

J Rockett Tour Series pedals

They're from the same stable as the award-winning Archer... but will these compact stompboxes hit the bullseye for **RICHARD PURVIS?**

You'd be forgiven for looking at this picture and thinking of one word: Klon. Yes, the people behind J Rockett Audio Designs were involved in the manufacture of the KTR, follow-up to the legendarily mythical Klon Centaur; and yes, the Centaur-inspired J Rockett Archer is part of the same Tour Series as these four stocky little silver boxes. But while the Archer was *G&B's* 2015 Pedal Of The Year, there's a lot more to this California-based outfit than cloning. Here, we have an ambitious modulation device, a simple overdrive, a Dumble-inspired clean boost with an SRV angle, and a fiendishly two-faced fuzzbox.



KEY FEATURES

Tranquillizer

- **PRICE** £179
- **DESCRIPTION** Vibe/phaser pedal, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Phase/vibe blend, focus, fat, speed; bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass; powered by 9v battery or DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 103mm(d) x59mm(w)x47mm(h)
- **CONTACT** Sonic Distribution 0845 500 2500 www.rockettpedals.com

First through the door is an analogue modulation pedal that, judging by the name and logo, should be perfect for making background music for aromatherapists. It's based on the old MXR Phase 45 but J Rockett says it can also cover vibe and Leslie sounds, the key being a 'focus' knob that controls bias. This allows you to adjust how heavily the effect throbs at the bottom of the sweep - for strongly pulsating sounds at high settings, and swishier tones lower down. Blend goes from pure phase to pitch-wobbling vibe, while 'fat' restores any phased-out low end.

Don't expect instantly likeable multi-FX fun, though. This is a nice vibe pedal, and a decent phaser, but it somehow doesn't add up to anything quite as versatile as that suggests. Focus does nearly all of its work between 11 and three o'clock, and it never really gets close to a Leslie effect... still, the sounds are all undeniably pretty.

Guitar VERDICT

- + Pleasing vintage vibe and swirly phase in one unit
- + Focus control is an innovative idea
- You might get more out of separate vibe and phaser pedals
- We're still looking for the promised Leslie sounds

Jack of all trades, master of about one and a half: this is a sweet-toned vibe/phaser, but not a rewarding pedal to play around with

7/10

KEY FEATURES

Blue Note

- **PRICE** £169
- **DESCRIPTION** Overdrive pedal, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Volume, gain, tone, fat; bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass; powered by 9v battery or DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 103mm(d) x59mm(w)x47mm(h)

If the Tour series is all about full-size tone in a compact and gig-friendly format, then the Blue Note has to be its flagship. J Rockett says this is essentially the same pedal as its Pro Series Blue Note OD, except for the omission of the 'hot' switch. It's a straightforward overdrive with controls that even a drummer would understand: volume and gain, and a two-way EQ section labelled tone and fat (so, treble and bass).

Sometimes we like drive pedals with lots of character; sometimes we rave about tonal transparency. The Blue Note is in the latter camp: the tone controls let you crisp up the top or fill out the bottom as required, but the heart of your guitar's clean tone is miraculously untouched. The breakup is sweet and amp-like, only getting seriously rocky when you turn the gain all the way up to full - you could quite reasonably describe this as a mild crunch channel in a box. That mids-pushing hot switch would've been handy, though...

Guitar VERDICT

- + Sounds uncannily like your clean sound, but with added hair
- + Nicely judged tone controls
- + At home in a wide range of genres
- Low-to-medium gain only

This is about as close to totally uncoloured overdrive as you're ever going to get in a stompbox... which may or may not be your idea of perfection

8/10



KEY FEATURES

Lenny

- **PRICE** £159
- **DESCRIPTION** Boost pedal, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Boost, tone; bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass; powered by 9v battery or DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 103mm(d) x59mm(w)x47mm(h)



Which did you recognise first - the song title or the hat? This two-knob boost is an attempt to recreate the silky clean tones of the Dumble Steel String Singer amp used by Stevie Ray Vaughan on his debut *Texas Flood* - and in particular, the delicious instrumental track that closes it. The results you get will of course depend heavily on the amp you run it into, but the Lenny should be as happy driving an edgy preamp into overdrive as it is adding zing to a dirt-free sound.

With both controls at halfway, you get something a lot like your bypass tone, but with bags more gain and a slight midrange bump - not quite Tube Screamer territory, but noticeable. Turning down the tone has a very musical, treble-softening effect; turning it up has an even more musical presence-boosting effect that's highly addictive. You won't just want to leave this pedal on all the time - you'll want to sleep with it under your pillow.

Guitar VERDICT

- + A booster you never want to switch off
- + Tone control can sharpen up the top end without harshness...
- + ...and tame shrill pickups without muffling
- Look elsewhere for pure, uncoloured boost

Excellent stuff, proving that two knobs can be quite enough - Stevie Ray surely would have approved of this subtle-yet-flexible tone-enhancer

9/10

KEY FEATURES

Hooligan

- **PRICE** £159
- **DESCRIPTION** Fuzz pedal, made in USA
- **CONTROLS** Level, gain, gunk; bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass; powered by 9v battery or DC adaptor (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 103mm(d) x59mm(w)x47mm(h)

So far, so tasteful... but wait. This one's a fuzz, and it's called the Hooligan, and it's got blood-red knobs, and one of the controls is labelled 'gunk'. Oh my, are things about to take a turn for the beastly? Well, not unless you really want them to. A stripped-back version of the J Rockett WTF, this is a simple fuzz promising warmth and musicality; the gunk control adding just as much nastiness as you need.

The 'warmth and musicality' part is easy enough. At low gain settings - gunk-free for the moment - it's a smooth and blurry overdrive/fuzz sound, with all the transient spikes of your clean tone rounded off and wrapped in brown felt. Cranking the gain makes things thicker and juicier, but it stays sweet and civilised all the way round, until you unleash the gunk. This introduces a roughness that can be challenging to conservative ears even set quite low; set high, it sounds like Keith Richards gargling through a ring modulator.

Guitar VERDICT

- + Really nice mellow fuzz at low gain
- + Boopy sustain at high gain
- + Gunk control is a shortcut to sonic insanity
- Quite dark, with no way to freshen up the top end

A warm, ear-caressing fuzzbox that goes just a little bit lo-fi... and then, if you're in the mood to properly scare people, goes downright horrible

8/10