



■ Listen to *Blizzard Of Ozz* while you're reading this to get the full multimedia effect!

... **A lot of guitarists will remember the first time they heard the late, great Randy Rhoads. I certainly do. Though his brief, blistering career was cut tragically short, his influence on heavy metal guitar is still clearly felt today.**

A Les Paul plugged in to a cranked Marshall stack is always going to sound great, but Randy had something else too, besides an unearthly amount of talent: a script-logo MXR Distortion Plus!

"IT DOESN'T HAVE A TONE KNOB BUT TO BE HONEST, IT DOESN'T NEED ONE"

The Distortion Plus (or 'Distortion +') was the stomper that Randy chose to help him drive his Marshalls to the edge of oblivion. While we're name-dropping, this little mustard-coloured box is also responsible for another of my favourite bits of shred, Steve Vai's epic guitar duel from the film *Crossroads*. Steve used this pedal with his Carvin X100B amp and Charvel 'Green Meanie' to produce what is arguably one of the greatest pieces of virtuoso rock guitar playing ever recorded.

SHREDDER'S DELIGHT?

So that must make the Distortion Plus the ultimate pedal for those who love the sound of fleet-fingered shredding, right? Well, yes and no. To understand how to get the most out of this stomper we need a quick history lesson in guitar tone.

The original script-logo MXR pedals were only produced from 1973 to 1977. After this the company changed hands and altered some of the components so that the pedals worked better with the new breed of master-volume amps that were sweeping the world. Before the late 70's most amps had a single volume control. To get the amp distort naturally, you had to turn the amp all the way up, which meant you were *loud!* Amps with additional master volume controls

began to appear at the end of the decade, enabling distortion at much lower levels. Even though this would seem to solve all the problems, the amps sounded different, and pedals needed to be voiced a bit differently to compensate.

PLUS MORE

This particular Distortion Plus from 1975 had me scratching my head when I first tried it. It seemed very tame for a pedal with 'Distortion' in the name, but the '+' gives it away. It's designed to drive or '+ ' an amp that already has its power section working hard, pushing it into natural distortion. Used like this it becomes the yin to a tube screamer's yang and produces one of the all-time classic rock guitar tones.

Most of us are overwhelmed with options when it comes to producing our tone, which thankfully is not a

PAWN STARS

ALL HAIL A PEDAL FROM A TIME WHEN ROCK WAS KING, GUITARS WERE LOUD AND MARSHALLS RULED THE EARTH



■ Despite the name, the Distortion Plus is relatively tame as far as overdrive effects go

THE AUTHOR

DAN'S THE MAN



■ Dan Steinhardt has a 200GB hard drive instead of a brain, where he stores endless FX and electronics knowledge.

He's also the boss man of Epix UK – www.thegigrig.com – and we're honoured to have him contributing to the mag.

problem you're going to have with this little number. The design is simple, with only a handful of carefully chosen components that enable you to control output and distortion. It doesn't have a tone knob – but to be honest, it doesn't need one. It will simply enhance your core tone, rather than producing something altogether different.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I PAY?

You can pick these up for between £100 and £130 in player's condition, but if it's in good nick with its original box, that figure is going to be closer to £180. This pedal is designed to work with vintage amps and certainly isn't for everybody, but use it the way it was intended and it will rock your world. **GB**