

OD Done Right

Visual Sound's Open Road Overdrive, Truetone Boost

THE STORY OF THE BOU-tique pedal maker typically starts with a tone-obsessed gear freak with a knack for tinkering spending hours in his garage, pursuing the Holy Grail of tone. One knight in that tale is Bob Weil and his company, Visual Sound.

The company's latest effects pedals—the Open Road Overdrive and Truetone Boost—prove the small-builder ethos is still alive and well at Visual Sound. Both workhorses use a sturdy die-cast housing that can withstand heavy abuse. But unlike some of their larger cousins from Visual Sound, they utilize the company's new, smaller box, which is much more friendly in regard to pedal board real-estate.

The Open Road is the latest in a barrage of overdrives, with one

very important element that sets it apart – it sounds considerably more open and does *not* have the midrange “hump” of a classic Tube Screamer circuit. It puts the issue to bed nicely with its interactive tone circuit that not only reacts to high-end roll-off, but gain structure, as well. It makes everything from single-coiled solidbodies to humbucker-driven archtops sound killer, with a very natural grit and girth that can make pretty much any instrument sound warm and full. Even pickups that can be inherently thin, like classic Dano/Silvertone lipstick-tubes, can sound robust with a touch of help from the Open Road; through an EL84-driven combo, lipstick-tube pickups, in fact, offer the *best* Mike Campbell-esque dirt a player could ask for.

The Open Road's overall tonal



VISUAL SOUND OPEN ROAD OVERDRIVE/ TRUETONE BOOST

Price: \$119.95 (Open Road), \$99.95 (True Tone)
Contact: Visual Sound, 4922 Port Royal Road B-11, Spring Hill, TN 37174;



color highlights the high-end of a single-coil, enhancing their sparkle. Even more impressive is how it responds organically to various amps, acting more like amp-driven overdrive than an outboard preamp. Players who do low-volume gigs will particularly love this aspect.

The Truetone is a clean boost with considerable headroom. Unlike some boosts, it's designed to not only give you a great boost with no tonal coloration, but gives the option to tweak one's tone. It's extremely useful in fine-tuning for different guitars, and works great for bass players, as well.

In a live setting, the box did a great job leveling the output between a lipstick-tube-loaded guitar and one with humbuckers. Its 15db of boost offers more than enough gain to match the pickup

types, and a slight tweak of the Tone knob yields a rotund bottom. The coolest part is how it doesn't rob the guitar of its natural properties. Instead, it creates “more” of them, as a good booster should.

In the studio, the Truetone showed another of its great uses; placed in front of a vintage tube amp, it drove the amp's front end hard, taking the overall natural breakup and sending it soaring. All the while the natural sound of both the amp and the guitar were not compromised in the least and there was no noise to remove in mixdown.

Weil has proven that the all-American commitment to ingenuity and hard work is still alive and well, and the Open Road and Truetone will continue the legacy. Both do impeccable work. – **Sean O'Bryan Smith**