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FEATURES

Majik Box Paul Gilbert Fuzz Universe Pedal Review

Oscar Jordan

The new pedal channels the tones used on Paul Gilbert's 2010 album.

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Majik Box has made a lot of noise lately with their growing line of effects pedals and sweet sounding Sonic Source pickups and stompboxes. They've already won over high-profile customers like Mars Volta's Omar Rodriguez-Lopez, Larry Mitchell, and Doug Aldrich, and the Torrance, California company now also counts Paul Gilbert among its clients.

<u>Download Example 1</u>

Clip recorded through a Peavey JSX on crunch channel, EHX Holy Grail Reverb, Performance Guitars custom strat-style, Sennheiser mic, through Garage Band.

The Majik Box Paul Gilbert Fuzz Universe pedal was developed for Gilbert by combining the Majik Box Body Blow, which set to Paul's favorite settings—Modern voicing and bassier low-cut, plus a custom tone control sweep—and the Majik Box Venom Boost. These two pedals were used extensively on Paul's Fuzz Universe album. And the two circuits combined and modified become a multi-faceted monster of many voices.

What's The Deal?

First off, the Fuzz Universe not really a fuzz pedal. Paul just calls it that because he's wacky. But with a built-in boost channel it's a little more complex than your average overdrive, and the additional functionality makes the very smart, and easy-to-navigate control layout noteworthy. It's a very logical control set. On the lower right you'll find the On/Off switch for Thrust 1, or the overdrive channel. On the upper left side of the unit is a chicken-head knob called Thrust 2 that controls the volume for the clean boost. The three round knobs arrayed in an echelon formation control the overdrive parameters—Drive controls the level of gain, Tone controls the EQ, and Thrust 1 controls the volume. Inputs and Outputs reside on the left and right sides. Powering up the Fuzz Universe requires a Negative Tip Adapter, and removal of the 9-volt battery is recommended if you're using an AC adapter.

Dirty Things

The Majik Box Paul Gilbert Fuzz Universe pedal was really designed to work with a dirty amp. Gilbert himself plugs the Fuzz Universe into a dirty Marshall Vintage Modern and a THD Hot Plate. If you plug this pedal into a clean amp, you'll likely get something other than what maestro Pablo Gilberto had in mind. For this review I used a Peavey JSX. I also took the pedal to a few gigs and played through an obviously pretty clean Fender '66 Pro Reverb and used a couple of different single-coil and humbucker custom Strats as well as a stock late '70s Yamaha SG 2000.

In line with my JSX the Fuzz Universe exudes all the tight and beefy smoothness that you hear in Paul's lead tones. My dirty signal sounded bigger with more focused contour—offering the kind of singing articulation you need for clear single note shredding and fat power chords. By itself the Overdrive section is milder and less angry than most overdrive pedals, which, needless to say, is a good thing with a dirty signal. This means you can set your amp for a dirty rocking rhythm tone, or dial in your favorite distortion or overdrive pedal, then use the Fuzz Universe to provide extra meat for solos.

Using the Fender Pro Reverb I essentially experienced a milder version of the Overdrive—a nice effect, but probably not the Fuzz Universe's strongest suit. Even with the Drive knob maxed, I was unable to achieve the nastier tones I got out by driving a higher gain amp—logical enough, but demonstrative of the fact that this pedal has a distinct ceiling if you choose to use it with a cleaner amp.

The considerable difference highlighted that the Fuzz Universe is better suited for distorted rock than mid-rangy Stevie Ray Vaughan hijinx. Even so, you can access a lot of tonal variation, ranging to fairly clean tones through use of the volume control. And it's also a sensitive pedal that will enables you to work with ultra smooth sounding gain, long term sustain, and Santana-like overtones.

In a general sense, the boost channel is really loud but very adjustable. It kicks hard when you want it to. Some players might find the boost voiced too loud. But the Thrust 2 can effectively rein the boost in to produce the kind of gritty boost that can really elevate a solo—potentially to the ire of live engineers and bandmates.

The Verdict

If you're looking for more traditional and gritty overdrive tones that work with a high-headroom Fender-style amp, you might be suited to look elsewhere. But if you love Paul Gilbert's distorted tones, or need a boost and overdrive that can help you tap into more sustain, this pedal will work wonders with your dirtier amp, and lend your dirty tones a lot more range.

Buy if...

you love Paul Gilbert's last album and love creamy sustain.

you live for a little grit on top of your Twin's tone. Rating...

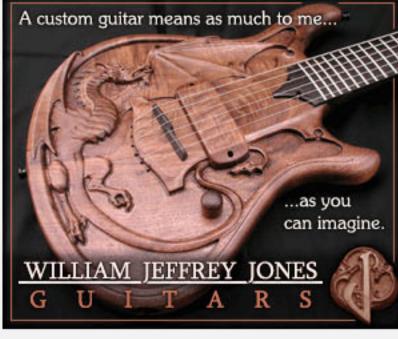
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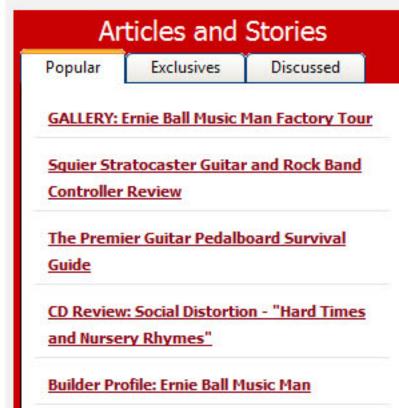
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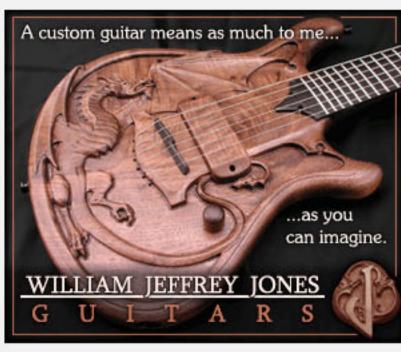
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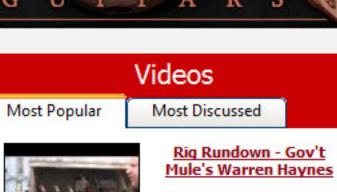


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