



VISUAL SOUND V2 OPEN ROAD & V2 TRUETONE

A COUPLE OF NEW PEDALS FROM THE VISUAL SOUND STABLE TAKE DANIEL HODGSON DOWN THE ROAD TO TONE

GBINFO

VISUAL SOUND V2 PEDALS

BUILT IN: China
POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC mains adapter (not included)
DIMENSIONS: 59(h) x 78(w) x 144(d) mm

OPEN ROAD

PRICE: £139
TYPE: Overdrive
FEATURES: Drive, tone & volume controls

TRUETONE

PRICE: £119
TYPE: Clean boost
FEATURES: Tone & volume controls

CONTACT:
 Headline Music Ltd
 PHONE: 01223 874301
 WEB: www.visualsound.net

Bob Weil's company ... Visual Sound has been successfully blurring the lines between boutique and mass-produced pedals for well over a decade now. While its first foray into the world of guitar effects was with a rather clever volume pedal, it's the company's range of overdrive stompers that has really solidified its reputation.

The recent 'V2' revamp of the entire range has allowed Visual Sound to break away from the dual-pedal format and start offering those prized circuits in individual stompers, as well as a host of brand new designs including the Angry Fuzz, Warped Distortion and the two pedals we have

here. You'll find many a pro pedalboard with one or two Visual Sound pedals on them, so we're expecting big things from this new pair of stompboxes.

CONSTRUCTION & FEATURES

Both of these pedals are housed in chunky die-cast aluminium housings, which, we don't mind telling you, feel virtually indestructible. The controls, which comprise the usual drive, tone and volume for the Open Road overdrive and just tone and volume on the Truetone boost, are protected by a raised section at the back of the pedal. This means that those knobs, though perfectly sturdy in their own right, won't be subject to the full force

of any stray feet. The input and output sockets are on each side of the unit while a 9V Boss-style adapter can be plugged in via the socket at the back of the pedal.

Battery access is something that has been improved on these V2-series pedals beyond even our highest expectations, and many other manufacturers should take note. Although this is only made possible by that raised area at the back of the chassis, the battery compartment is very similar to what you would find on an electro-acoustic guitar, as the cell fits inside its compartment vertically. You simply unclip the hinged lid on the bottom of the pedal, slide a 9V cell in, connect up the lead and clip the lid shut again. ▶



The footswitch design on both units is also worth a mention. For a start, Bob Weil sits firmly and squarely on the 'buffered' side of the effects pedal bypass fence. Indeed, anyone who paid attention to Dan Stienhardt's *Tech Talk* article back in issue 97 will know that a properly designed buffer can work wonders on your bypassed tone, preserving high frequencies over long cable runs, and Visual Sound's 'Pure Tone' buffer circuit is one of the best around. The footswitch for these new pedals is a large circular button with a spring action, so there's no loud 'click' as with a standard true-bypass switch. These switches are tested to survive over 10 million hits – significantly more than even the best quality 3PDT switches out there.

SOUNDS

When it comes to overdrive pedals, the Ibanez Tube Screamer is one of the most influential designs of all time, and countless pedals have used it as a starting point. One key element of the Tube Screamer is a pronounced hump in the mid-range, which makes it particularly good at pushing the preamp stage of an already-driven valve amp into rich, toneful distortion. This works particularly well in combination with Fender amps, which typically have a slightly scooped mid-range to begin with. However, this style of overdrive can work less well with other amps – Marshalls, with their full, prominent mid-range, for example.

Visual Sound's famous Route 66 and Jekyll & Hyde both mated an excellent Tubescreamer-style circuit with vintage-style compression and heavy distortion respectively. In contrast, the Open Road aims to provide the flat-frequency ying to the Tube Screamer's mid-range-heavy yang.

Plugging into a Marshall-style

GBVERDICT

VISUAL SOUND V2 OPEN ROAD

GOLD STARS

- ★ Plenty of gain
- ★ Responsive, open sound
- ★ Tight bottom end
- ★ Solid construction

BLACK MARKS

- None

IDEAL FOR...

Open, amp-like overdrive sounds

GBRATING

★★★★

GBVERDICT

VISUAL SOUND V2 TRUETONE

GOLD STARS

- ★ Loads of boost
- ★ Ample clean headroom
- ★ Wide-ranging tone control

BLACK MARKS

- None

IDEAL FOR...

Boosting your solos or driving valve amps and overdrive pedals

GBRATING

★★★★



■ These footswitches are rated to withstand an incredible 10 million hits



■ The raised section at the back of these pedals protects the controls from damage

non-master volume valve amp which is already cooking nicely, the first thing we noticed was how tonally transparent the Open Road can be. There's a huge amount of range in the gain control, and this pedal can function as a great little clean boost with the gain control set to minimum, though at the other end of the spectrum there's plenty of dirt to push the amp to melting point.

The tone control adds in some more highs and mid-range as it's turned clockwise, though the sound never becomes either shrill or overbearing like a Tube Screamer can be, and the Open Road has a very amp-like feel. This is no more apparent than when we roll back our guitar's volume knob and vary our pick attack. Just like the best valve amps, you can go from a crystal clean sound to a dirty roar just by digging in.

Moving on to the Truetone, this pedal can provide up to 15dB of boost, and due to the fact that the voltage inside the pedal is raised to 27V, there's ample clean headroom all the way up. There is loads of volume on

tap here to overdrive the front end of any valve amplifier, though many may prefer to use the Truetone to provide a more modest level increase to lift solo passages above the rest of the band. It's also worth experimenting with this pedal in front of an overdrive stompbox, as applying a boost here can yield some great results. The tone control comes in handy for changing the way the Truetone interacts with either amp or overdrive. Hike up the treble frequencies along with the volume and you'll make a Les Paul-type guitar sing out loud and clear with plenty more bite.

CONCLUSION

Visual Sound has earned a reputation for innovative design and high build quality, and on the basis of these two examples, it's well deserved. They might be quite bulky for single stompboxes (and the Open Road in particular looks a bit like a Teletubby's tombstone), but make no mistake: these are professional-grade pedals.

The Open Road's amp-like response and tonal transparency are really impressive, and this is a great alternative to the many Tube Screamer-style overdrives out there – we'd love to see Mr. Weil package this effect with his Route 808 in a dual-pedal format.

The Truetone clean boost does exactly what it says on the tin, staying completely clean up to +15dB, while the additional tone knob greatly increases versatility. There are cheaper overdrives and clean boosts available, but considering the quality of both sound and build on show here, plus the well-respected 'Pure Tone' buffer on board, these prices look very reasonable indeed. **GB**