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Red Rocker

MXR CUSTOM BADASS '78 DISTORTION By Chris Gill



best friend. The '78 Distortion, the first pedal from MXR's new Custom Badass line, delivers punchy, crunchy tones reminiscent of that prime vintage year for hard rock, but it's also a great distortion pedal for players who love aggressive, raunchy tones that preserve the character or their guitars and amps.

FEATURES The '78 Distortion provides the usual triumvirate of controls—output, tone and distortion (gain). One big difference is the crunch switch, which boosts the harmonic richness of the output signal to bring out subtle overtones and enhance detail. Unlike many classic pedals that were available during the days of Pope John Paul I and Jonestown, the '78 Distortion has an on/off LED indicator and an AC adapter jack.

Apparently, the '78 Distortion is a hot-rodded version of a classic pedal, but MXR isn't specifying which one. An educated guess suggests it may be the Boss DS-1 Distortion, which made its debut in 1978, however, the circuit features a Texas Instruments TLC2262 op amp (also used in some SansAmp circuits) instead of the Toshiba TA7136AP op amp in the original DS-1.

PERFORMANCE The '78 Distortion complements the sound of any amp, from a clean Fender to a raging Marshall, with responsive, natural dynamics. The midrange is full but never flabby or fake sounding, the bass is aggressive, and the treble sparkles while emphasizing pick attack. The crunch switch makes tone even fuller, adding a gorgeous layer of upper-midrange harmonics.

FOR AN IDEA of what the MXR Custom Badass '78 Distortion is about, just think back to all the great music from that year: AC/DC's *Powerage*, the Ramones' *Road to Ruin*, UFO's *Obsession* and, perhaps most importantly, Van Halen's *Van Halen* (and definitely not the Bee Gees' *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack). It was a time when Marshalls ruled and midrange was still the guitarist's

CHEAT SHEET



LIST PRICE \$136.23;
street price \$79.99
MANUFACTURER MXR,
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● THE BOTTOM LINE

The '78 Distortion sounds as wild and raunchy as music was back in hard rock's glory days, while it offers the versatility and low-noise performance that today's players demand.

Buzz Bin

NEW, HIP AND UNDER THE RADAR



Size Matters Laguna LE50

▶ Short-scale electric guitars are prized by young players, guitarists with small hands and frequent flyers looking for a travel-friendly instrument. Unfortunately, reducing a guitar's dimensions almost always compromises its playability and tone.

Laguna's 22 1/2-inch-scale LE50 is one short-scale electric that doesn't disappoint in any way, shape or form. In fact, smaller size aside, the LE50's scintillating midrange voice and wicked harmonics will appeal to metal players. Its solid basswood body contributes to these tones with surprisingly deep, punchy lows, and the dual ceramic-based humbuckers respond with note-defining clarity and sharp attack characteristics. The LE50's maple neck is bolted to the body, features a full 24 frets on its rosewood board and has a contoured heel for greater comfort. Plus, the thin C-shaped profile makes the LE50 a fast and easy player.

To make it even better, Laguna's short-scale LE50 is small enough to fit into a large suitcase and ideal for little hands, making it one of the most musical and playable guitars in its class.

— Eric Kirkland

LIST PRICE \$199.99
MANUFACTURER Laguna Guitars,
playlaguna.com