



GEAR

REVIEW



THE BOX THAT WENT TO HARVARD

Effectrode's Fire Bottle Magnetic Pickup Booster



Price: \$255
Info: www.effectrode.com

The Effectrode Fire Bottle is a pedal that deviates from the norm and offers something fresh. Unlike a chorus, distortion, or phaser that delivers a definite “effect,” the Fire Bottle is a preamp that can fix and alter certain audio and level issues with your guitar’s tone. Its description as a “Magnetic Pickup Booster” may sound mysterious, but it’s all quite logical.

One feature about the UK-made Fire Bottle that should get attention is that there’s a real tube inside: a 6112 sub-miniature triode vacuum tube based on military specs (meaning it’s tough as nails). The Fire Bottle’s design is based on the preamp stage of a vintage Fender Harvard combo amp. As for what this Effectrode box does for your tone, it gives the opportunity to fatten up, for example, the single-coil sound of Strat or Tele pickups, and precisely dial in a pleasing tone.

How does it sound? Say you’re playing a gig that requires a tone somewhere from clean to slightly grungy, but your guitar

ain’t cuttin’ it. It’s thin and weak and even making you consider the costly replacement of either guitar or amp. But as Effectrode creator Phil Taylor points out, neither of them may be the culprit – there may be a solution that has more to do with levels than materials. The Fire Bottle is the “pickup booster” that kicks your rig in the butt by strengthening the actual guitar signal.

In terms of design, the exterior of the Fire Bottle is very simple: Level knob, Boost knob, footswitch (with true bypass), and a Vari-Z switch in the back by the AC jack. The pedal offers genuine-sounding boost to your tone, from clean and transparent to dirty and fierce. We used it to successfully smack a Vox-style tube amp in the face, bringing in a thicker tone as

well as more tonal variety. The Vari-Z switch can dial in more sonic changes, but keep in mind that it’s reactive with your amp—some amplifiers provide more or less improvement than others. Depending on how you set the pedal and amp controls, you can conjure clean country and jazz, nasty blues, or raging rock and roll.

For the player who has a discerning ear and wants real subtlety, the Fire Bottle is a great tool, even for solid-state users who merely need to thicken up their tone. No question, this Harvard-styled booster is a clever, useful box that will find myriad uses in the hands of wise players.
— **Pete Prown VG**