



## Radial Tonebone Plexitube £299

Radial's Tonebone range expands further with the Plexitube. We plug in... by Adrian Clark

We were highly impressed by the multi-talented Triumode back in issue 270, and Radial's Plexitube is designed along the same lines, with a flexible interface, twin channels and a 12AX7 valve. As the name suggests, the Plexitube is designed to give a typically British range of sounds, and the front panel bears the slogan 'Hot British Distortion'.

The Plexitube has one footswitch for turning the pedal on and off, and another for toggling between the two channels. A green LED by the on/off footswitch indicates that the pedal is in (true) bypass, and the channel selection is indicated by means of a red or yellow LED. Along with the mono input and output, there's also an effects loop on channel two. Instead of the usual send and return connections, Radial has used a single insert connection, as found on mixing desks; you'll need a special TRS insert cable, which carries both the input and output through a single jack plug.

The main row of controls is simple enough to follow. Each channel has its own independent level control, and there's a single drive control (there are dual drive controls on the Triumode). Then there are high EQ, low EQ and dual contour knobs. The purpose of contour is to determine the frequency range at which the mid-range boost or



The top end control adjusts the high frequencies

scoop is applied, so with that in mind, let's move on to the row of switches below the main controls.

First up is top end, which adjusts the character of the high frequencies. The options are 'bright', 'flat' and 'dark', which are self-explanatory. Bear in mind that the controls on the Plexitube (and other Tonebone pedals) are interactive, so an adjustment to one control will affect how you need to set

other controls. The top end control is a case in point: each switch position will probably require a readjustment to the high EQ control.

Next, there's a three-position voicing switch for each channel. These affect the mid-range characteristics of the sound and are designed to be used in conjunction with the contour controls. Both feature 'fat' and 'scoop' settings, but channel one, aimed primarily at

### The rivals

Fulltone Fulldrive 2 £199  
Carl Martin Plexitone £189

Vox Cooltron Bulldog Distortion £139

It all boils down to personal taste, but there are plenty of options for similar sounds at much lower prices. The closest equivalent is the Carl Martin Plexitone, which has three channels of overdrive, but less tonal shaping options and no valve. The Vox Cooltron pedals all use the same 'starvation' approach to get valve overdrive at low voltages, and the Bulldog is a two-channel distortion pedal. For a lower-gain alternative, the Fulltone Fulldrive is a recognised classic, with two stages of boost.



**RADIAL TONEBONE PLEXITUBE**  
**PRICE:** £299  
**ORIGIN:** Canada  
**TYPE:** Two-channel valve distortion pedal  
**FEATURES:** True bypass, insert loop, 12AX7 valve  
**CONTROLS:** Drive, level for each channel, high EQ, low EQ, contour for each channel; three-position mid boost switch, three-position voicing switch for each channel, three-position top end switch; drive trim control (channel 2 only)  
**CONNECTIONS:** In, out, insert loop (requires TRS insert cable)  
**MIDI:** No  
**POWER:** AC adaptor (included)  
**OPTIONS:** None  
**Rosetti**  
**01376 550033**  
**www.tonebone.com**

TONEBONE PLEXITUBE	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

- **WE LIKED** Hugely flexible and full of surprises
- **WE DISLIKED** The level controls need to be quite high to provide a decent boost

→ rhythm applications, also has an 'ultra scoop' position. For channel two, the third position bypasses the voicing function. Finally, a single mid boost switch allows you to add either 7dB or 12dB of extra mid-range or, if you prefer, none at all. For hardened tweakers, a trim control (accessed with a small screwdriver) allows you to fine-tune the distortion on channel two.

**SOUNDS:** You can't get the 'authentic' tone of any amp just by plugging in a pedal, because your own amp will always colour the pedal's sound. That said, though, the Plexitube offers a range of Marshall-esque tones; but what really impressed us was just how wide that range of tones is. Our only real criticism was that we had to turn up the level controls quite high in order to get a decent increase in level from our dry amp sound.

The various EQ knobs and switches are very flexible and we'd recommend spending plenty of time familiarising yourself with their effects. With the top end switch set to 'dark', a generous high EQ boost and the channel one voicing switch set to 'fat', we were able to get a very convincing early Black Sabbath tone, while the bright top end setting and a mid-range scoop was



The voicing switches can take you from vintage to modern

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more reminiscent of Kings X. The ultra scoop position on channel one's voicing control is perfect for modern metal.

Channel two is geared towards lead sounds, and is based on the Tonebone Hot British pedal. We got the best results by turning the trim control just below the stock 50 per cent setting, to give more headroom on the main drive control. Plugging into an almost-clean Cornford Harlequin, we were able to

get more than enough distortion from the Plexitube, with precise control over the mid-range characteristics.

### Verdict

Tonebone products are not cheap, and very few players could justify spending \$300 on a distortion pedal. For that sort of money, you want the product to form the very backbone of your sound, and if you're a Marshall fan, the Plexitube could very easily do just that. It's difficult to find a bad tone from this pedal; we found a range of new possibilities every time we plugged in and started a new tweaking session. **T**

### Radial Tonebone Plexitube

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★