



Fat & Furious

AMPTWEAKER FATMETAL DISTORTION By Chris Gill

THE MODUS OPERANDI for designing most “metal” distortion pedals usually involves making a circuit that can boost gain to ungodly levels and slapping in a radical EQ circuit that boosts and cuts frequencies far beyond the normal limits of most guitar amps (and taste for that matter). One engineer who truly understands metal distortion *and* great tone is James Brown, who has designed amps for Eddie Van Halen, Joe Satriani, and Synyster Gates and is responsible for a good solid chunk of the metal guitar tones heard on records and live over the last 25 to 30 years. Brown’s latest endeavor is Amptweaker, which currently offers a wide variety of effects, including some of the most highly regarded metal distortion pedals available today. We took a look at his latest creation—the FatMetal.

FEATURES With its industrial-strength, bulletproof construction, the FatMetal is

truly a professional-quality tool. From the bent steel “roll bar” that protects the control knobs to the ingenious magnetized sliding battery door that enables battery changing without tools, FatMetal is loaded with useful features that reveal an uncommon devotion to both quality and practicality. For example, the sides of the control knobs have contrasting “rising” dots that indicate the knob’s position when viewed from the side, LEDs illuminate the knobs when using a power adapter, and a battery switch lets users turn off the battery without unplugging cables.

Controls include volume, tone, gain, and tight, and a trio of mini switches allow players to select normal/thrash tone, noise gate on/off, and normal/black gain boost settings. In addition to standard mono 1/4-inch input and output jacks, the FatMetal also includes series effect loop send and return jacks that engage additional effects when the FatMetal effect is switched on and a second effect loop called SideTrak,



For video of this review, go to GuitarWorld.com/Nov2015

which becomes active when the FatMetal is bypassed (to provide a second set of “clean” effects or even route the bypassed signal to a separate amp for an A/B setup). Other features include true bypass switching and a DC jack that operates with 9 to 18VDC power supplies.

PERFORMANCE As its name suggests, the FatMetal produces thick, rich distortion with a warmer overall tone than Amptweaker’s TightMetal pedal. The tone is absolutely huge—this is one of the few metal distortion pedals whose sound doesn’t suddenly disappear when playing with a full band. The noise gate automatically tracks the gain control to seamlessly and transparently reduce noise. The EQ may not be as versatile as other metal distortion pedals, but that’s a good thing because its distortion and overall tone already sounds great and needs only minor tweaking to satisfy individual players’ needs.

CHEAT SHEET



LIST PRICE \$200
MANUFACTURER
Amptweaker,
amptweaker.com

- The Thrash and Black mini switches allow users to dial in aggressive modern metal tones while the normal settings provide classic high-gain distortion.

- A pair of effect loops allow players to engage additional sets of effects via the on/off footswitch or even switch between two different amps.

- **THE BOTTOM LINE**
If you desire huge, rich distortion tones that don’t get lost in the mix, the Amptweaker FatMetal delivers the goods in a professional-quality package that also expands the versatility of any rig.