

Some Like It Hot

MXR Blowtorch distortion pedal



with the cleaner low and highs. While many distortion pedals turn your sound into a one-dimensional ball of sludge, the Blowtorch has a more layered effect.

This unique blending preserves the note's fundamental pitch definition while adding an extra layer of textured midrange distortion. To truly understand the value

of this approach, you need to hear the way this textural layering works in a mix, as it fills the

track with massive density, while still leaving room for the drums and other instruments to breathe and speak clearly within and around these layers.

To further enhance the pedal's versatility, the Blowtorch has a 3-position Mid Shift switch that focuses the distortion

emphasis in three different ranges: the low mids (250 Hz), middle mids (750 Hz), or upper mids (2 kHz).

Other features include a side-mounted Torch/On kick switch that jacks up the gain (and volume), and there's also a Thru Out jack that lets you send a clean signal to a second amp. For

maximum headroom, the Blowtorch runs on two 9-volt batteries or an 18-volt AC adaptor (included).

THE BOTTOM LINE

As evinced by our sound samples, the MXR Blowtorch is a remarkably versatile distortion pedal with a wide range of unique tone-sculpting capabilities that give it an impressive ability to carve its own perfect place in a mix. It's a worthy addition to the legendary MXR family lineup, and surely destined to become a classic in its own right. ■

By Terry Buddingh

BACK IN THE SEVENTIES, MXR introduced a line of compact, durable, and elegantly appointed pedals that set the standard for effect manufacturers of that era. Now under the guidance of Jim Dunlop Manufacturing, MXR pedals are made at the Dunlop headquarters in Benicia, California. Besides replicating the classic MXR pedals, they've also been cooking up some ambitious new designs that promise to set the standard for the current era as well. The Blowtorch is their latest offering, designed especially for bass. And it was definitely born to rock.

HOT BOX

Make no mistake: The MXR Blowtorch is not just another warmed-over vintage pedal repro, but a truly modern design intended to cover a wide range of contemporary rock tones in a fresh and unusual way. It was developed from the ground up with the help of several bass-playing Dunlop staffers, and fine-tuned with input from some top touring rock bassists.

The source of the Blowtorch's magic is its Blend control and the unique way the pedal's midrange-emphasized distortion blends

DEMO TRACKLIST

Listen to Ed Friedland play the Blowtorch at guitarworld.com/gear.

"For the first six tracks, the bass, mid, and treble tone controls remained set at 2 o'clock, with the Blend at 1 o'clock, and the Gain at 12 o'clock. I ran the Blowtorch through the tube channel of my Genz Benz GBE 1200, set for a clean, neutral tone (with the pedal in bypass mode)," says Ed Friedland. "I placed an MXL 603S condenser mike four inches off axis from one speaker of my Genz Benz NEOX 212T 2x12 cab. Recorded into Pro Tools, the bass samples received only a minimum of compression, and were otherwise unprocessed. All samples were played on a stock 1974 Fender Jazz Bass strung with LaBella Hard Rockin' Steels."

TRACK 1 With the Mid Shift frequency set to 250 Hz, the Blowtorch adds some layered midrange texture and density to the Fender J-Bass's soloed bridge pickup—while also leaving space to interlock with the drums.

TRACK 2 With the Torch/On boost switch engaged, notice how the billowing distortion further enhances the track's density, while the low end stays focused and the fast picking remains articulate.

TRACK 3 Now for something a little different: With the Mid Shift set to 750 Hz, and both pickups wide open, the Blowtorch conjures up some old-school buzz—warm and fuzzy, yet well-defined.

TRACK 4 Check out how the distortion becomes thicker and raspier, and more synth-like, when some extra gain is supplied by the Torch/On boost switch.

TRACK 5 Switching the Mid Shift to 2 kHz adds top-end bite for more cutting presence in the mix. This setting works great with a P-Bass too. Notice how the root-five power chords ring true all the way down to a B₀.

TRACK 6 With the Torch/On boost switch engaged, the sustain and drive are more intense and massive, yet the bass's true sound and pitch still ring through. The extra gain gives the power chords an amazingly wide, yet still focused, tone.

TRACK 7 Want to hear the Blowtorch's more subtle side? This track is played with all the EQ controls set flat, and the gain knob all the way down. The Blend knob is set to 2 o'clock for just a taste of tube-like growl.

TRACK 8 Want to hear the other extreme? This freaky square-wave synth sound can be achieved with all the controls maxed out and some right-hand palm-muting technique.

THE DETAILS

LIST PRICE
\$229.98

MANUFACTURER
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