



DANELECTRO BILLIONAIRE PEDALS

Danelectro has a reputation for quality budget effects, but the new Billionaire range sees the company promising even more bang for your buck. **MICHAEL WATTS** feels flush...

Billionaire by Danelectro'. The name alone raises a wry smile. Despite their budget price point, Danelectro pedals have often punched above their weight class when it comes to sheer musicality. Some of the company's pedals (the long discontinued Back Talk reverse delay being a case in point) have become classics - commanding high prices on the second-hand market. Unlike the usual plastic cheap and cheerful Dano pedals of old, however, the Billionaire range offers true-bypass, die-cast construction, sleek lines and some useful features that may elevate them above the competition.

In a now increasingly standard move, these pedals have no batteries and need juice from a power supply. This helps keep them compact and pedalboard-friendly, but they're not the smallest pedals out there. Each unit has a blindingly bright purple LED to show when it's on, and smooth-turning plastic knobs in hues that match the 'custom automobile colours' on the chassis. They're sophisticated-looking units that certainly don't appear 'budget'.

Unboxing the first of these pedals it is clear that a lot of thought has gone into the presentation. Each pedal comes in a soft bag to protect the surprisingly high quality finish

- not necessarily something you'd expect from a budget brand, but Danelectro has previous when it comes to surprises.

Filthy Rich Tremolo

First up is the Filthy Rich Tremolo, which comes with a hard and soft switch to provide you with a wide variety of sounds - from subtle country shimmers and dock-side rumblings through to Mancunian indie lord and 'attack helicopter'. Good stuff. Tremolo can be an extremely musical effect, but many pedals suffer from a perceived drop in volume when engaged. If you feel that your evocative tremolo sound



is getting lost in the band mix, then Danelectro has got you covered with a trim pot inside the pedal to give the volume a cheeky bump.

The instruction manual makes the good point that many vintage amps have the tremolo stage after the

relatively rare to encounter such a versatile unit at this price point. What really sets the Filthy Rich Tremolo apart is the quality of sound in both soft and hard settings – it's very musical and very easy (and a lot of fun) to use.

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reverb, and applying this approach to your signal chain does make a difference, adding definition and detail to the sound – give it a try and see what we mean.

Guitarists are now spoiled for choice when it comes to tremolo pedal options, even at this more bank-friendly end of things. It is however,

Pride Of Texas

With a name like Pride Of Texas there can be little ambiguity about what Danelectro is aiming for with this pedal. If anything you almost have to admire the restraint to not paint it *that shade of Green*.

Without further ado, it's time to plug in a Strat and start scuttlebuttin'

– and it is immediately apparent that Danelectro has come up with something pretty special. Pleasingly mid-heavy and grunty, the Pride of Texas adds real bite and focus to the sound, tightening up the bottom end and making for a very articulate and inspiring experience. We find ourselves wondering if we haven't plugged in something a lot more expensive by mistake.

While it's obviously being pitched at the SRV blueshound demographic, this is more than just another TS808 or TS-9 attempt. It's very responsive and warm for the price and it absolutely excels when played fingerstyle with a slide – very impressive.

Outside of the blues realm, the Pride of Texas proves itself to be a very capable pedal in just about any context where you would benefit

KEY FEATURES

Danelectro Billionaire Filthy Rich Tremolo

- **DESCRIPTION** Tremolo pedal. Made in China
- **CONTROLS** Speed, 2x depth knobs, hard/soft mini switch, bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass, 9V mains supply only (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 135 x 58 x 76mm
- **CONTACT** John Hornby Skewes 0113 286 5381 danelectro.com

Danelectro Billionaire BB-1 Billion Dollar Boost

- **DESCRIPTION** Boost pedal. Made in China
- **CONTROLS** Volume, treble, bass knobs, flat/low-cut mini switch and bypass foot switch
- **FEATURES** True bypass, 9V mains supply only (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 135 x 58 x 76mm



KEY FEATURES (continued)

**Danelectro Billionaire
Pride of Texas**

- **DESCRIPTION** Overdrive pedal. Made in China
- **CONTROLS** Volume, gain, treble, bass knobs, bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass, 9V mains supply only (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 135 x 58 x 76mm

**Danelectro Billionaire
Big Spender
Spinning Speaker**

- **DESCRIPTION** Rotary speaker emulator. Made in China
- **CONTROLS** Volume, treble and speed, ramp and bypass footswitches
- **FEATURES** True bypass, 9V mains supply only (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 135 x 58 x 76mm

from a quality mid-gain drive. Apparently Billionaires also get privileged access to independent bass and treble controls. Handy!

Big Spender

It is wise to approach budget rotary speaker simulators with a degree of caution. They often sound like slightly watery and insipid phaser/chorus/vibrato mash-ups rather than tectonic plate-shifting psychedelic powerhouses. In short, it's a difficult effect to get right.

Danelectro has come pretty close here, having avoided the worst of these pitfalls by giving us separate volume and treble knobs, which can drive your amp with extremely pleasing amounts of gain, and tailor the amount of sheen and shimmer involved, too. As you might hope, there's also a ramp button to simulate the slowing down and speeding up of a real Leslie, and a speed knob, too. There's not much room here for the dual footswitch set-up, but given the current trend for miniature boutique units jigsawed onto tiny boards, this isn't the most cramped layout we've seen.

Sonically you'll get some pretty convincing funk organ chord stabs - it won't turn you into Jimmy Smith but you'll have a lot of fun anyway. It's greasy, with shimmer on the top end and when you add some grit with the volume it gets all kinds of sleazy. Or you could just play *Bridge Of Sighs* until the neighbours complain...

Billion Dollar Boost

Last, but by no means least, here comes the Billion Dollar Boost. Promising not only a full spectrum jump in volume but also extra detail and dynamics, Danelectro describes this sound as 'The secret weapon of Irish and British alt-rockers'. We wonder what ever could they mean? Our money is on this being a take on some early FET preamp that was found lurking in a corner of one of The Edge's mega-boards.

Most of us require two things from a boost pedal, the first being an increase in volume, detail and responsiveness, the second the ability to massage this boosted tone with some EQ. Danelectro comes good here with plenty of available gain, and bass and treble controls.

There's also a flat/low cut switch, giving you the option of subtly altering your sound by shelving the lower frequencies. We find this to be very effective in band rehearsals.

Danelectro's tongue-in-cheek marketing aside, this new range of pedals offers some genuinely useful features and good sounds for not a lot of cash. They may not be the most finessed tones out there but at this price point the quality is impressive - particularly in the case of the Pride Of Texas.

Guitar VERDICT

Danelectro Billionaire Pedals

- + Excellent sounds for not a lot of cash
- + Stylish, high-quality enclosures
- + True bypass switching

- Form-factor makes things rather cramped on the Big Spender
- The angled footswitches can be hard to activate when behind other pedals on your board

The Billionaire range elevates Dano's pedals from budget curios to proper gigging options - with road-hardy build quality, quirky good looks and high-quality sounds

9/10