

Way Huge Swollen Pickle, Pork Loin & Fat Sandwich

£199, £209 & £219

A legend is reborn! We look at the new Way Huge pedals and track down their designer, George Tripps, in LA *by Adrian Clark*

Way Huge was originally launched by George Tripps in 1992 and the pedals gained quite a cult following, with some originals changing hands on Ebay for three- and even four-figure prices. Since July, a range of reissues has been manufactured by Jim Dunlop, so it's now possible to experience these underground classics at a much more sensible price.

All three of these new examples have the same basic design, with three main controls, two smaller controls for intermediate tonehounds and internal trim controls for the helpless tweaker. Like the originals, the new Way Huge pedals are built to last, enclosed in all-steel casings. A hinged plastic cover provides easy access to the battery compartment and the pedals can also be powered from a nine-volt DC adaptor. Let's enter the warped world of Mr T.

Swollen Pickle MkII

The Swollen Pickle (fnarr!) is described as a 'Jumbo Fuzz', and it certainly sports a much more impressive array of controls than your average fuzz pedal. The standard adjustments are found in the shape of loudness, sustain and filter controls, but there are also controls for mid-range scoop and crunch. For the sonic perfectionist there are two trim controls inside the pedal: one adjusts the character of the fuzz between smooth and gritty, while the other adjusts the intensity of the mid-range scoop control.

Sounds

A lot of players seem to overlook the potential of fuzz pedals (as distinct from distortion), possibly because the effect has become rather typecast. There's much more to it than woolly Big Muff sustain or waspish Satisfaction

buzz, and the Swollen Pickle does a great job of demonstrating this.

With lower sustain and loudness levels, the pedal does a nice range in crunchy tones suitable for power chords or riffs. At first these settings can be a little too woolly, even on a Strat's bridge pickup, but the crunch control adds plenty of extra bite. Adding a touch of scoop also tightens up the flabbier lower mid-range frequencies.

Pushing up the loudness and sustain controls, there are plenty of classic fuzz sounds. Most of the time, you get best results with the filter control at 100 per cent, but lower settings come in useful when you want to recreate those smooth Fuzz Face tones where the notes seem to be glued together. Similarly, we prefer to keep the crunch control fairly high, and also use the internal trim control to select the grittier type of fuzz.

At high sustain settings, the pedal compresses quite heavily, so you'll find that the top 20 per cent or so of the loudness control's range doesn't have any effect. That said, the Swollen Pickle provides plenty of extra level even by the 50 per cent mark.

Pork Loin

The Pork Loin is described as a 'Soft Clip Injection' pedal, which is a new one on us. A quick perusal of the user instructions reveals that it's a blend of two distinct circuits – a 'British' preamp for cleaner tones and a modern soft clipping overdrive. For the overdrive circuit, there are the usual volume, tone and overdrive controls, along with a curve control that fine-tunes the 'corner' frequencies (we assume this means the cut-off frequencies) of the overdrive. Then there's a control to blend in the clean British preamp circuit.

Not surprisingly, there's even more scope for adjustment if you care to look under the bonnet. The filter control adjusts the tone of the clean preamp, while the drive mix sets the amount of overdrive in the signal. Setting this to zero means that you'll only hear the clean preamp and therefore turning down the external clean control will result in a very quiet pedal. Finally, a presence control provides an extra level of tone-shaping for the overdrive.

Sounds

Don't expect to hear a tight Tubescreamer-like overdrive when you turn on the Pork Loin. The overdrive circuit is much wilder than that. If anything, it's closer in character to a lot of fuzz pedals, producing some wonderfully squishy saturated sounds. We find the lower reaches of the tone control a bit too dark for everyday use, so it remains wedged at 100 per cent.

Also, there are significant hidden tonal depths to be found by adjusting the internal trim pots. And it seems a terrible waste not to hear more of the clean preamp in the mix, so try bringing the drive mix control down to about 50 per cent and then turning the filter almost to the brightest

The Rivals

The **MI Audio Neo Fuzz** (£89) and **GI Fuzz** (£79) offer a range of fuzz sounds. The **HBE Power Screamer** (£139) and **Xotic BB Preamp** (£139) are versatile overdrive pedals. The **Toadworks John Bull** (£99) has a gritty tone, the **D*A*M Sonic Titan** (£135) uses its own preamp to create massive distortion from scratch.

setting. This then allows you to use the clean signal for extra clarity and definition. Using fairly low overdrive settings, this arrangement works particularly well for riffs and chunky chords.

Fat Sandwich

Another name to amuse Sid James, and another interesting description; the Fat Sandwich is a 'Harmonic Saturator', using two stages of clipping to add lots of distortion to a clean amp sound. The volume, tone and distortion controls are as you'd expect, and then there's a presence knob for extra high-frequency shaping and a resonance control that shapes the lower frequencies.

Inside the box, the curve control affects the corner frequencies of the first stage of distortion, while the drive control adjusts the gain of the second stage. Then, for extra fine-tuning, the highs knob adjusts the high-end between the two distortion stages.

Sounds

This is the most dramatic of the three, capable of producing some absolutely huge distortion tones. With all controls set high, the pedal starts to resemble octave fuzz units of the Octavia variety,



The Fat Sandwich uses two stages of clipping to add lots of distortion

with that mixture of saturated fuzz and rich harmonic content.

In all honesty, we find it a little too polite for its 'harmonic saturator' job with the default settings, so we head once again to the internal trim controls and boost the drive. This reduces the Fat Sandwich's capacity for crunchy mild distortion, but really, when you buy a pedal like this, you're probably not going to use it for old-style blues!

The curve and highs controls also become less useful at these higher distortion settings, but that really doesn't matter, as the tonal range produced by the presence and resonance controls is sufficient. If you like your lead tones to be wild and barely in control, this is the pedal for you!

Verdict

As befits the Way Huge name, there's nothing particularly subtle about any of these pedals, but that's fine by us. All three go way beyond normal notions of fuzz, distortion and sustain, and have the versatility to blur the boundaries between those three stompbox genres. All in all, we are marginally more impressed by the Pork Loin than the other two, thanks to the extra tonal range offered by the clean preamp channel. The Swollen Pickle is the one for vintage fuzz fans, and the Fat Sandwich is well worth a demo because of its exciting, harmonically rich distortion tones.

Of course, they're not cheap compared to many other stompboxes – despite the Jim Dunlop production – but they're still not mainstream pedals and offer more than many of their competitors. When you've had as much fun with stompboxes as we've just had, the prices start to seem less of a problem. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Wide and adventurous range of tones, oh, and the names!

We dislike: Slight reservations about the prices

Guitarist says: If you want standard fuzz and distortion pedals don't buy these. But if you're interested in altogether more sick, fuzzed out distortions we suggest you plug into the vision of Mr Tripps



Way Huge Swollen Pickle

PRICE: £199
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Jumbo fuzz pedal
FEATURES: More EQ control than the average fuzz, extra internal controls
CONTROLS: Loudness, filter, sustain, scoop, crunch, internal clip and voice
CONNECTIONS: Input, output
MIDI: No
POWER: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
OPTIONS: None
JHS 01132 865381
www.wayhuge.com

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★☆☆

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Way Huge Pork Loin

PRICE: £209
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: 'Soft clip injection' pedal
FEATURES: Dual overdrive and clean preamp circuits, extra internal controls
CONTROLS: Volume, tone, overdrive, clean, curve, internal filter, presence and drive mix
CONNECTIONS: Input, output
MIDI: No
POWER: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
OPTIONS: None

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★☆☆

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Way Huge Fat Sandwich

PRICE: £219
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: 'Harmonic saturator' pedal
FEATURES: Two-stage clipping circuit, extra internal controls
CONTROLS: Volume, tone, distortion, presence, resonance, internal curve, highs and drive
CONNECTIONS: Input, output
MIDI: No
POWER: DC adaptor (not supplied) or nine-volt battery
OPTIONS: None

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★☆☆

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



The Pork Loin Soft Clip Injection uses a blend of two distinct circuits

WAY HUGE SWOLLEN PICKLE, PORK LOIN & FAT SANDWICH



Tripps explains all about his comically titled range of pedals

Huge Design

Fast-talking George Tripps spills the beans on his past and present gigs. Guitarist struggles to keep up *by Dave Burluck*

We're sitting in George Tripps LA office/workshop. It ain't big but it's crammed full of old guitars, amps, pedals and electrical components. Tripps is making a few mods to some new pedal designs. As the soldering iron smokes, Tripps talks.

"Yeah, unofficially I started Way Huge back in February of 1992. I started making pedals for fun and used the name Way Huge for shits and giggles. It was a bunch of us being stupid and we came up with the name." By 1994 Way Huge was officially in business with Tripps (with help from his wife) doing everything from designing the effects to making and selling them. Tripps' first pedal, the Red Llama, introduced a substantial line of effects, all with wacky names that would virtually create the blueprint for what we now call the 'boutique' pedal industry. Tripps went on to make just under 3,000 Way Huge pedals before, after consulting for Line 6 during 1998, accepting a full-time job with them and winding up Way Huge.

"My first day at Line 6 was the day they shipped the first POD: 28 December 1998. See, it was at a time when my wife wanted to go to law school and people wouldn't pay what they now pay for 'boutique' effects."

Tripps' first role was to get involved with Line 6's first range of stompboxes, including the now classic DL4 Delay Modeller. "The layout was already done," says Tripps, "but, for example, I put in the looper and decided on which delays they should model."

Numerous other products followed including the Spider I, Spider II, the Duoverb and the Tone Core range all benefiting from Tripps' touch. He learnt many lessons too. "The Duoverb was the best thing – a cool amp but there wasn't a customer for it. That's what I learned. So when I did the Spider II, I thought about who it was aimed at. It wasn't for me but that didn't matter."

Post Line 6, Tripps went to Jim Dunlop where he's been for the past couple of years in his primary role as product developer with a hand in numerous Dunlop-made

products: "the Hendrix stuff, the MXR Classic 108 Fuzz, the script logo '74 Vintage Phase 90," and, of course, the new Way Huge pedals, which Tripps is keen to point out aren't reissues of his original designs "The one we wanted to bring back was the Swollen Pickle, it's so different to a Big Muff," says Tripps, "it's more gnarly. The [original] Pickle is cool but I just added more controls."

"The Fat Sandwich started a long time ago: my desire to make a

distortion, a Marshall-y kinda thing," while the Pork Loin – which was originally supposed to be the Pork Pie but a drum company has the name registered – is Tripps' take on an overdrive. "I needed to do an overdrive but what can I do? The Klon [Centaur] and Voodoo Labs' Sparkledrive, I really liked. The Klon is cool but not gain-y enough and the Sparkledrive is too Tubescreamer-y. So we used a Neve BA183 transistor opamp for the clean side of the pedal, but it has a little crunchiness to it, and we have two blend controls."

It's well into the night before Tripps finishes his mods and we go and eat. Later as we bid him farewell, Tripps is still talking tech. "The thing to remember about carbon film resistors is..." We reckon it's in his blood. **G**



The Red Llama was the first pedal that Tripps designed