

SEYMOUR DUNCAN PALLADIUM GAIN STAGE

REVIEW BY **DAVID A. EVANS**

STREET PRICE **\$299.00**



Seymour Duncan's Palladium Gain Stage overdrive aims to please even the most jaded of tone hounds. The company claims that the Palladium is the first pedal to capture the tone and behavior of an overdriven tube amp. Based on my tests, I'd say that the Palladium succeeds admirably in capturing the sound and feel of a genuine amplifier. It's a pedal with tones that run the gamut from soft blues to Van Halen's famous "brown sound," and it offers a superior level of tone-sculpting control.

The Palladium offers a curious two-knob setup for

control of the distortion. The Gain knob adjusts the level of distortion in the lower frequencies while the Resonance knob adds or removes distortion from higher frequencies. I can't recall a similar arrangement on other pedals that I've reviewed, which leads me to believe that the Palladium's two-knob distortion circuit is uncommon. In fact, during testing, I was surprised to discover that the Resonance knob had any connection to the distortion circuit. First time users who tend to overlook instruction manuals could easily miss this fact, which shows that it's always important to

review the instructions. Speaking of overdrive, the Palladium provides more than enough, but it also responds just as a genuine amplifier would. As I mentioned earlier, the Palladium provides more than enough distortion and sustain for those all-important finger-tapped solos. Rolling back my guitar's volume to its lowest settings cleaned up the signal but still maintained a bit of edge. In this respect, the Palladium felt very much like a tube amplifier.

Additional overall level control comes in the form of the Boost switch. Depending upon the

setting of the Boost knob, the Boost circuit provides up to 25db of signal enhancement. It's worth pointing out that the Palladium's Boost circuit takes "inspiration" from Seymour Duncan's 805 Overdrive. Seymour Duncan hasn't clarified to what extent the Palladium's boost was inspired by the 805 Overdrive—my guess is *very* and *directly*—but whatever its origins, the thing sounds good to my ears. The Boost circuit adds enough extra crunch to take the Palladium's already-powerful distortion to another level. Because I wasn't playing with a band while testing the unit, I didn't find much need for the Boost. In another situation, however, I'd appreciate the extra edge it could give me.

The Palladium also offers a greater range of equalization than does the tone-sculpting-friendly 805 Overdrive, whose trio of EQ knobs expanded the pedal's tonal palette. In addition to the Palladium's distortion knob duo, the pedal features a quintet

of equalization knobs. Perhaps the most useful of these are the Mid Level and Frequency knobs which connect to a semi-parametric equalization circuit. Dialing in or drawing down a problem frequency is no problem. The Mid Level knob can sweep from 255 Hz to 1.1 kHz, and the Mid Level knob will increase or decrease the chosen frequency by 12 db. Lower still, the Bass knob adds or cuts 15 db in the 100 Hz region, while up around 2.7 kHz, the Treble knob can add or cut 13 db. Finally, the Presence knob gives the user a chance to boost or cut 13 db from the 5.2 kHz area. What all of this means is that the Palladium is well-equipped to boost or cut frequencies from 100 Hz to 5.2 kHz.

Seymour Duncan aimed to re-create the sound and handling of an overdriven tube amp and it seems that in the Palladium, the company has succeeded. If the company has done nothing else, it has provided musicians with a fantastic-sounding, highly-versatile

overdrive pedal which is sure to please the ears of listeners and tone hounds alike.

WHAT WE LIKE

A high degree of control over the distortion levels and over the equalization of the signal; a semi-parametric equalization circuit; fantastic, wide-ranging distortion.

CONCERNS

The Gain and Resonance labels are a bit misleading, because both knobs ultimately control gain levels.