



Flynn Amps Rory Gallagher Hawk Booster £185

The rebirth of a little-known effect that was rated by Rory *by Adrian Clark*

Rory Gallagher's passion for music and multi-faceted guitar technique earned him the respect of the biggest guitar names. When once asked how it felt to be the greatest guitarist in the world, Jimi Hendrix replied: "I don't know, go ask Rory Gallagher."

Gallagher's lead tones were mostly the result of his trusty battered Strat and a range of amps, but he added extra gain and bite with a treble booster. Although he used the Dallas Rangemaster with Taste, he later settled on the Hawk II Tonal Expander. With its quirky twin sliders, the Hawk was designed by amp wizard Harry Kolbe. You'll be lucky to find one of the originals now, but Glasgow-based Flynn Amps has worked with Rory's brother Donal, his son Daniel and his roadie Tom O'Driscoll to recreate the Hawk's sound.

Dispensing with the sliders and large switches for a more typical guitar stompbox look, Stevie Flynn has housed the new Hawk in a large, rugged enclosure with a standard footswitch (lacking on the original). There are four controls for bass, middle, treble

and volume, plus a treble boost switch. Battery access is ingenious – the pedal chassis pivots away from the baseplate and sides. Like the original, this Hawk requires 18 volts to achieve its huge boost potential, so you'll need to use two nine-volt batteries unless you can find a suitable DC adaptor.

Sounds

It's immediately apparent just how much the Hawk can boost your signal. We started with a Strat plugged into a clean valve amp, and set the pedal's three EQ controls at 50 per cent and the volume at zero. Even with those settings, the pedal gives the amp an extra kick, but the tone is very transparent. The three EQ controls give a generous range of adjustment – the mid-range doesn't seem to be voiced for a scooped metal sound, but you can still use that technique to add crispness to various rhythm tones.

Pushing up the volume control reveals the full range of available boost: a lot! At 50 per cent, the Hawk is working like a vintage overdrive, able to take a clean valve amp into fat blues lead territory. At 100 per cent,

your amp is receiving a considerable gain boost, along with a wonderfully smooth natural compression, which at the same time isn't squishy and indistinct like a fuzz pedal. It's worth pointing out that the original Hawk was considered a 'set it and leave it' effect and the same would probably be advisable with high-gain settings on the Flynn version. The step up in level is so enormous, it wouldn't really be practical to kick it on and off throughout a song.

The real fun starts when you click the LPF switch to add the treble boost circuit. On single-coil pickups, the extra treble is quite aggressive, so we tamed that slightly with the pedal's treble control. This wasn't so necessary on vintage-voiced humbuckers, as the pedal just added a well-tuned mid-range focus to the overdrive. With a high volume setting as well, the treble boost is capable of some stunning lead sounds.

Verdict

Signature pedals can be a mixed bag, often lacking the versatility to go beyond the artist's characteristic sound. With its pre-Gallagher ancestry, there's no such problem with the Hawk. Its tonal versatility is huge and it works well with a range of guitar and amp types, so for many users the Rory Gallagher connection would be irrelevant. It's simply one of the best overdrive/boosters we've ever reviewed.

As the clips on the Flynn website demonstrate, the Hawk is perfectly capable of recreating some of Rory's classic tones, but this isn't your average signature pedal: think of it more as a mercifully rediscovered design, that was used by one of the true greats of the electric guitar. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Transparent tone; loads of boost; versatility

We dislike: Footswitchable treble boost would be fun

Guitarist says: Here's a signature pedal with real tonal variety. One of the best OD/boosters we've tried

The Rivals

Two of the best boosters are the **Fulltone Fat Boost** (£179) and the **Xotic RC booster**, which has EQ controls. Both produce a very transparent boost. If you want the aggressive mid-range of a treble booster, try the **D*A*M Red Rooster** or the **Roger Mayer Concorde+** (both £135). Then there's the **Thunder Tomate Fat Treble Booster** (£135), designed with Phil Hilborne's help, which has a Cut control to fatten the sound, along with a row of internal DIP switches for extra tonal variety.



Flynn Amps Rory Gallagher Hawk Booster

PRICE: £185

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: Boost/overdrive pedal

FEATURES: Three-band EQ, optional treble boost

CONTROLS: Bass, middle, treble, volume

CONNECTIONS: Input, output

MIDI: No

POWER: 18V DC adaptor (not supplied) or two 9V batteries (supplied)

OPTIONS: None

Flynn Amps

0141 334 6494

www.flynnamps.co.uk



Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



The original model's sliders have been replaced with rotary knobs

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOBY SESSIONS