



THORN SOUNDLABS

Basstard and SteamBass

Thorn Soundlabs SteamBass

Price £167
Made in Nashville, USA
Features Metal casing, 9-18V DC power intake
Weight 380g/0.84lbs

WHAT WE THINK

- **Plus** Highly flexible, high quality studio-style compressor.
- **Minus** Underreactive Threshold slightly limits tonal control.
- **Overall** The range of controls on this compressor allows for new creative approaches: a great addition to your board.



£167

Bold names with even bolder tones: Rachel Towner takes on two ambitious new pedals with unique, player-focused designs

Despite the huge selection of effects pedals available to guitarists, finding high-quality effects pedals specifically catered towards the bass guitar is comparatively rare. Low end can get muddled, definition can get lost, all while trying to configure equipment that wasn't designed with your instrument, and its frequencies, in mind. That's why Thorn Soundlabs pedals are a treat for the modern bass player.

Established in 2021 in Nashville, Thorn Soundlabs is a designer of premium effects pedals. Setting out to redefine the role of the pedal, their equipment is designed

with sonic innovation in mind, offering greater creative control without sacrificing tonal quality. Staying true to their word, they have released two pedals, specifically with the bass in mind, each promising to deliver quality tone without sacrificing the low end.

The wryly-named Basstard is a visually striking, bass-specific overdrive. It's clear that it aims to deliver on Thorn's promises, providing a low-end clarity that can be

OUR RATING

Build ●●●●●●○○
Sounds ●●●●●●○○
Value ●●●●●●○○

lost with other drive pedals. The star of the large display of control dials is the Damping dial, which regulates the low-frequency input, adding an essential added blend for clean tonal control.

The inclusion of a Class A and Class AB switch is very effective for tonal adjustment, with the Class A delivering a slightly higher gain response, while Class AB allows for a tighter output. What stands out the most is the Basstard's ability to introduce distortion without compromising the fundamental body of the bass tone. Even under heavier settings, the low end remains intact. This is aided by the pedal's three-band EQ, and the mid-frequency selector is another excellent idea, although it would be improved with a little more reactivity.

Accompanying the Basstard is a bass-specific compression pedal, the SteamBass, a highly musical tool with a spread of controls that mimic the role of a studio-style

compressor. These encourage experimentation, offering a level of creativity rarely found within more simply-designed compressors. Certain details, such as the inclusion of an Auto setting, are welcome additions and, pleasingly, don't make the pedal feel overcrowded.

Similarly to the Basstard, articulation is maintained across the neck, aided largely in part by the Detail control knob. Even when heavily compressed, utilising the detail will support that tonal clarity by restoring lost treble frequencies. This quality is maintained while paired with the Basstard; both clean and distorted signals are handled extremely well. The attack and release dials are extremely reactive, although the threshold control felt less reactive than expected, with minimal audible change across the range. While this slightly limits fine-tuning, it doesn't harm its overall presence.

Thorn Soundlabs Basstard

£149

Price £149
Made in Nashville, USA
Features Metal casing, 9-18V DC power intake
Weight 410g/0.9lbs

WHAT WE THINK

- **Plus** Tonal consistent: a great drive with lots of body.
- **Minus** Calls out for a slightly more diverse mid-range selector.
- **Overall** A great drive pedal with lots of body, highly adaptable and a unique approach to high-gain tone.



“The SteamBass is a highly musical tool with a spread of controls that mimic the role of a studio-style compressor”



Both pedals are versatile creative tools. Thorn Soundlabs have brought a refreshing, variable approach to bass sound design, while also providing a tonal selection that is often missing. A notable feature of both the SteamBass and the Basstard is the option for higher power-supply voltage: both accept a nine to 18v signal range, allowing for a richer tone that would otherwise be limited by the regular nine volts that most pedals require. These pieces of kit are fantastic value for money and well worth considering the next time your pedalboard requires an upgrade.

thorn-soundlabs.com

OUR RATING

Build ●●●●●●○○
Sounds ●●●●●●○○
Value ●●●●●●○○