



Fulltone GT-500

BY DARRIN FOX

DEvised AND BUILT IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, Fulltone's GT-500 (\$225 retail/street price N/A) is a dual mode grind machine with independent Booster and Distortion modes. Like all Fulltone pedals, the GT-500 sports absolutely impeccable construction and top-shelf components. Housed in a folded-metal enclosure that is the same size as the company's classic Fulldrive 2 (a very pedalboard-friendly 5¼" x 4"), the GT-500 does its dirty work via F.E.T. circuitry, which, according to Fulltone's Michael Fuller, aids in giving the pedal a more musical tube-amp feel and response. But in the end, it wouldn't matter if the GT-500's circuit consisted of 20 lb-test fishing line and a couple of resistors, because this pedal *smokes*.

The GT's Booster section sports Volume, Drive, Treble, and Bass controls, and the Distortion side offers Volume and Distortion controls, as well as Bass, Mids, and Highs. The real crux of the GT's biscuit, however, is its Series Switch, which allows you to place the Booster *before* the Distortion in the pedal's circuit, or vice-versa—two very different tonal propositions. This, in conjunction with each side's ultra-musical and ultra-tweakable EQ, makes this pedal a very special thing indeed.

Using a Fender Telecaster and a couple of Gibson SGs, I ran the GT-500 through a Fender Deluxe Reverb, a 50-watt plexi Marshall, and a Victoria Regal. The GT's Booster side jolts the front end of an amp with a serious dose of volume that transformed my clean-toned Deluxe Reverb into a full-on chunk-machine—and this is with the Drive control nearly turned off! Dialing in higher Drive settings and backing down the Volume, I could approximate the sweet singing chirp of my Deluxe on eight, but at much quieter bedroom volumes. How sweet. How transparent. All of the sonic goodies that I love about a simple guitar-into-a-cranked-amp setup are here, including the dynamic interactions

of how hard you hit the strings, and how you manipulate your guitar's volume control. Plus, the GT imparts none of the harsh crashiness in the treble frequencies that can hamper many distortion boxes—even boutique ones—when the pedal is the sole source of grind.

The GT's Distortion side is equally impressive, yielding some of the most musical, natural-sounding distortion I've ever heard from a buzz box. The output in this mode is just as massive and punishing as on the Booster side, while the Mid control—which actually sports a wah inductor in its circuit—allows you to really fine tune your rig's all important midrange frequencies, from sucked-mid metal textures to a piercing, pointed honk. The Bass and High controls can yield some pretty drastic results, as well, but if you dig the sound of your guitar and amp, these controls are better utilized as tasty complementary seasoning—like gourmet salt and pepper on a perfectly cooked filet mignon.

But the rubber meets the road with GT-500's Series Switch. With the Distortion side dialed in for fat, squawky lead lines and a thumping-yet-taught low string roar, I set the Booster to minimal Drive (nearly off), and cranked the Volume. With the Booster before the Distortion, the GT-500 amplified my aforementioned distorted tone with substantially more hair and volume. But the timbre remained basically the same. With the Series Switch in the opposite position, the Distortion-into-Booster configuration hit my amp with the tonal equivalent of 10,000 volts. The volume increase was astronomical, and the infusion of greasy midrange juice and sheer sonic force produced a whole different tone altogether. The amount of tones and textures you can pull out of the GT-500 boggles the mind, and if you can't find your grind in the GT-500, maybe it doesn't exist. And that's why this bad boy receives an Editors' Pick Award. Bravo! 🎸

FULLTONE GT-500

KUDOS Possibly *the* most musical two-in-one distortion box going.

CONCERNS None.

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