

# Review: MXR EVH 5150 Overdrive Pedal

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## ***PLATINUM AWARD***

For as long as I can remember, Eddie Van Halen's unmistakable guitar sound is one of the most copied and revered tones that guitarists love to endlessly deliberate over. And it's a good discussion to have, because some Van Halen aficionados are resolutely passionate for the romanticized "brown" sound of Eddie's vintage Marshall Super Lead amplifier, while others are addicted to the high-gain muscle of his signature EVH 5150 III 100S heads turned up to summon gloriously musical overdrive and singing feedback. Regardless of which side you're on, the good news is Eddie Van Halen and Dunlop have teamed up to introduce the MXR EVH 5150 Overdrive, which delivers both of Eddie's legendary classic and modern tones in a singular pedal.

## FEATURES

Following in the same striped graphic motif as the MXR EVH Phase 90 and EVH Flanger, the stage-ready 5150 Overdrive is painted with black stripes over a brushed matte-black aluminum chassis. The pedal features true-bypass switching and five controls for output, three-band EQ (bass, mid and treble) and gain. It also includes a mini gate control (based on the MXR Smart Gate Noise Gate circuit) that lights up yellow when noise reduction is engaged. There's also a boost switch, which is key for transitioning into harmonically rich hi-gain tones with a dose of compression but without changing the overall volume. A nine-volt battery or AC adapter powers the pedal.

## PERFORMANCE

To say the MXR EVH 5150 Overdrive is a phenomenally dynamic, super-charged overdrive pedal is no exaggeration, because it uncannily nails both early and current EVH amp tones in convincingly enhanced detail. Word on the street is that even the man himself was unable to discern the difference between the pedal and his signature 5150 III head.

The pedal's bold overdrive is definitely on the red-hot side, with searing crunch that teeters on the edge of distortion, even when the gain is set low and without the boost switch activated. I was quickly able to dial in the famed "brown" sound here (think Van Halen's "Unchained"), with a cutting midrange and hot-rodded crunch that warms up as you goose the volume on your guitar. When I needed more roundness and saturated crunch (à la Van Halen's "Tattoo"), turning on the boost switch was the way to go. And if you do decide to leave the boost switch engaged, the gate control works wonders for taming hum.

The 5150 Overdrive sounds remarkable with just about any clean channel amplifier you plug into. Not to say you can't get the same results using it in front of a hi-gain amp or as a boost, but the pedal's superbly defined and concentrated gain sounds more tube-like and feels incredibly responsive with an amp that has a sparkly clean tone. Every so often a pedal comes around that knocks your socks off, and this is one of them.

**STREET PRICE** \$199.99

**MANUFACTURER** Jim Dunlop, [jimdunlop.com](http://jimdunlop.com)

## Cheat Sheet

- The EVH 5150 Overdrive features a boost switch that doesn't increase the volume but kicks in a shot of harmonically rich gain and warm compression.
- The pedal also includes a built-in gate control, based upon MXR's popular Smart Gate circuit, which keeps the unit dead quiet without choking the signal, especially as you ratchet up the gain.

**THE BOTTOM LINE** With tube-like feel and balls-to-the walls overdrive, the MXR EVH 5150 Overdrive is about the closest you'll ever get to Eddie Van Halen's signature amp sound in a stomp box.