

LAZY J

Cruiser

A truly great-sounding booster/overdrive is the majority of guitarists' desert island pedal. How has high-end amplifier maker Jesse Hoff tackled this most touchy of challenges? Review by **Hayden Hewitt**

There's no doubt that the retro overdrive pedal market is currently vibrant, to say the least. Not a minute seems to go by without yet another builder claiming to have found the holy grail of valve tone goodness, often with hand-painted daisies or suchlike all over the front. It takes something special to stand out from the crowd these days - and the Cruiser is certainly special.

Jesse Hoff will be known to readers of this magazine as the expat American responsible for Lazy J amps. First he built the Lazy J 20, a 5E3 tweed Deluxe-inspired combo that nabbed our coveted Best Amp Over £1000 prize just last year; then he upped the volume stakes with the Lazy J 80, a tweed Twin-alike with gobs of power on tap. And why should you sully the signal path 'twixt your best guitar and your Lazy J amp with anything but a pedal built by the same maker?

The genesis of the Cruiser pedal dates back to the mid '90s, when Hoff decided he wanted a clean boost to drive his amps at a lower, more club-friendly volume. With that achieved, the pedal design evolved according to needs and suggestions, leaving us with the Cruiser as the boost and overdrive pedal we have before us today.

Sounds

On the front of the pedal everything is kept nice and simple with input Gain, Drive, Sat (saturation) and Volume knobs. Turning down the Drive knob fully removes both it and the Sat knob from the equation, leaving you with the boost side of the pedal. This done, you'll find that there's a large amount of clean boost available even with the input gain set low, which can really beef up the clean tones on the amp. Dialing in more input gain slowly adds a little hair to the sound, giving a very musical breakup.



The Cruiser is not a high-gain pedal, more an organic overdrive which seems to mimic amp breakup remarkably well


Having control over the input gain is an unusual feature on a pedal, but one that seems so obvious - whether you're giving your vintage Telecaster some extra teeth or backing off your high-gain pickups.

Bringing in the Drive knob slowly introduces the overdrive aspect of the Cruiser. This is not a high-gain pedal, more an organic overdrive which seems to mimic amp breakup remarkably well. Even at extreme settings with your low strings dissolving into a huge fuzz breakdown, the upper registers retain a singing tone so thick you could chew it.

Lastly we come to the Sat knob, which has three settings that affect the headroom, clipping, and compression of the pedal. From right to left you have maximum headroom, increased headroom, and finally low headroom with soft clipping. Turned to the low

headroom setting, the Cruiser feels as if you are playing through an absolutely cranked valve amplifier. That's how complete the aural illusion is.

Verdict

The Cruiser is a deliciously addictive pedal which delivers on all counts. If you like having everything from massive cleans through to filthy fuzz all in one pedal, then you'll love it. 

FINAL SCORE

LAZY J CRUISER	
Build Quality	19/20
Playability	18/20
Sound	19/20
Value for money	18/20
Looks	16/20
TOTAL	90%

FACTFILE

Cruiser

SPECS Overdrive/boost pedal with headroom settings. 9 volt power or battery (supplied).

Made in the UK

CONTROLS Gain, Drive, Sat, Volume

PRICE £205

CONTACT

Lazy J Projects

0843 289 4089

www.lazyjprojects.com

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RRP £149 approx