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## Effectrode Mercury Fuzz & PC-2A Tube Compressor **£235 & £249**

Valve-driven fuzzbox and an improved compressor

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Effectrode specialises in valve-driven stompboxes and has just released the Mercury Fuzz, a limited-edition pedal based around NOS components – a Philips subminiature valve and vintage germanium diodes. The Mercury follows on from the now sold out Helios valve-driven fuzz, but uses a different valve, one that Effectrode designer Phil Taylor says delivers “fatter, more robust sounding fuzz”.

We took a look at the PC-2A compressor as part of a What You Need To Know About feature last year, but since then the pedal has been revised. In effect, it's been fine-tuned for extra performance partly in line with some suggestions from David Gilmour's guitar tech. This valve-driven optical compressor pedal has always been a solid design, well-respected and used by many pros, but now it uses a different (higher-spec'd) NOS Philips

valve and a faster photocell for a quicker attack time and has an added 'knee' trimpot in the side-chain, allowing control of the smoothness of the onset of compression.

### Sounds

Powered from a supplied 12-volt adaptor, the Mercury sports standard volume and fuzz knobs. At lower levels of the fuzz knob there are some tasty overdrive sounds, but whack it up and you get a lovely fat creamy fuzz sound with plenty of sustain and harmonic content. The sound is naturally vibrant but there's an internal Bright trimpot to roll off or accentuate top end above 2kHz, offering subtle shading. For a different fuzz voice, there's an external Heat switch that allows the second valve stage to be operated at a reduced plate voltage (known as starving the valve). Flick this switch and the fuzz gets harder, tighter and less

squashy, the actual sound depending on how low a plate voltage you dial in with a second internal trim pot, offering a range of alternatives that add to the pedal's versatility.

What you get with the new PC-2A is more transparency – and it keeps your signal level consistent in the most natural way and can thicken up the sound, adding extra punch and sustain. A limit/compress switch switches between light smoothing and a more intense squashy compression, dialled in by the peak reduction knob, while the gain knob sets the output level. Overall, you get smooth studio-style compression that's a pleasure to play through.

Both pedals have excellent silent switching with no thumps or pops, but the necessary circuitry does cause a momentary volume dip, which may require some careful synchronisation for those who

wish to kick them in for solos. However, seeing as these are the sort of tone-building pedals you'd keep on all the time, that may well be an irrelevance.

### Verdict

A classy pair. Residing in the upper echelons of the stompbox hierarchy, Effectrode pedals cost a fair whack but if you are willing to spend over £200 on a pedal, we reckon that the price tag is justified – you're not only getting hand-built pedals, ruggedly put together for heavy road use, but you're also getting original valve-driven designs that aren't mere clones. [TC]

### GUITARIST RATING

Effectrode	★★★★★
Mercury Fuzz	★★★★★
Effectrode PC-2A	★★★★★
Tube Compressor	★★★★★

**Guitarist says:** Quality valve-driven pedals that could become an essential part of your tone