdrive pedal from Carl Martin

CARL MARTIN HDB	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
■ <b>WE LIKED</b> The valve-like tones are second to none at this price	
■ <b>WE DISLIKED</b> Doesn't really do extreme metal...	

Guitarist RATING



**KEY INFO** CARL MARTIN HOT DRIVE 'N BOOST MK 3 **PRICE:** £149 **TYPE:** OVERDRIVE PEDAL **TEL:** FIRST LINE 01392 493429

# Epiphone Valve Junior Combo £129



Small amp, big sound, low price. What's not to like? by Chris Vinnicombe

## WE ARE SPOILT NOWADAYS

with myriad knobs and switches on our multi-channel Quadruple Rectum-fryer stacks, but for an aspiring guitarist in the early fifties, this was pretty much what you'd get: two valves, one volume control and an eight-inch speaker. Despite the ultra-low price, the Valve Junior's minimalism and retro stylings make for one cute little unit, with construction quality robust and confidence inspiring.

**SOUNDS:** Given its small physical size and eight-inch speaker, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the Valve Junior is a bedroom practice amp.

However, don't expect any drive at all at neighbour-friendly volume levels without some form of attenuator. Five single-ended Class A watts ensure that the projection of the sound is impressive, assisted by the extra dispersal of the open back cabinet.

The way to get the best from this amp is simply to play it wide open and control the tone with the guitar's volume knob. With a medium output humbucker you get everything from a warm, touch-sensitive clean voice to a juicy classic rock drive sound with all the inherent fireworks of a small amplifier pushed hard.

## Verdict

If you want a cool sounding small amp for recording with a quality clean sound at bedroom levels, then you simply have to try a Valve Junior out. A circuit this simple is also perfect for those of you who enjoy valve swapping or DIY modding. Early production runs were reported to suffer from excess hum, but happily Epiphone seems to have



Epiphone Valve Junior Combo: small and perfectly formed

resolved this issue, with no more hiss than you would expect.

Guitarist RATING



EPHONE VALVE JUNIOR TEST RESULTS	
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
■ <b>WE LIKED</b> Dynamic clean and raunchy drive sounds; superb value	
■ <b>WE DISLIKED</b> Only a four-ohm speaker-out limits external cab options	

**KEY INFO** EPIPHONE VALVE JUNIOR **PRICE:** £129 **TYPE:** CLASS A VALVE COMBO **TEL:** ROSETTI 01376 550033