



The Nex Generation

Sabine NexFX pedals

by Dominic Hilton

Although Sabine is most commonly associated with its comprehensive range of electronic instrument tuners, the company has now plunged into the world of effects with its new NexFX pedals. From first impressions, it seems that Sabine has done its homework. These stompboxes have some nifty construction details, including a rugged, chunky metal casing with a non-slip rubber base and pedal pad, protective cloth bag, easy-access battery compartment and stereo outputs. Better still, each pedal features AC in and out jacks that enable a single AC adaptor to power up to six interconnected pedals without lots of long power cables. (To that end, each pedal comes with a power patch

cord.) And while other pedals use a solitary LED power indicator, the control panels on the NexFX illuminate when the pedal is active. In addition to looking cool, the backlit fascia allows settings to be easily checked on dark stages.

The NEX-5200

Overdrive has control options not usually found on this type of effect. In addition to the Overdrive control, the pedal has Mid and Treble controls that allow the powerful mid frequencies to be sculpted from hollow drives to warmer humped tones, and the upper frequencies can be pushed or tamed as needed. The Sustain control can add smooth compression to cleaner tones or add punch to the dirtier end of this pedal's capabilities. Plus, the Overdrive's stereo outputs offer some interesting blends of clean and distorted tones. Soundwise, this pedal is about subtlety, bringing soft, controlled overdrives to clean tones, or adding natural heat and sustain to lead sounds.

Like the Overdrive, the NEX-5300 StereoChorus sneaks an additional function into a popular effect. The unit has controls for Speed, Depth, Tone and Dry/Wet mix, as well as an Autopan feature that allows the chorus to sweep between the stereo outputs for big stereo ambience. The tone of this analog pedal is remarkably warm and smooth, and the gentle modulations are, like the Overdrive's distortions, subtle and useable.

Sabine has taken an interesting approach with its NEX-5100 FuzzStortion effect by combining two types of distortion in one unit. While the FuzzStortion has the obligatory Level and Drive controls, it's the unit's three other controls that break new ground. As on the Overdrive, the FuzzStortion's eq consists of Mid and Treble controls; however, the unit's Mid pot has a center detent to aid navigation across its dramatic range. The Fuzz/Dist control also has a center detent to separate the sweep of vintage fuzz effects from the more traditional range of distortions on the right side of the dial. The FuzzStortion proved to be extremely flexible. The Mid control produced tones ranging from thrashy to fat, and the unit's Fuzz side delivered plenty of hot, raspy transistor distortion and a slew of tonal options from the eq controls.

The most traditional effect of the bunch is the NEX-5400 Compressor. In addition to Level and Tone controls, the unit has Threshold, Attack and Ratio controls that allow uncompromised access to a full range of compression effects. The Compressor makes fast work of unruly clean tones and lackluster leads, adding smooth sustain and front-end punch where needed. The stereo output enables this high-quality effect to be blended with a dry signal for added texture.

The NEX-5000 Pedal Tuner is familiar territory for Sabine. The highly visible, 11-segment display is color-coded for fast, accurate tuning, and a large LED readout indicates which note you're aiming for. A Flat Tune button enables accurate detuning to two and a half steps below standard in half-step increments, and the Calibration function offers a detuning range of 435–445Hz. The footswitch engages mute mode, and the two outputs can be used to drive separate signal paths.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Sabine's NexFX pedals may not be the most outrageous effects units available, but they easily rank with the most solid and best-designed stompboxes. This is a strong debut from Sabine's new product line.

LIST PRICES: NEX-5000 Pedal Tuner, \$119.95; NEX-5100 FuzzStortion, \$119.95; NEX-5200 Overdrive, \$119.95; NEX-5300 StereoChorus, \$169.95; NEX-5400 Compressor, \$129.95

Sabine, Inc., 13301 Highway 441, Alachua, FL 32615;

(386) 418-2000; fax: (386) 418-2001; www.sabine.com

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