



GEAR

# Earthquaker Devices

## PLUMES SMALL SIGNAL SHREDDER OVERDRIVE PEDAL

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

**SURPRISING VERSATILITY FROM** a three-knob OD pedal is what the Plumes brings, and several things are going on here to make that possible. For starters, the circuit uses JFET op-amps instead of the JRC4558 op-amp and bipolar transistors found in the classic OD-808/TS-808 and its clones. The Plumes has a higher input impedance of around  $10M\Omega$ , and it converts the nine-volt input power (from external adapter only) to +/- nine volts, all with the stated goals of reducing noise and increasing headroom, clarity and overall sonic dimension.

The key function here is a three-way mode switch that, in position one (left) produces symmetrical LED clipping for nicely saturated distortion. Used with both a Telecaster and a Les Paul, it was easy to get a great overdrive tone through a Fender Deluxe Reverb — and the louder the amp was, the better the pedal sounded. The Plumes worked great for dirty rhythm playing, and there's enough gutsy sustain with the gain turned up for solos.

In mode two (middle position), the soft-clipping diodes are taken out of the circuit and the JFET op-amp delivers a clean volume

boost. I dug using it for live playing this way, with the Deluxe's volume turned up to around four, as it coaxed a sweet, natural overdrive that was very responsive to picking and took full advantage of the amp's own compression via the pushed 6V6s. I liked just leaving the pedal on full-time in this mode with the level and gain set to around nine o'clock and three o'clock, respectively, which made it easy to go from clean to a beautifully distorted tone with a sweep of the guitar's volume knob.

In mode three (right position), the circuit reconfigures to an asymmetrical silicon-diode arrangement, which sounded darker and more compressed, and yielded some righteous high-gain distortion tones, which were smooth and clear, with excellent balance and responsiveness to picking attack. The squasher response in mode three made it necessary to increase the level setting a bit, and, as in the other modes, the tone control is musically effective and useful throughout its range, never making things sound too muddy or too bright.

The Flexi-Switch bypass switch is interesting. When pressed quickly, it allows



the effect to be toggled on and off in standard manner. When pressed and held down, the OD sounds only until the switch is released. This invites you to use distortion in shorter bursts, which is a fun thing to play with once you get used to it.

EarthQuaker Devices' Plumes has so much going for it sonically, and its sub-\$100 price makes it a very attractive choice for those who seek something more adventurous and flexible than the typical three-knob distortion box. ■

### SPECIFICATIONS

#### Plumes Small Signal Shredder Overdrive Pedal

CONTACT [earthquakerdevices.com](http://earthquakerdevices.com)

PRICE \$99 street

**CONTROLS** Level, tone, gain. Three-position mode switch

**BUILT** U.S.A.

**KUDOS** Two excellent and distinct distortion modes, plus a clean boost

**CONCERN** No provision for battery power