



Roger Mayer Voodoo-Blues

By Art Thompson | April, 2007

British effects maker Roger Mayer is famous for doing things his own way, so it's not surprising that when he recently designed a new distortion pedal, he avoided the popular Tube Screamer template. As Mayer puts it, "I have over the years refused to make an updated copy or clone of the Tube Screamer, because I was never very happy with its nasal tone and lack of detail and dynamics."

The new Voodoo-Blues features a completely different type of distortion circuit designed to produce "very musical overtones with feed-forward compression as it slips into overdrive." The output level of the Voodoo-Blues is high enough to drive an amplifier's front end into distortion, and a Fatness control is provided instead of the usual treble-rolloff EQ. The Voodoo-Blues comes housed in a rugged extruded aluminum enclosure that features a clever, slide-open battery compartment. A 2.1mm (center negative) jack for use with an external AC adapter is also provided. The unit's three 1" outputs include a hardwire out and a pair of buffered outs. These latter active outs are intended be used when driving long cable lengths, as the buffering prevents high-frequency losses that can occur due to capacitance in the cable. When using the hardwire out, the buffered outs are automatically bypassed.

I tested the Voodoo-Blues using mainly the hardwire out—which guarantees a straight-through bypass when you click off the distortion. Played through a Budda Twinmaster and a Carr Vincent (both 1x12 combos), the Voodoo-Blues delivered distortion textures that were open, smooth, and very clear sounding. Though not

a super-high-gain pedal, the Voodoo works great for blues, rock, and even some jazzier tones when a little grind is needed. The Fatness control allows you to bolster the bottom without compromising the overall crispness, and the unit's superb dynamic response allows it to clean up well when you roll down your guitar volume. Even when using lower Drive settings, there's plenty of output available to overdrive your amp, and when using high Drive and Output settings, you can slam an amp hard enough to push it into the classic metal zone.

The Voodoo-Blues is a professional-quality distortion/overdrive pedal that's particularly well configured for pedalboard use, courtesy of its jacks all being located on the front side (which allows it to fit into cramped spaces more easily). The buffered outs enhance its flexibility in more complex systems, and the overall vibe definitely reflects the forward thinking Mayer applies even to something as de rigueur as a distortion box. In short, if you're looking for something in the realm of a Tube Screamer that offers more output, less midrange color, and improved features, the Voodoo-Blues is a great choice.

JUST THE FACTS

Kudos

Rich, dynamic distortion tones. Strong output. Hardwire and buffered output jacks.

Concerns

None.