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1 EARTHQUAKER PALISADES £229

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Overdrive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Boost, volume, tone, Gain A & B, voice, bandwidth, normal/bright switch, input buffer switch, boost footswitch, gain B footswitch, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 144 (w) x 122 (d) x 56mm (h)

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Just about every boutique pedal maker turns out some sort of Tube Screamer clone, but EarthQuaker has taken a radical approach to the task. While the company may have based its Palisades on the classic TS808, it's built into it a larger array of options than we've so far seen in any overdrive pedal. There's a choice of six clipping voices and five different bandwidth settings (via a pair of rotary switches): 30 variations on the character of the effect before you even start to tweak!

Pedals that change the clipping diodes for different distortion voices are not uncommon, but some do the job with set-and-forget internal DIP switches. Not so the Palisades, with instantly accessible options of no diodes, LED clipping, MOSFET clipping, asymmetrical Silicon clipping, symmetrical Silicon

clipping and Schottky Diode clipping, each offering a change in the nature of the distortion. Further changes are made with bandwidth settings, which go from thin-sounding with the least amount of gain to the fattest setting with the heaviest gain. You also get a tone knob and a normal/bright switch. The result is a pedal that lets you dial in a massive range of overdrive tones – not just good impersonations of TS pedals, but much gainier drives verging on distortion and fuzz, as well as transparent boost/overdrive. If you like boost and dirt pedals, you'll find something to suit you here, and the Palisades shines in its switching capability.

While there's a knob for the overall output volume, the

Palisades is actually a two-channel pedal with separate gain knobs for channel A and the higher-gain channel B; you can set one up to be dirtier than the other and switch between them with the Gain B footswitch. More variation is provided by a third footswitch, which brings in a boost set by the boost knob: instant access to four different gain levels.

Tube Screamers (and their associated clones) can be a bit of a one-trick pony – something that the Palisades is most definitely not. What this pedal is all about is options: options in dialling exactly the overdrive sound you want, and then options in using that sound live with different degrees of footswitchable gain. Cool. [TC]

VERDICT *Overdrive sounds to suit many tastes, delivered in a pedal with real practicality for live work*

9/10

2 EARTHQUAKER RAINBOW MACHINE £199

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Pitch shifter pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Secondary, pitch, primary, magic, tone, tracking, magic footswitch, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, expression pedal input

POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied) 60mA current draw

DIMENSIONS: 93 (w) x 121 (d) x 54mm (h)

Described as a 'polyphonic harmonizing modulation machine', the Rainbow Machine uses digital oscillators to deliver polyphonic harmonies from a 4th down to a 3rd up – plus all the pitches in between if an atonal vibe grabs you. All this is delivered via a Pitch knob that you have to tune by ear: unison is at the 12 o'clock position, but there are no notches on the knob. You can also add in an upper octave to the harmony, the volumes of the harmony and octave relative to the dry sound (and to each other) are set with Primary and Secondary knobs. The Tone knob can soften the high end, while a Tracking knob determines the time lag between the harmony/octave and the dry signal. Further adjustment comes via the Magic function, basically a regeneration control, which

gets its own footswitch and is designed to add weirdness.

Without even getting into any actual pitch shifting, the pedal does some cool things with the Pitch control set to unity. Bringing up the level of the primary harmony gives you a direct copy of the original signal for a nice doubling effect, and you can then use the Tracking knob to put distance between the two for instant delay up to a cool slapback effect. If you add the secondary harmony in you get more delays, so there's a signal like a multi-head tape echo. A slight movement of the Pitch knob reveals some lovely detuning and chorus-like effects. Of course, you can move the Pitch knob further to tune into standard

pitched harmonies, such as the musical 3rd up, and tracking is excellent all over the neck. If you don't want to grab the Pitch knob to dial in your pitches, there's provision to connect an expression pedal, which, of course, opens up the possibility of sweeping the pitch, although not like a Whammy, because the original pitch stays intact while the harmonies move alongside it. Freaky, but some will like it.

Even more intriguing though is the Magic function, which adds a ramping up or down to your selected pitch creating 'spaceship taking off' sounds among other things. There's truly a rainbow variety of sounds here – some extremely musical, others extremely odd, but always interesting. [TC]

VERDICT *A colourful spectrum of sounds: a pedal for both prominent effects or just something a little off-kilter behind your standard sound*

8/10