Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 30 Sep 2012, 19:40

Earlier this year i revamped my main preamp board by moving from 4 distortion pedals down to 3 and dropping both my OD-2 and ML-2 and replacing them with an MZ-2 to pair with a DS-1 and OD-3.

Wile I liked the sound of the MZ-2 it just didn't quite kick over the top at my normal playing volume. A good chunk of that is probably due to where it sits on the board (#6 of 6) but yesterday I decided to replace it. In the past week I picked up an SD-2 (3rd time I've had this pedal) and an MT-2 (12th time?) and shot them out against each other.

Observations.
The MZ-2 can "kick over" but required the most volume of the 3 to do get the dynamics i was looking for. Tonewise it is a bit different than most of the other high gain distortion pedals. To my ears it sounds most like it was trying to replicate an ADA MP-1 or a tubescreamer into a rack-based head (e.g. Digitech legend). It had the least sustain out of the three, was most dependent upon position in the chain (it loses a lot when it's not running solo), but it was also the smoothest and by far the quietest of the pedals.

The MT-2 can kick over at any volume and in any position on the board. It has the greatest tweakability but also is the most difficult to get a "good" tone out of. Tonewise I liked this pedal the least but its dynamics were the closest to what i was looking for. Has feedback and noise issues and the least string definition but also the most bite and chunk out of the three. Requires the most volume to get a "good" tone but doesn't lose its dynamics at low volumes.

The SD-2 doesn't usually enter into these kinds of shoot outs, but I've always liked this pedal on its lead mode (in crunch mode it's a bit harsh compared to other overdrives). This test was just for the lead channel. Both the era, sounds, and features of this pedal make me believe it was trying to emulate a channel switching marshall Jcm with EL-34's (later 800's or early 900's before they switched to 5881's). Very crunchy with tons of gain and sustain... Its a lot warmer in its voicing than the MT-2 or MZ-2 but it also has a significant amount of edge. It's rather noisy and feedback prone compared to the MZ-2, but less so than the MT-2 (or HM-2/HM-3). It's two main negatives were: it would not kick over if placed after my DS-1 in the chain, would kick over if placed before it (this is with the Ds-1 bypassed) and it really doesn't like neck humbuckers. The guitars I was testing with were mahogany, one with a jazz/blues voiced alnico ii and the other with a ceramic dimarzio evolution and both seemed to fart when playing from the neck pickup.

The winner: SD-2

It had the chunky and harmonic rich dynamics I wanted and the warmest tone. I was worried it wouldn't have significantly more gain than the DS-1 (my previous times owning the SD-2 i was using single coils) but with buckers it definitely has more.

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **Pepe** » 30 Sep 2012, 20:17

Yeah, the SD-2 is great!

Pepe

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **Mesjoggah** » 30 Sep 2012, 22:09

I agree!

Mesjoggah

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **DasBeef** » 01 Oct 2012, 02:34

> *Pepe wrote:*
> *Yeah, the SD-2 is great!*

Oh you like it do you? Ha ha.
I liked the pedal, but just not enough to keep it. I had so many other dirts that I preferred that it was low enough in my rankings to get the chop. I was trying to be a bit more brutal with what I was keeping. Got offered a trade for something I was more interested in owning and jumped at the chance.

DasBeef

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 01 Oct 2012, 03:59

I had sold my previous two, once for the single coil thing and the other was financially motivated. With the second, i was going to keep either the OD-2 or SD-2 as my heavy overdrive but posted both for sale on craigslist. Someone came over and demoed both but chose the SD-2 so I kept the SD-2.

It's sort of odd to me that there aren't more shredders in pursuit of this pedal. I would say it's pretty high up on the gain list for boss pedals, following the MT-2, ML-2, HM-3, HM-2, and possibly the ST-2 as the only pedals i would say have a higher chunk factor.

On it's crunch channel i would say it's one of my least favorite boss overdrives... if not my least favorite. I think the OD-1/OD-2/OD-3/SD-1/BD-2 are all a bit better in that role and even the MD-2 with the gain dialed back to min is smoother.

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **Pepe** » 01 Oct 2012, 09:05

> *zentropa wrote:*
> *On it's crunch channel i would say it's one of my least favorite boss overdrives... if not my least favorite. I think the OD-1/OD-2/OD-3/SD-1/BD-2 are all a bit better in that role and even the MD-2 with the gain dialed back to min is smoother.*

It sounds very harsh on the EQ's middle position, I must agree to that! But I really like this channel as well, as it sounds like no other pedal that I have. In fact I think it sounds pretty much like the "Crunch" channel from a Marshall MG100DFX if I remember that sound correctly.

Pepe

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 01 Oct 2012, 15:33

It is very much like an el34 marshall jcm900's crunch channel (or the mk iii super leads) if you have the treble above 3 on the amp. When marshall switched to 5881's on the 900 line the harshness went away a little. I also agree that it is unique for a pedal.

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **visserman** » 04 Oct 2012, 11:15

I like how you look at distortion sounds of various pedals and compare them to the sound of well-known amps. Of course, this is so true, all these pedals emulate what cetain amps can give you distortion wise. But then not many folks go into those detials. You have mentioned some of you discoveries before on Bossarea. com, and it made me listen to some of those pedals in another way.

Started using some of my amps without pedals, and then combine them later on with some of those pedals, then changing speakerset and.....get the picture, keep going and going.
Great!!

visserman

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 04 Oct 2012, 15:08

Thanks, viss. Comparing them to amps makes it easier for people to understand the tone without having to hear an extensive pedal demo. I also believe there are certain sounds, amps, recordings etc that they had in mind when designing the pedal.

The OD-1 and TS-808 were basically trying to sound like cranked plexi's and people playing cranked plexi's found that that running them into a cranked plexi made them sound even more cranked. The better they got at circuit design, the more they were able to shoot for more specific sounds. The advent of high gain amps added more things to shoot for. That being said, i don't think all pedals go for that, but there are a chunk of them that do. E.g. I believe the HM-2 was shooting for ozy era randy rhoads (mxr distortion plus into jcm800 w 500t ceramic buckers), the ML-2 for 80's metallica (ts9 into mesa mark iv), the blues driver was going for a fender blues/hot rod series w

the bright switch engaged, etc. the SD-2 came out shortly after the JCM900 high gain dual reverb channel switchers came out and it really nails the gain stages of those amps (but the crunch is a little dirtier).

Something like the OD-3 i think was more of an upgrade pedal. Do better on what the OD-1 and SD-1 were designed to be. More chunk, more bite, more transparency, less fizz.

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 04 Oct 2012, 21:30

Another random thought on this...

I dont judge pedals based on whether i think they sound good or not, i judge them on the perceived role they would have and how well they fit that role. I think i miss out on some things this way (i rarely test "metal" distortions with the gain set below 12 o'clock, but at the same time it's often failed boss marketing that leads to that) but occasionally i discover some combo that works via demo or by accident. It does however, yield an apples to apples comparison.

I think there's a slew of boss pedals that don't work well with humbuckers and a handful that work way better with buckers than single coils or p90's.

Recently i discovered that the analog CH-1's are probably the best boss chorus for use with high gain overdrive/distortion. I generally use chorus with clean tones so this was a nice surprise. I missed this because usually when i demo a chorus it's with a clean tone.

To make crap even more complicated, i recently raised my amp off the floor about 2.5' and man, everything sounds way diff when the highs aren't being dulled by the carpet.

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **visserman** » 08 Oct 2012, 11:18

Yes Zentropa, raising your amps will change to sound.
I am fond of putting them in a slightly tilted way against the wall. Also fond of putting them on crates, all depends on the available space in the room.

Back to pedals, I thought you mentioned before SD-2 being based on the Eddie van Halen Peavey amp.

I also find the OD-3 having the JCM900 Marshall sound. In a simple overview: OD1, SD1 and HM2 for old school Marshall, with the HM2 being able to give you 80s metal sound as well, which you cannot get from a Plexi or JMP or JCM 800. OD3 for the more "modern" Marshall sound, more articulated, less midrangey or transparent, all depending on what adjective nails it for you (and your own experience of that particular sound!)

Zen, I would be interested in hearing from you which bosspedals do work well with humbuckers and which ones work better with single coils. I think I will not be the only one interested in hearing this.
Will open up a new thread for this to make it clearer.
Thanks!

visserman

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **Pepe** » 08 Oct 2012, 12:08

I think the SD-2 belongs into the "we want to copy the Marshall sound" group. In this case it's very convincing. I loved it on the spot!

Pepe

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 08 Oct 2012, 21:43

I may have written about the 5150 a while ago. 6L6's are a bit brihter than 5881's but after playing some EL-34 jcm 900's, im pretty certain that is the SD-2.

The OD-3 hits the jcm900 "clean" channel sound pretty well, but only the later 5881 versions. It will also do the dsl jcm2000 sounds (these had less gain than the 900's).

OD-3's really have a lot of versatility. Once the gain breaks 12 o'clock the dirt doesn't increase much imo, but it's more like tweaking the presence knob on an amp beyond that point. Closer to 12 is a lot more transparent than cranking it higher.

As for OD-1 and SD-1 doing marshalls, the original od-1 and 4558d (or any non dd version dual op amp) do pretty well with the plexi sound. The SD-1 has a lot more fuzz to it though with less bite and cut. IMO it sounds more like a recorded version of a tubescreamer + plexi than an actual live sound. The 4558dd od-1 i feel similarly about.

HM-2's are basically a randy rhoads sound alike. Mxr d+ into a jcm800 super lead.

I'll post on the single vs bucker thing on the other thread.

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 10 Oct 2012, 17:36

Shot out my OD2r that arrived last night against the SD-2.

I have to say that I'm impressed with the OD-2r for being quiet even though it's a Taiwan model. Usually MIT dirt pedals have tons of hiss compared to their MIJ counterparts. Other observations vs the OD-2, the 2r has more gain in standard mode from what i remember and the turbo mode gives a noticeable volume jump vs standard mode, which is probably what it should be (i'm used to losing volume with turbo mode and that's the reason I sold it as it failed with higher output buckers.

Against the SD-2 it was a close call. The OD-2r has just enough dirt to push it over the top and reach the gain i was looking for for that role when it's by itself, but buried in a chain the low end loses its percussive crunch and starts to fart, but not as badly as the MZ-2. The only solution was to crank the tone up and then it got a bit harsh (ended up using the tone in the 8-9 o'clock range and had to go to 12-1 to get the same behavior when it was in the chain). The SD-2 just has way more edge/cut headroom in this regard, which is what i wanted.

This was my first OD-2r and i would place it at the upper end of the medium gain pedals, probably right near the top for its gain potential. Probably right around equal with the MZ-2 but with a more OD-ish tone bias. While it didn't

quite make it as my high gain distortion, it will be on my secondary board as the medium gain dirt box.

If i had to give it an amp comparison, i would say OD-1 into a late 70's marshall.

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **Pepe** » 10 Oct 2012, 19:06

A sound that you should love easily! I have (and have had) quite a lot BOSS pedals. The OD-2R belongs to my personal "BOSS Top 5".

Pepe

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 10 Oct 2012, 19:31

It sounds good. It's odd how i choose to keep pedals as i tend to assign them pretty specific roles rather than go for their overall sound.

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **Pepe** » 10 Oct 2012, 20:13

Each to his own.

Pepe

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 10 Oct 2012, 20:39

Hehe. I doubt i would have an OD-3 on my board if not for those roles. It just happened to fit the warm mild overdrive/booster role well but i rarely use it when establishing my own sound. It does help me replicate other sounds well. Back when i could crank my amp louder it got used more

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **Pepe** » 10 Oct 2012, 22:26

So why don't you simply buy all those amps that you have in your mind instead?

Pepe

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **zentropa** » 10 Oct 2012, 23:18

I used to have em, where do you think my comparisons come from :p

zentropa

Re: Most recent heavy distortion shootout

by **Pepe** » 10 Oct 2012, 23:36

You could have been working in a music shop, just like me.

Pepe