

Sound and Vision

Visual Sound's Route 808, Visual Volume, and Comp 66

VISUALSOUND FOUNDER and president Bob Weil and chief engineer R.G. Keen have given their flagship combo pedals a face lift and introduced a new line of single pedals. These new V2 series effects are built on heavy duty die-cast aluminum chassis, replacing the steel housings on the old line, their in/out/power jacks are still

hand-wired, they get a new switching system, and there's a new "tone buffer" circuit designed to reduce signal degradation caused by cables and other effects.

Through a



20-watt EL84 1x12" combo, the Route 808 produces the anticipated thick, harmonically rich "Tube Screamer" sound with a lot of midrange boost. But unlike the classic Ibanez version, with the Visual Sound the user can activate the pedal's Bass Boost mini-toggle to regain some of the low-end lacking in the classic pedal. This makes it great for chunky rhythm parts and gives it a fuller overall tone.

Controls on the Comp 66

VISUAL SOUND V2 EFFECTS

Price: \$119.95 (Comp 66), \$109.95 (Route 808), \$139.95 (Visual Volume)
Contact: Visual Sound, 4922 Port Royal Road B1,

Spring Hill, TN 37174; www.visualsound.net.

include Compression, Tone, and Gain, as well as a mini toggle that disengages the Tone control. The pedal delivers everything from a light "fattening" compression to a heavy, squashed chicken-pickin' signal. With its Tone control engaged, it can easily compensate for any loss of high- or low-end response.

The Visual Volume pedal runs in two stereo modes – passive and active – with internally adjustable independent Gain controls. The passive mode is straightforward; treadled all the way down, the pedal produces no signal, and when treadled up, its 10-LED scale indicator lights progressively as its output signal increases. The active mode works the same, but also engages an adjustable gain boost and the Pure Tone buffer circuit.

The pedal operates with a very smooth taper that's great for volume swells or quick, accurate volume adjustment. The LED scale indicator is a fantastic aid for consistently producing the same output. Like most waha, you must remove the bottom of the pedal to get to the battery compartment, and to switch from active to passive. The unit can also be powered by 9-volt DC power.

Visual Sound's new V2 Series pedals are solid performers, and the Visual Volume is one of the most useful and innovative volume pedals on the market.

– Phil Feser

Gold Standard

Epiphone's Slash Les Paul Goldtop

EPIPHONE'S NEW SLASH Goldtop is a guitar that may change your perceptions about guitars manufactured in Asia. Because of its superb sound and playability, one might assume this guitar is made in Japan, but it's actually crafted at Epiphone's own factory in China. This is surprising, because while there are some very good guitars made in China, this one can be described as having "outstanding" construction. Right off the bat, it's a game-changer.

Epiphone also cites the guitar's "long neck tenon" construction as a key difference from your average Les Paul. With this method, the butt-end of

the neck extends further into the body, with a wedge of wood sitting just under the neck pickup. This additional length reputedly adds resonance and tone. Other features include an 8.1-pound mahogany body and neck, and a thin maple-veneer top. The glued-in neck is topped with a rosewood fingerboard, 22 medium-jumbo frets, 12" radius, and has a 24³/₄" scale. Electronics include two Seymour Duncan Alnico Pro-II humbuckers and the usual pair of dual volume and tone controls with a three-way toggle. Hardware is the LockTone tune-o-matic bridge, LockTone Stopbar, and nickel hardware. The guitar is finished in Metallic Gold, which appears to be lighter than the new

EPIPHONE SLASH LES PAUL GOLDTOP

Price: \$1,525
Contact: www.epiphone.com/slashgoldtop.

Gibson Slash Goldtop, which is finished with the deeper-hued Bullion Gold (Epiphone says it's "...the same finish introduced on the original Les Paul of 1952.")

Now, back to that long neck tenon. This is how Les Pauls were made 50 years ago, and it

