

KEELEY ELECTRONICS OXBLOOD

REVIEW BY **FLETCHER STEWART**

STREET PRICE **\$199.00**



MYTHICAL MAGICAL MYSTERY MANURE

Forget about the proverbial “rocking horse poo” rarity of the Klon and the centurial legion of Klones it bred. This new Oxblood Overdrive from Keeley Electronics is something unique and special in the world of overdrive. In fact, this mighty Oxblood can pull the weight of a hefty clean boost, dynamic overdrive, or even a tweedy squidgy fuzz—à la Zuma-era Neil Young. As one might have guessed, I love this pedal already—and it is mighty tough to get me excited about any type of

overdrive pedal at this stage in the game.

I have been into amp drive lately, so my criterion for a great dirt box is damn near unrealistic. Basically, I want it all. I want an overdrive pedal in front of my preamp section that can blend right in as a transparent booster when the amp is dirty, impart a completely different dirt voicing in front of my clean channel, and go right through to loose juicy fuzz gushing at full whack. I also want said-overdrive to match the low-end of my thunderous rig and be as compressed or as open as I need for the musical scenario. That is a mighty,

obelisk-tall order. I think the Oxblood may be the first to fill it.

RIPPED TO RIBBONS FROM KOSSOFF TO GIBBONS

While this burly beast of a pedal is as versatile as an overdrive can be, the Oxblood does have a distinct continuity of sonic character across most dial settings. To my ears, this is a classic rock machine that straddles the line between vintage British and American amplifiers. This pedal harkens back to the day when tube rectified non-master-volume Fenders and Marshalls sang with similar voltage sagging

voices. With all the dials set just past midnight, the phat switch engaged and the clipping set to the more open Mythical Diodes, the raunchy paunch of bark and bite can be crunch conducted with touch and guitar volume knobs alone. Think ZZ Top's "Precious and Grace" or traverse the dynamic dirt range of Free's *Tons of Sobs* using only humbuckers and volume knobs.

If one is in need of more gain and compression, while cutting out low-end flub, the Oxblood yields some leaner cuts of beef with both switches set to the left position. This achieves a slightly more modern tone—by modern I mean late-'70s era Judas Priest—that still retains the focused snarly midrange that most metal heads miss. The Tone control is cleverly fine-tuned to avoid needles and spikes and I can go from woody flute-like leads to sparkly Brit-chime grime with the twist of the dial. While my favorite Oxblood settings are harmonically rich and gristly, this circuit also excels

at clean boosting with the gain completely dialed out. Is there any need for my trusty old Hot Cake anymore? Time will tell.

WHAT WE LIKE

Maximum versatility with minimal tweaks is the name of the game here. Keeley and crew have not missed a trick. It is also worth mentioning that like the spiritual Klon predecessor, there is an internal charge pump under the hood, so one can power up with any nine-volt source, while enjoying the extra headroom to pummel preamps. This also makes it possible to enjoy a more convincing amp-like experience when recording direct to speaker sims. The Hammerite finish and handsome color scheme is top shelf—just like the tones and build quality. The Oxblood pisses all over the electric fence between vintage British and American amp tones. It naturally chews the cud of any boring signal, digests it and excretes pure tonal gold out the speaker cone tone-tract.

CONCERNS

I didn't think I would ever want or need another overdrive, but I keep on rocking in the *not for free world*.

