

Rad to the Bone

Radial Engineering Tonebone Classic and Hot British distortion pedals. BY ERIC KIRKLAND

Radial Engineering's Tonebone distortion pedals are gaining a serious reputation among tone-hungry artists for their ability to singe your amp's front end with the natural drive of a 12AX7 tube. The Tonebone Classic and Tonebone Hot British pedals provide remarkable control over EQ and drive levels to create some of the most exciting distorted tones yet from a stompbox. Both pedals are built from heavy 14-gauge steel, feature true-bypass switching and operate via their supplied 15-volt adapters.

Classic

Praised by Eric Johnson for its responsiveness and musicality, the Tonebone Classic produces smooth tones reminiscent of the overdriven power sections of 6L6-, 5881- and 6V6-based amplifiers. It has controls for level, drive, and high and low eq, and a powerful filter knob that balances the pedal's treble output and maintains harmonic integrity as you adjust the other EQ controls.

A trio of three-way sliders provides control over top end, midboost, and drive gain. The top end switch has settings for bright, flat and dark and lets you adjust the dominance of the highs and add presence and attack. Midboost provides up to 12dB of midrange push to fatten your guitar's tone and help you cut through a loud band. The drive switch lets you select from low-, medium- and high-gain levels and works in conjunction with the pedal's drive knob, which controls volume and sustain.

Using a Stratocaster and a Les Paul Custom, I tested the Classic with a Marshall Plexi Reissue and a Fender Hot Rod Deville. Low-gain settings produced incredible blues drive and a warm tube grind that was easily controlled with the guitar's volume. With the gain increased, the top end set to bright and the filter tweaked for natural treble, I was able to mimic Jimi Hendrix's untamed Monterey Pop distortion. Dimming the

drive, backing off the filter and dialing up the level evoked the violinlike tones of Eric Johnson and the cascading overdrive of the early Mark Series Boogies. This is simply the finest U.S.-style distortion pedal I've played.

Hot British


For everything from Eric Clapton cool to Slayer cruel, the Hot British distortion pedal creates the blazing upper-mid presence, tight chunk and sizzling preamp gain of a fleet of Marshall amps. Like the Classic, the Hot British has a trio of sliders, for top end, voicing and midboost. The top end switch has settings

for dark, flat and bright, and delivers a huge perceived gain boost as the treble level is increased. The voicing switch has settings for fat, notched and no voicing. The fat position pumps the low midrange and softens the crunch, while the notched voicing sucks out the mids for classic hard-rock tones.

For even stronger-sounding single notes, try the three-position midboost, which increases the overall gain with up to 12dB of extra midrange.

The Hot British has controls for level, drive, and high and low eq, and a contour dial, which balances the bass-to-treble ratio with regard to the voicing switch. When no voicing is chosen, the contour control has no effect.

Employing the Hot British with a variety of clean amps and a JCM 800, I was dazzled by the pedal's realistic tones—from Bluesbreaker-era Clapton to *Back in Black*. For the best Eighties metal sounds, set the top end to bright,

notch the voicing and crank the drive. From here, moving from EVH to Randy Rhoads tonalities is just a matter of fine-tuning the contour and EQ. More than a distortion pedal, the Hot British creates nearly three decades of heavy rock tones with the soul of a modified Marshall stack. 



List Prices

Tonebone Classic, \$300.00; Tonebone Hot British, \$300.00

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