

Price: From **£17.99**

We love bargain effects that sound good enough to scare the handwired merchants, and this foursome from the non-boutique name of Belcat are hellish cheap. Review by Huw Price

Belcat

PST-10, TRM-507, DLY-503 & DST-501

This month we're looking at a quartet of stompboxes from the unromantic-sounding Belcat brand - a power supply, a tremolo, an analogue delay and a distortion.

POWER STATION PST-10

Most of us who use multiple pedals will have grown heartily sick of inadvertently draining batteries because we forgot to unplug that pedal... again! Buying PP3s on a regular basis gets pretty costly too, so a decent power supply and distribution box is one of life's little essentials.

The Belcat PST-10 is a compact device featuring a whopping eight 9v DC outputs plus two extras with variable voltage controls that can be set anywhere from 6v to 12v. It's actually just a distribution box - a separate 15v 1 Amp wall wart DC power supply is included. The higher voltage is obviously there to provide juice for pedals that run on 12v, like the TC Novas. Why the 6v option? Since we've never seen a pedal specified to run on 6v, we can only speculate that it's there for players who prefer to run some stompboxes at lower voltages to simulate the sonic effects of tired batteries.

SOUND

It's a power supply, so the only sound you might expect it to generate is hum. Since it's not earthed, it doesn't, and I didn't notice any difference in background noise between the PST-10 and battery power. In other words it works, and it works very well. Just try and determine how much current your effects pedals draw in total, and try not to exceed the PST-10's 1 Amp current supply capability.

TREMOLO TRM-507

These days everybody seems to make a tremolo pedal, but it doesn't seem that long ago that they were quite rare. Plenty of the shoegazing bands I was working with in recording studios back in the early '90s used a Boss stereo panning pedal; the trick was to only use one side, and you got a neat tremolo effect.



The TRM-507 goes from asymmetric US amp-type tremolo to sequencer effects and bubbling sci-fi soundtracks

This might make you wonder why there are so many tremolo pedals. After all, if tremolo is merely a rapid rise and fall in volume, surely they all sound the same? Within reason there is some truth in that, so the thing that really sets one tremolo pedal apart from another is the way it 'feels' rather than the way it sounds.

The TRM-507's three control knobs are labelled Rate, Depth and Wave. Rate simply sets the speed of the volume modulation, and Depth sets the balance between the dry signal and the effected signal. On many tremolo pedals that's about all you get, so the Belcat's Wave control is a real bonus; it adjusts the way the volume changes are made, from a fast swell and a slow fade (saw tooth), to a slow swell and rapid fade (reverse saw tooth) and all points in between, with an even rise and fall in the centre position (triangle wave).

FINAL SCORE **P5-10**

Build Quality	16/20
Versatility	20/20
Ease of Use	20/20
Value for money	20/20
Vibe	15/20

TOTAL **91%**

Good for... Powering up to 10 pedals

Look elsewhere... Earth loop hum, 18v taps

FINAL SCORE **TRM-507**

Build Quality	16/20
Versatility	17/20
Sound	17/20
Value for money	19/20
Vibe	19/20

TOTAL **88%**

Good for... Tremolo

Look elsewhere... Extreme tweakability, sonic transparency

FACTFILE

PST-10

Description: 10-way power supply. Made in China

Controls: Two voltage-adjusting trim pots

Price: £27.95

THE COMPETITION

HARLEY BENTON

Powerplant

For slightly more, this gives eight 9V DC (500mA) sockets, one 12V DC (250mA) and one 12V AC (250mA) outputs. Includes cable set and the transformer is built-in, so there's no wall wart

RRP: £36.61

FACTFILE

TRM-507

Description: Tremolo pedal. Made in China

Controls: Rate, Wave & depth, true bypass footswitch

Price: £17.99

THE COMPETITION

BEHRINGER

Ultra Tremolo UT100

Moulded plastic casing and flimsy control knobs for Depth, Rate and Waveform

RRP: £25

Price: From £16.99

FACTFILE

DLY-503

Description: Delay pedal. Made in China

Controls: Time, Level & Repeat, true bypass footswitch

Price: £18.99

THE COMPETITION

CARL MARTIN Red Repeat

Retro delay with a slightly warmer tonality and a Tone control for extra versatility

RRP: £89

SOUNDS

The Belcat Tremolo can cover just about any tremolo sound and feel that you need, from the playable asymmetric American amp-type trem to that strange disappearing front end that's more typical of AC30s. At the extremes you can even get some sequencer effects and the rapid bubbling sound that used to be so popular on sci-fi soundtracks. However, there is a slight drop in volume accompanied by a loss of midrange beef and a bit of hiss.

ANALOG DELAY DLY-503

There's quite a bit to say about the sound of this pedal, so forgive me for blasting through the description. It looks just like all the others, and the controls are Time, Level and Repeat.

SOUND

This little delay pedal has a big personality. It's a retro-sounding unit, so don't expect pristine echoes or two-second delay times, but this pedal is quieter than most bucket brigade delay devices - and clearer-sounding, too. If Belcat's designers were actually trying to emulate the sound of any of the classic tape echoes, the one they chose may well have been the Roland RE-301 Space Echo - the brightness and hint of glassy fuzz in the upper mids really nails the Brian Setzer tone.

At minimum Time setting you get a very fast slapback, and if you set Repeat to minimum the DLY-503 generates a halo of bright spaghetti western reverb that I can't quite get out of my Carl Martin Red Repeat. You'll hardly be aware of the echo - it's more of a thickening of the notes. Delay time ranges from very short to not very long. The slappy reverb effect morphs into a *Wicked Game* vibe with higher Repeat settings, and from there it's into Edge-like echoes then pure psychedelia, although disappointingly I couldn't coax it into feedback.

This isn't a warm-sounding delay like the Red Repeat or MXR Carbon Copy, but it's a highly convincing analogue tape emulator. There's something special about the way it seems to accentuate the tone of every guitar I tried through it, and the way it makes single notes sing. The DLY-503 is a bit of a find!

DISTORTION DST-501

This time it's horror comic graphics with a cracked look that makes it seem as if the top has shattered around the switch. The controls are Tone, Level and Dist - and you can guess what they do.



Bright with a hint of glassy fuzz, this little delay pedal nails the Roland RE-301 Space Echo sounds of Brian Setzer

SOUND

This is a one-trick pony, but its trick happens to be a good one - it does distortion. Yes, it says 'distortion' on the tin, but plenty of distortion pedals will clean up enough to give you a clean boost or square the circle for out-and-out fuzz. Some will even do a bluesy overdrive, but none of the above applies here.

At the minimum Dist setting, Level needs to be pretty much maxed out to achieve unity gain when switching on and off. Back off the tone to about 10 o'clock for something near neutrality and the effect is subtle but gratifying... a bit like a Marshall that's just beginning to grumble. There's more than a hint of fizziness in the highs and upper mids plus a useful hint of compression - ace for old school metal and hard rock power chords.

Wind up Dist and the basic sound remains consistent - you just get more and more distortion. At intermediate levels it's like early ZZ Top where the tone of the guitar still cuts through the crunch and squeaky pinched harmonics jump of the strings regardless of your picking. Is there supposed to be a harmonic there? Who cares. There is now.

At super-saturated settings note definition remains excellent and the bass notes stay crisp and tight, even with vintage-voiced neck humbuckers. The key to this pedal's versatility is the Tone control. It has a very wide range and it's extremely powerful, but you can clearly discern the changes as you sweep the control around to really hone that tone.

VERDICT

Let's get the negatives out of the way first. The paint was already beginning to chip, and the soldering looked a bit shoddy, with copious amounts of stray flux. Still, you could slap any one of these down on your pedalboard next to a row of boutique boxes and they wouldn't look out of place. Even better, they wouldn't sound out of place. The power supply works, the tremolo functions well though with a little noise, the delay is really good, and we like the distortion's sound and tone control. We were amazed by the quality of the Danelectro FABs, and this pedal range might give them a run for your money.

FINAL SCORE DLY-503

Build Quality	16/20
Versatility	16/20
Sound	18/20
Value for money	19/20
Vibe	19/20
TOTAL	83%

Good for... Retro delay, short decay reverb
Look elsewhere... Long delay times, feedback mayhem, soupy warmth

FINAL SCORE DST-501

Build Quality	16/20
Versatility	14/20
Sound	15/20
Value for money	19/20
Vibe	19/20
TOTAL	83%

Good for... Distortion
Look elsewhere... Scooped midrange tones

FACTFILE

DST-501

Specs: Distortion pedal. Made in China

Controls: Tone, Level & Dist, true bypass footswitch

Price: £16.99

Contact: Gear4Music 0843 155 0800 www.gear4music.com

THE COMPETITION

DANELECTRO FAB Metal FAB3

The Fab3 has Tone, Level and Dist controls in a metallic black case with more of a scooped midrange tone

RRP: £22.99