

Fulltone PlimSoul

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THE GAP BETWEEN DISTORTION PEDALS that perform “soft clipping,” such as the Tube Screamer and its myriad variants, and those that do what is called “hard clipping” (a group that includes the Pro Co Rat, Boss OD-1, and MXR Distortion +) was narrowed a few years ago by Fulltone’s OCD pedal. Now, the PlimSoul (\$199 retail/\$169 street) takes up where the OCD leaves off by incorporating soft *and* hard clipping circuits, both of which are independently adjustable. The PlimSoul features Sustain, Level, and Hi-Cut controls, along with a small knob labeled Stage 2, which adjusts the level of a second stage of hard-clipping distortion (an LED pulses to indicate how much hard clipping is being added). The idea is that by adjusting the Sustain and Stage 2 controls you can arrive at an ideal distortion sound for your style, be it a saggier and more compressed tone for blues, a tighter, tougher response for hard rock or metal, or any blend of the two.

I’m a fan of the OCD and how well it preserves the sound of your guitar while delivering a tube-like distortion sound. However, the PlimSoul goes beyond in its ability to replicate the dynamic response and *feel* of a tube amp. Using the Sustain control by itself brings on the soft clipping tonalities, which are so harmonically rich and natural sounding that it’s easy to forget you’re even playing through a pedal. Used with a 1x10 Victoria Ivy League combo, it made that amp sound like a vintage Marshall, with everything from grinding rhythm tones to singing leads available with a sweep of the volume knob on my PRS 22. And when switching to a G&L ASAT Special loaded with DiMarzio pickups, a quick tweak of the Hi-Cut control was all it took to get a girthy distortion tone with a sweet sounding top-end slice. The PlimSoul’s mids are rich and well balanced, but *some* players who use single-coils might wish for a little more midrange hump.

The Stage 2 control slathers on more sustain while tightening up the response in a way that feels like you’ve added a second amplifier with more headroom. There’s lots of distortion available in the Stage 2’s range, but the notes remain clear and focused and don’t become muddy or indistinct even when this control is turned way up. It’s easy to get carried away by the feedback sensitivity and soaring sustain available in this mode, and by getting a happening overdrive sound using the Sustain control and then slowly rolling in the Stage 2 textures, you can find the right distortion texture to suit your guitar and playing style.

The PlimSoul provides an extremely effective way of replicating the distortion quality and dynamic feel of a tube amplifier, and can be highly effective either when used to overdrive an amp that pushes easily into distortion or to get a rich, saturated lead tone from something much cleaner sounding, like a Fender Twin Reverb or the Dr. Z EZG 50 that I used. Either way, the PlimSoul is an outstanding distortion pedal and it earns an Editors’ Pick Award.