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ROGER MAYER CONCORDE +

THE HUMBLE TREBLE BOOSTER IS AN ALMOST-FORGOTTEN MEMBER OF THE DISTORTION FAMILY. HOW DOES IT STACK UP TO ITS MORE WELL-KNOWN BROTHERS? BY **PETER HODGSON**

When you think of ways of generating gain you probably think of a cranked amp as well as pedals for fuzz, overdrive and distortion. Maybe you've experimented with using a clean boost to punish a valve amp's input section to get more juice than the amp is built for. Well back in the day, one of the options available to guitarists was the treble booster. Not quite a fuzz, not quite an EQ, treble boosters were typically based on very simple circuits and they promoted the idea of boosting the strength of the signal to the amp while tailoring its tone curve to attain maximum tonal goodness.

THAT'S A PLUS

The Concorde + looks a lot like the other pedals in Roger Mayer's Vision Series. It has controls for Drive, Tone and Output, a sturdy and stompy footswitch, twin buffered outs and a hardwired bypass out, an input, a handy slidable battery cover, and a tough-as-nails casing. Internally it combines a low noise class A silicon drive circuit with passive tone shaping to drive a fully optimised germanium treble booster, allowing you to add drive and distortion with EQ before the actual treble booster section. Mayer notes that you can also set the silicon drive section to drive the treble booster section much harder than any guitar pickup could ever do without any added distortion but with the added feature of having EQ prior to the treble booster, giving you the qualities of soft germanium type distortion overload characteristics or more radical germanium distortion sounds. So let's try it out!

FLIGHT OF THE CONCORDE

My first thought of treble boosters is the monster tone of Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid.' Part of the trick to getting this iconic Tony Iommi riff to sound right is to play it up at the 12th fret while using the neck pickup. This is pretty much the antithesis of modern metal rhythm guitar technique but if it worked for the master of metal it can work for you, right? So I slung my Ibanez Talman with Ibanez Super 58 pickups (great PAF-alikes), flipped to the neck pickup and unleashed my inner Iommi. With this kind of fast muted rhythm riff I found a magical setting (about 3 o'clock on the Drive control and 2 o'clock on the Tone) where there was just enough dirt and grizzle around the notes but still enough punch and definition on the

low end to keep the impact. Ratchet up the Drive too much and you get a fuzzy buzz between the notes which works great for sludgier riffage, but gets you further away from that Iommi tone.

There are also some great Jimmy Page tones lurking within the Concorde +. The pedal came out of the box with every control set to midway, and this was perfect for 'Whole Lotta Love' and 'Communication Breakdown' - that barky, aggressive tone which begs for you to alternate muted chugs and brash chord stabs. Wind back the Drive control for a bright, punchy clean tone suited for heavy gauge strings and single coil country licks.

The Tone control on the Concorde + seems to interact very sensitively with the Drive control, and its effect on the sound depends greatly on the pickups you're feeding it with. So after getting used to the sound of the pedal with my Talman I switched to my modded Ibanez RG550 with a Seymour Duncan Parallel Axis Trembucker in the bridge position and a DiMarzio PAF Pro at the neck. I found I needed to reign in the pedal's Tone control a little when used with this guitar to reduce a bit of low-end woof. Pushing the Drive all the way up summoned a singing, reedy lead voice with a huge amount of sustain (especially for a guitar which has a naturally brief sustain profile like the RG550). It's here that various Brian May comparisons spring up: although his pickups are very different to those of my noodly shred axe, the pedal was able to evoke similar roundness and sustain.

FEATURES

CONTROLS	Drive, Fatness, Output
OUTPUTS	1X Hard wire, 2X buffered
POWER	9v battery (50 hours battery life) or 9v AC adapter (not supplied)
SIZE	Width 170 x Depth 112 x Height 57mm
WEIGHT	640g with battery

The Concorde + is equally happy whether it's driving a clean amp or one on the edge of breakup, but it's also a lot of fun when used to alter the character of a distorted amp. I switched my Marshall to its lead channel, turned its gain all the way up and used the Concorde + Tone control to thin out the low end and add a little upper-harmonic texture. The PAF Pro particularly benefited from the reduced muffle, exaggerating its already bold pick attack. Maxing out both the Drive and Output controls pushed them amp into glorious distorto-rama. Remember that volcanic, overdistorted tone Paul Gilbert had on Mr Big's 'Colorado Bulldog'? Well imagine that same level of overdriven, almost-out-of-control mayhem but with clarity and definition - that's where the Concorde + can get you when paired with a distorted pre-amp.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Concorde + is for the retro player who wants to get closer to those classic Page, Iommi and May tones; for the experimental player who is seeking new levels of tone control; or for any guitarist who is looking for a different character to their overdrive and distortion, one not heard too often these days. While some pedals tend to make every guitar or pickup selection sound the same, the Concorde + emphasises their differences while still imparting its own unique flavour. **BB**



▶ WHAT WE RECKON

PROS

- ▲ Long-lost classic tones
- ▲ Plays nice with different guitars
- ▲ Very responsive controls

CONS

- ♥ Pricey
- ♥ As wide as two pedals

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