unit that is capable of providing all the distortion you require with no help at all from your amplifier. An overdrive box, while capable of a modest amount of distortion, is used mainly to help your amplifier create its own distortion. For example a Pro-Co Rat is a distortion box and an Ibanez Tube Screamer is an overdrive unit. The Centaur is not a massive hard clip distortion unit, but rather an overdrive that will help your tube type amplifier create its own distortion. With the gain way up, the Centaur will create some MODEST amounts of distortion on its own which is very useful for harmonic enhancement. The guys at Klon state that it has enough distortion to be used as a distortion box on its own. In fact I was told it has "considerable distortion with the gain turned up." I don't agree. What it can do is hit your first gain stage hard enough to clip it. Since in most amps a volume control follows the first gain stage, you can clip that stage and your volume control acts as a *"master volume"*. Used in this manor the Centaur has a good amount of distortion, but it's part Centaur and partly the amplifier, and not stand alone distortion from the Centaur. The Hot Cake Overdrive I've talked about in the past has noticeably more stand alone distortion than the Centaur. Even with the amount of distortion in a Hot Cake, I put two Cakes in series when I want serious amounts of stand alone distortion.

That item out of the way, this is what a Centaur will do. First it has a tone neutral, clean boost setting. That is, it can boost your guitar's signal cleanly with no change in its tonal balance. If you like the tone of your guitar and amp just the way they are, but wish for more of the same, pumped up and more muscular, then the Centaur rates an "A" plus grade.

Klon says that some Jazz players are even using their box on the clean boost settings to beef up their signal. I could see that with one caveat. The Centaur is not quiet. It makes more noise than a Hot Cake, Tube Screamer, and even my NKT-275 (the original ones!) Fuzz Face. People who use boxes with noise reduction circuits may find it kind of a throwback to older days in that regard, but the folks at Klon wanted performance first, and that's what this overdrive is all about. I don't find the noise level objectable. The folks at Klon rate the noise as minor. I'd rate it moderate by today's standards.

For my testing I used a variety of guitars and amps. The Centaur worked well with Strats, Teles, Les Pauls — both the Jr. and adult versions. For amps I used Fender, Vox, Marshall, my Kendrick 2112, and my trusty Peavey. The Centaur didn't find a combination it didn't like except for a 900 series Marshall. The Centaur doesn't do the 90's metal sound, but that's another guitar magazine's main thing, *VG* readers will most likely not care. The Centaur can't beat a Boss or Marshall box in that arena.

The Centaur, used as an all-out overdrive, is big, fat, and warm. This thing has tons of bottom and a Strat on the neck pickup retains its full throaty sound. The distortion it provides is part of the note rather than a distorted buzz added over it. The Centaur seems to become part of your amplifier's tube circuits and doesn't feel or sound like you are using an outboard device. The treble control reaches down to the mids and extends up to the higher frequencies as it moves through its range. This gives many useful tones as opposed to just being a simple tone control. The Centaur is refined, but packs a real wallop when called on to do so. It's a blues/fusion machine, but can really rock out too.

I know, you're going to ask me how it compares to a Hot Cake. They're different. The Centaur is smoother, more refined. While the Cake has more "trash" in its sound. The Cake, and I'm talking my favorite (I have three originals, and one of the later versions — my favorite being an original) — has a bit more note separation in chords, and a more aggressive nasty rock sound, but does have some trashiness in it that gives it a raw quality I also like. I really like them both. The Centaur does the Texas tones better than anything. At $239 including shipping the Centaur isn't cheap, but on the other hand, the Centaur sounds better than the less expensive overdrives I've tried. Klon is a small limited production company and once the word is out on this box, production will not be able to keep up with demand. Klon offers a 48 hour money back trial period; if you don't like the Centaur after using it for two days you may return it for a refund. If you're looking for a natural sounding overdrive unit, you've got to try this one.

Klon
P.O. Box 1025
Brookline, MA 02146 USA

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I've recently been informed by the folks at Klon that their stock of Centaur Boxes has been sold out and won't be available again until late July. -K.F. VG

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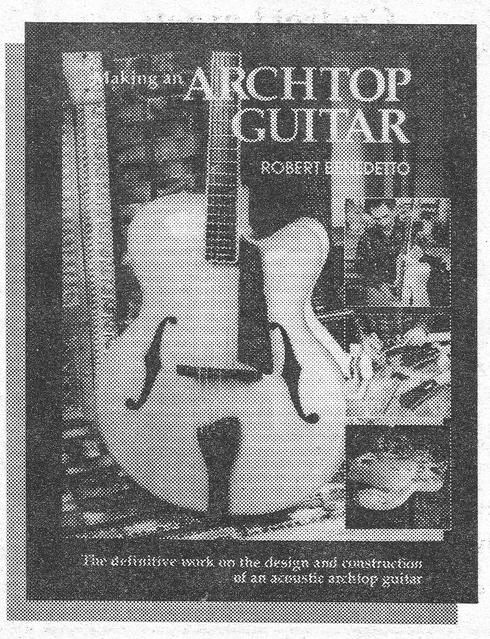

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