

EBS MultiDrive

Originally published in: Fuzz no 6, 2001

Author: Lars Arvidsson

Translated by: Micke Linderoth

For distorted bassists (and guitarists) The Multi-drive has the family name "Universal Overdrive Pedal." The given name certainly hints that EBS' latest effects pedal is geared towards both guitar AND bass players. .

CONSTRUCTION

The design and looks are similar to EBS' earlier effects pedals. The pedal has a metal housing with two knobs and a small three-way Mode-switch. The controls are Drive and Volume and the Mode-switch situated between the knobs have three settings, Tubesimulation, Standard and Flat. On the side panel there is a small button where you can choose the input sensitivity for active or passive instruments.

The Multidrive can either be powered by a 9V battery, a mains adapter or with EBS' Phantom powering-system if used with an EBS amplifier. To use this feature a stereo cord must be used. When you want to change the battery, the pedal's bottom plate must be removed.

EBS has developed a tube emulation circuit that is intended to have the same overtone characteristics as real vacuum tubes. For those technically inclined, it might interest you that the electronics is designed like a class A-circuit.

IN USE

With the gain-knob set to 10.00 the distortion, effect is just right for that characteristic growling sound of a hard-driven tube amplifier. With both knobs set to 12.00, the sound becomes very dirty but there is still plenty of more distortion to be had.



The treble is slightly cut but without making a disappearing act [making it too muddled].

All three of the Mode-switch's positions are wide-ranging. The Standard position is clean and transparent with plenty of the strings sound left.

The Tubesimulation setting adds more compression, a slightly cut treble, and a little less attack. When set to the Flat position and a lot of is gain added the character becomes more "chopped" and very tight. More like a normal distortion pedal's sound. When used a bass the unit sounds best with a small amount of distortion to my ears. If you dial in more distortion, the core of the sound might be lost, which will make it hard to be heard when playing with a band.

Don't let this stop you though; you can always play a riff with a hardcore meltdown sound. You can get most sounds from this pedal.

The question is whether the Multidrive is not even better for a guitar.

When I set the Mode-switch to a Tube setting and add a subtle amount of gain, out comes a fat, chunky tube sound that gives you an impression that a very small amount of reverb has been added. The sound character is definitely British. With the bridge position humbucker, the sound is not far from AC/DC's Young Brothers sound, i.e. a compressed sound with low gain but with plenty of guts, grit and low end. With everything set to max the sound is tight and heavy, plenty of distortion for everyone in my opinion.

Bass sounds can be spiced with a small amount of distortion; one good example is when it is played with slap-bass technique, a combination that sounds excellent. Another great sound is the gritty yet organic sound when you play with a pick. With the Tubesimulation setting the treble cut sounded perfect with my somewhat trebly Music Man bass.

The treble cut might only be a disadvantage if used with clean sounds when you want a lot of transparency but in those cases, the Flat and Standard settings are better.

The active/passive Mode-switch is useful when you want to experiment with the amount of gain. If you use an instrument with a high output together with the active setting this enables you to get outrageous amounts of gain. Of course, the Mode-switch can also be used with a low output instrument to get a cleaner sound with less volume. Not many distortion effects pedals can actually achieve a good slightly distorted sound, and even less retains a good quality low end. It is in this area the Multidrive pedal excels. The whole range of the Drive knob can be used.

It is easy to set up a sound with guts but at same time without the sound becoming too distorted. It is a simple but effective way to add warmth and revive sterile sounds. The Multidrive cannot replace a tube amplifiers dynamics but the sound characteristics are very close. A big advantage is that you can dial in the same distortion at any volume.

THE BOTTOM LINE

One can only congratulate EBS. They have once again succeeded in their aim to build a simple yet user-friendly effects pedal with a big sound.

The Multidrive certainly lives up to its name; this is a pedal that can be used by anyone. Guitar or bass doesn't make a difference, everything sounds tremendous. The three main settings give a wealth of sound options.

I even think that it might sound great on a snare drum sound to...

Price: 1.695:- SEK

Manufacturer: EBS Sweden,
+ 46 [0] 8 - 735 00 10

