

ROAD TESTED

ROCKTRON CYBORG DIGITAL DISTORTION



We live in a digital world. While analog lovers soldier on, boasting about how their recently repaired tape echo just broke again or the only batteries that can power their 1970s fuzz pedal have been discontinued, digital embracers are basking in sunny fields of 1s and 0s.

GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNIN'

Enter Rocktron with the Cyborg Digital Destiny Distortion. How could a pedal with such an awesome name not blow your socks off and then invade your planet with technologically enhanced beings? At the heart of the Digital Destiny Distortion is a state-of-the-art Motorola DSP engine that allows this digital brilliance and control to take place in the powerhouse of a pedal.

SET FOR LIFE

The pedal is based around eight pre-programmed distortion types presets include that are called: Edgy Coils (single coil distortion), Dirty, Austin (famous Texas distortion), Crunch (kicking bluesy distortion), Corrosive (hard edge grind distortion), Stack (huge amp stack distortion tone), Rectified (modern metal) and Armageddon (heavy metal). On top of this there is a different distortion voicing (Crunch and Solo) per preset. That is 16 presets of chirpy digital glory.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Testing these settings through a Japanese Stratocaster into a Mesa Boogie Express with a Pedal Power 2 as a power supply the best

settings where the cleaner options. With some fiddling with the gain and level settings the pedal bought out the chirpiness and shrillness of the Mesa. Through a Fender Deluxe the heavier settings where more productive and the Corrosive and Rectified settings certainly bought forth some interesting and inspiring tones. Perhaps the coolest thing about the Cyborg Digital Destiny Distortion (apart from the name) is the ability to connect and control other Rocktron Cyborg devices via midi creating an endless "pedal centipede" of digital glory controlled by the Cyborg-Centipede-King, the Rocktron Midi Exchange pedal.

The Rocktron Cyborg Digital Destiny Distortion come with a HUSH noise reduction function included. This is a great idea from Rocktron as it helps eliminate unwanted noise produced by this pedal. If you are a guitarist obsessed with having infinite distortion tones available at your toes and love reading informative manuals, then this beast of a pedal is for you.

By Will Teasle

Price: RRP \$459
 Distributor: Dynamic Music
 Phone: (02) 9939 1299
 Website: www.dynamicmusic.com.au

AKAI PRO ANALOG DELUXE DISTORTION

The Deluxe Distortion from Akai is a humble little blingy box pack with every feature you have ever wanted from a distortion device.

The first thing you notice about the Deluxe Distortion is that it looks deluxe. It is finished with a chrome metal finish so those so vain can stare down at themselves as they shred. The six knobs and 4 switches on the chrome box give it an aviation feel that really rocks.

CAPTAIN CRUNCH

The Deluxe Distortion has a level and dist (gain) knobs like most other drive pedals, but its tone shaping three band EQ with the mid frequency selection control puts this pedal into a world of control where few have been before. The EQ is beautiful and musical and the sweepable mids knob is great for scooping out solos to precision or boosting crunchy presence based rhythm guitar.

FLIGHT FACILITY

Four switches expand the already endless possibilities of this pedal. Three drive settings can be chosen from Fat, Boost and Warm. These settings effect generally the attack and compression of the sound. The Fat setting produces a round, full sound suitable for chugs, where as the Boost setting was the best when the bridge pick up was in full flight. Our favorite lead setting with a Gibson Les Paul going into a Fender Deluxe Reverb was with the boost engaged, high cut off and modern EQ mode. Solo's where



heard clearly through the mix and had a beautiful screaming detail about them. Switching the driving setting to warm, pumping the mids and putting on the neck pick up churned out some perfect fuzzy tones. With a Stratocaster the pedal assisted in churning out some grunge classics with the distortion knob turned to 3am, the amp dirtied up and it seemed like Nirvana or Mudhoney were in the room.

IN YOUR FACE

There is a high cut on/off which is great if you are simply filling out a sound rather than being dominant in a band setting. EQ modes include Modern, Normal and Classic. Modern scoops the mids more and classic pushes the lower mids and creates some really cool, old-style warmth. There is even a direct recording for those plugging straight into an audio interface or desk to allow for some analogue tone shaping love. The pedal can take a 9V battery or 9V DC or 9.6V AC regulated power supply and is true bypass. Although this pedal may take up the space of two standard distortion pedals it can potentially replace all your gain and destruction devices.

By Will Teasle

Price: RRP \$289
 Distributor: Electric Factory
 Phone: (03) 9474 1000
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MI AMPLIFICATION IRON DUKE

MI Amplification is an Aussie company making killer tube amps with utterly bulletproof construction and incredibly versatile tone. I recently got



my hands on their Megalith amp for some recording and it blew my mind with its approach to heavy, heavy tones. But that's not all I play, so I was stoked to see the Iron Duke arrive on loan for this review. I lugged it to my music room, propped it on top of my Marshall and plugged it into my 4X12 cab. Let the madness begin!

DUKE IT OUT

The Iron Duke is a 50 watt amp powered by a pair of EL34 output tubes - the same type used in classic Marshalls. There are three 12AX7 preamp tubes, and two channels: Channel 1 and Channel 2. As expected, one is for your clean to dirty tones, while the other takes off where the first ends and goes all the way up to high gain sounds. Each channel has controls for Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble and two volumes. In fact, MI says there are two ways to think of the Iron Duke's preamp: either as 2 independent channels with a foot-switchable boost or as four 'channels', each pair of which shares EQ and gain controls but with independent volume controls. Each of the two main channels also a three-position Attack switch, while all four of the 'real' channels has an on/off Mod switch which alters the tonal response. There are also negative feedback-informed Presence and Depth controls, and a three-way Depth Frequency switch which voices the low end. There's no reverb but you'll find a series effects loop around the back.

CLASSIC CRUNCH

The Green channel (Channel 1) is inspired by classic British Class A amps, while its Mod switch extends the lows. The Boosted clean channel is more like your classic British amps, except not as harsh in the high end. The Unboosted overdrive channel is your classic hard rock crunch, and the Boosted overdrive sends the gain into the stratosphere. As mentioned, I've extensively played the MI Amplification Megalith amp, which is an impressive monster capable of high gain brutality of the best kind. And what the Megalith is to heavy, heavy tones, the Iron Duke is to rock tones. There's an openness and clarity to the sound of the Iron Duke which really screams when you use higher gain settings with lower output humbuckers, and it gives single coils plenty of toughness instead of the relative wimpiness that some amplifiers seem to impart. I guess the overall vibe is that of an expertly modded Marshall, or perhaps a nice subtle input boost applied to a

cranked Plexi and brought down to the point where it can sound great even at bedroom levels. It's also a very responsive amp. I plugged

in with my Ibanez RG7620 loaded with DiMarzio Blaze humbuckers - a scooped-midrange pickup - and used the Iron Duke's generous Midrange control to restore some of the missing middle while cooling down just a little of their high end. What blasted forth was a woody-sounding, warm, chunky, compressed rock tone perfect for modern rock. Hang back a little on the guitar's volume control though and the tone opens up in a more 'Classic Rock' kind of way. Players who like to ride the guitar's volume control are going to love this amp, as will those who need a fully-cranked, scooped-midrange, compressed-attack 1991 Metallica-style metal tone. Actually, now that I think about it, a lot of the tones reminded me of those achieved by Mick Mars on Motley Crue's 1994 self-titled album - the one with John Corabi on vocals. Even if you don't like the Crue, give that album a spin to hear some killer guitar sounds and to get a bit of an idea of the breadth of tones I'm talking about. Punchy cleans, ringing jangles, muscular crunch, raunchy distortion and sometimes even full-on metal.

TOUCHY TONE

The Iron Duke isn't the best death metal or metalcore amp - the Megalith more than comfortably fills that niche - but for any variant of music with 'rock' at the end of its name (classic rock, blues rock, hard rock, heavy rock, funk rock, jazz rock) the Iron Duke is perfectly voiced and expertly balanced to give you that magical combination of tone and touch that so many medium to high gain amps seem to miss out on. The Iron Duke is an addictive playing experience because it gives you great rock tones that recall an expertly modded Marshall, but with enough identity that it sounds and feels like an MI Amplification product rather than anyone else's. I already felt they were onto something great with the Megalith but the Iron Duke really hits it home.

By Peter Hodgson

Price: RRP \$1799
 Distributor: MI Amplification
 Phone: (02) 9519 5902
 Website: www.miamplification.com

TOKAI REBELROCKER RG-43

It's no secret that Tokai are back and putting their guitars into the scene with a wide range of models and styles. Known for their quality Japanese versions of an assortment of classics, Tokai have expanded their processes to cater for more price points by utilising other parts of Asia to produce instruments too.

RIC ROCK

It is interesting to note that there aren't many Ric looking guitars going around these days, but Tokai are filling that void. With a throwback to its origins, Tokai have used Rebelrocker as the moniker for these particular axes and they are running the gamut with 6 and string guitars and a 4 string bass. Quite a distinctive shape and look this guitar instantly makes you think of the Beatles, Byrds, Tom Petty, The Who and a host of others. It is an acquired taste and the rounded shapes, chambered body and long neck and deep cutaway definitely have their own thing going on.

TAKE ME BACK

Coming in two of the traditional colours you're looking at black or fire glow which is a burst looking finish on both the body and headstock. A basswood body with some ply veneers, maple neck and rosewood board make up the chassis of the RG-43 and the guitar felt solid overall. It's a set neck setup here and the weight of the guitar sits comfortable without any weird leanings. The finish looked good - it's got the vibe right and the control plate, knobs,

pickups all looking the part too for an authentic feel.

GRAB A BITE

As a semi acoustic guitar (a chambered kind of deal) you get a good range of solid body tones handling cleans and distorted rock tones but the added woodiness and warmth of a hollowbody as well as some extra sustain. Don't get me wrong, this isn't a jazz box sound it's definitely jangly but has a little added depth thanks to the semi hollowbody. Above all they are known for 'that' sound though and pull out some Beatles licks, old rock or more modern alternative tunes and you'll have a chirpy axe that finds its place in the mix nicely. Thanks to the deep double cutaways access right to the 24th fret is a goer and with a comfy midsized neck you won't have to wrestle hard to work your way around the fretboard.

REBEL REBEL

Tokai have put out another solid offering with the RG-43 and it's a guitar that definitely harks back to yesteryear, but can still sit in with today's music and surprisingly cover quite a bit of ground in between. These styled guitars don't pop up much unless you're paying big bucks for the real deal. The rebelrocker RE-43 is cool as.

By Nick Brown

Price: RRP \$799
 Distributor: Jade Australia
 Phone: 1800 144 120
 Website: www.jadeaustralia.com.au

