

Xotic Effects

EP-Booster

Based on the preamp stage of an EP-3 Echoplex—which has been used by Jimmy Page, Eddie Van Halen, Eric Johnson and others as a guitar-signal booster/conditioner—the EP-Booster (\$145 retail/street price N/A) is a super-compact unit (3.5" x 1.5" x 1.5") that features a discreet FET preamp with a low-output impedance that makes it well suited for driving long lengths of cable (as well as other effects) without loss of highs or signal. The unit has a quality feel and it looks cool too with its clear plastic Gain knob, blue LED on a black face plate, and buffed zinc housing. A 2.1mm adapter jack is installed for those who don't want the trouble of removing the bottom plate to change a battery. Bass Boost and Bright switches also reside inside, and Xotic recommends using the "off" positions on both for an authentic EP-3 response.

Though butt simple, the EP-Booster could easily become an essential element on your pedalboard. Even when using moderate boost with the Gain knob less than halfway up, the EP made everything sound fatter, juicier, and well, more *vibey*. Cranking the EP-Booster's Gain knob to maximum pushed all of our clean amps into thick distortion that could be easily controlled via the guitars' volume knobs. In this mode, the boost sounded perfectly balanced with no tendencies to get shrieky or splattery—even when the EP's Bright switch was on (which actually is a flat setting). The Bass Boost switch is also useful for making single-coil guitars sound a littler thicker and tougher. No quibbles; the EP-Booster is an highly useful sonic tool and it earns an Editors' Pick Award. —Art Thompson

KUDOS Makes everything sound fatter and cooler. Minimal footprint lets it fit just about anywhere.

CONCERNS None.

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