

EARTHQUAKER DEVICES

Plumes

A refreshing take on a Tube Screamer-style overdrive

Words Rod Brakes **Photography** Phil Barker

VIDEO DEMO ▶ <http://bit.ly/guitaristextra>

Released more than 40 years ago, the original Maxon OD808/Ibanez TS808 Tube Screamer circuit is still considered a benchmark among overdrives. Tube Screamers and Tube Screamer-style pedals have endured as a pedalboard staple, with many builders compelled to put their own spin on the design. It can be tricky to navigate the marketing hyperbole, but in the overpopulated world of overdrive, EarthQuaker Devices' Plumes stands out as a straightforward and genuinely worthy addition.

Right now, EarthQuaker's 808 kudos couldn't be much stronger following Maxon's official seal of approval. Soon after the Akron, Ohio firm released the Plumes 'Small Signal Shredder', a collaboration with Maxon was announced in the form of a limited run of 400 'Signal Shredder' modified OD808-40E Overdrives to commemorate the original pedal's 40th anniversary.

Clearly, the Plumes is a variation on a theme – and EarthQuaker makes no bones about the pedal's obvious comparisons – but with three clipping

modes (symmetrical, asymmetrical and no clipping) along with an enhanced tone control and plenty of volume and gain, the ability to push into further overdrive territory is enhanced.

With the Plumes in mode 1, symmetrical clipping is produced using a pair of LEDs giving a crunchier, more compressed tone. In mode 3, asymmetrical silicon diode clipping provides a more 'transparent' sound; the processed signal sounds more natural and less coloured. Mode 2 bypasses both types of diode clipping and is essentially a JFET op-amp clean boost, great for coaxing out natural overdrive from the front end of the amp. Using the Plumes alone or gain-stacked with other drive pedals, the above options deliver an extensive palette of sounds to choose from.

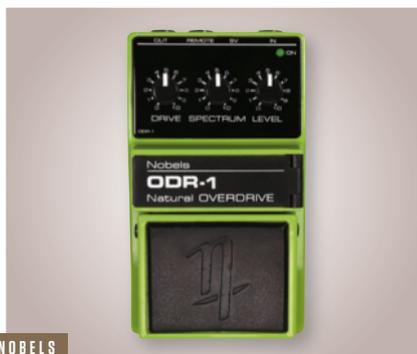
VERDICT

Boasting a broad range of low-medium gain overdrive tones, outstanding signal quality and a sturdy build, EarthQuaker Devices' Plumes punches well above its weight in terms of price and is a genuinely useful tool for a wide variety of applications from stage to studio. **G**



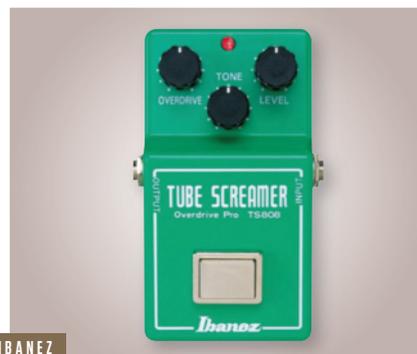
PROS Broad range of sounds; lots of headroom; excellent signal clarity and detail
CONS No battery-power option

ALSO TRY...



NOBELS **ODR-1 Natural Overdrive** £79.99

An underdog of sorts, the Nobels ODR-1 has been hailed a firm favourite by the likes of Graham Coxon, Lee Anderson and Walrus Audio president Colt Westbrook, and is prized for its amp-like overdrive sounds, ranging from gentle breakup to gritty crunch.



IBANEZ **TS808 Tube Screamer reissue** £162

Resplendent with the much-lauded JRC4558D op-amp, Ibanez's official TS808 Tube Screamer reissue features the same analogue circuit as the endlessly imitated and highly collectible original pedal – which now fetches several hundred pounds on the vintage market!



JHS PEDALS **Bonsai** £219

A super-versatile Tube Screamer-style pedal, the Bonsai from JHS Pedals features nine modes, each providing a unique variation of overdrive, including Boss OD-1, TS808, TS9, MSL, TS10, Exar OD-1, TS-7 (+ mode), Keeley Mod Plus and JHS Strong Mod.



Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Low-medium gain overdrive

FEATURES: 3 clipping modes; Flexi-Switching (momentary/latching switch)

CONTROLS: Level, gain and tone; 3-way clipping mode switch (symmetrical/asymmetrical/no diode clipping)

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied); 25mA current draw

DIMENSIONS: 121 (w) x 63 (d) x 57mm (h)

Guitarist CHOICE

9/10