

Gig-FX VOD

FEATURING THREE GAIN STAGES THAT YOU CLICK through with a rocker pedal, the VOD (\$249 retail/\$175 street) is a bit like having a three-channel amp right at your feet. The "I" shaped rocker is a clever design that allows the controls to be located on top of the unit for easy access. The VOD has concentric Gain and Level knobs for each of its gain stages (which are also indicated by separate LEDs), along with a shared set of Treble, Mid, and Bass controls.

This arrangement allows you to set three different distortion sounds, which—along with the straight sound of your guitar—effectively puts *four* sounds at your feet. The only bothersome thing is that the rocker switch feels quite stiff and clacky as you notch it between settings. (A second VOD we tested had a much smoother-feeling switch, so maybe someone forgot to lube the mechanism.)

Gig-FX has done a good job of packing a lot of functionality into the VOD, and the distortion sounds it delivers are happening. The pedal doesn't have a huge amount of output—and the level is somewhat dependent on having all the tone controls turned up—but it's a good choice for players who use a single-channel amp and would like to be able to instantly go from a mild bluesy grind tone to a heavier crunch sound to a wickedly overdriven lead sound—all without having to jump from one pedal to another, or even between different footswitches on the *same* pedal. This pedal does more than most stompboxes can manage, making it a cool choice for players who want a lot of options for their money.



GIG-FX VOD

KUDOS Provides three different preset distortion sounds. Clever operating system.
CONCERNS Stiff rocker switch. Could use more output.
CONTACT Gig-FX (978) 263-6432; gig-fx.com

HAO Rust Driver

ONE OF THE SIMPLEST PEDALS OF THE GROUP, the Rust Driver (\$135 retail/street price N/A) has but a Level control and a 3-position mini-toggle with Bright, Normal, and Warm settings. The compact, die-cast aluminum enclosure sports green hammer-finish paint, a status LED, and a 2.1mm jack for use with an external AC adapter (not included). The Rust Driver doesn't feature a battery hatch, so you'll need to get out a screwdriver and remove the bottom plate whenever a battery change is required.

In some ways the Rust Driver is like using a good single-channel amp—which isn't surprising since it's designed to replicate the sound of a '60s-era plexi Marshall—and its level control unleashes a steady and predictable amount of grind and accompanying volume as you turn it up. Obviously it's not the best choice for those who like to wick up the gain and then hold down the signal that hits the amp (or do the opposite

and keep the level high while using very little distortion), but its simple controls provide buttery, dynamic distortion that can be easily tailored for optimum response with humbuckers or single-coils. In Bright mode, it brings out sparkling detail with a Les Paul—switch to the Warm position with the Level control maxed and a Strat's bridge pickup sounds thick and explosive though a clean amp. The pedal has excellent touch sensitivity and really nails the less-is-more ethos of distortion pedal design.

HAO RUST DRIVER

KUDOS Simple. Excellent amp-style distortion.
CONCERNS Can't do high-gain/low-volume or low-gain/high-volume tones.
CONTACT HAO Handbuilt Effects, dist. By Godlyke (866) 2godlyke; godlyke.com

