

FULLTONE FULL-DRIVE 2 MOSFET

A SPECIAL 10TH ANNIVERSARY VERSION OF THIS BOUTIQUE, TWO-CHANNEL OVERDRIVE FROM CALIFORNIAN FX GURU FULLTONE. **LOUIS THORNE** GETS HIP WITH CLIP

... To say that Michael Fuller, the man behind Fulltone, is a fanatic about guitar playing and gear is an understatement. Not only does he own a huge array of classic amps and effects, but he also builds his own tone machines and, as an accomplished guitarist, even holds the impressive accolade of *Guitar Player* magazine's Ultimate Blues Guitarist 1993. Clearly, he knows a thing or 10 about tone and taste.

The following year, Fulltone the company was born out of Fuller's love of vintage effects, with an added desire for more reliability. Consequently, we are not talking mass-produced, digital modeling devices here; these are handmade pedals, constructed with top quality components, and thus they come with top level price tags.

NEW STARTER FOR 10

This version of the Full-Drive 2 celebrates 10 years of Fuller's most celebrated stomper, here with a new 'mosfet' mode in addition to the standard model's sounds. According to Mike Fuller, in 'vintage' mode the mosfets add richness in the mids for a more 'Dum***' like lead tone, among other textures. From that, we assume he means Alexander Dumble's ultra-rare, ultra-desirable amplifiers, used by the likes of Stevie Ray Vaughan, Larry Carlton, Eric Johnson and Robben Ford. It's a big claim, and a tantalising one at that. The other part of the story is that in 'fm' mode, the mosfets are said to impart a 'chimey, open, stinging Texas blues sound'. More of which later.

The FD2's heavy-duty steel chassis is now a lovely shade of 'burnt orange metallic' in place of the regular blue, and is home to a collection of knobs and switches which are all of the very highest quality. The pots are bolted securely to the steel chassis – meaning minimum internal damage from a stray stomp – and then point-to-point wired to the rest of the components,

GBINFO

FULLTONE FULL-DRIVE 2 MOSFET EDITION

PRICE: £249

BUILT-IN: USA

TYPE: Overdrive stompbox

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC mains adaptor (not supplied). Also takes 18V DC

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GBOPINION

FULLTONE FULL-DRIVE 2 MOSFET EDITION

GOLD STARS

- ★ World class, beautifully transparent drive sounds
- ★ Adds two channels to your amp
- ★ New 'mosfet' mode increases versatility

BLACK MARKS

- Not a single one

GBRATING

★★★★★



■ Chances are you'll be bending over the front when hooking up, hence the upside-down labels

using custom-made, heavy-gauge copper wire. The switches are triple-pole, double-throw types, which provide the connections needed for true bypass when the pedal is off, and the inclusion of an LED when it's on. Mike Fuller is extremely picky about his true-bypass switching, pointing out that most pedals, even the more expensive ones, don't truly leave the

signal chain when they are turned off. It could be argued that with the right buffer, true bypass isn't the be-all-and-end-all for effects pedals – and in your average pub gig, its arguable whether or not people would notice – but that argument is never going to convince the obsessives. In any case, all you TB fans are safe here.



■ The big news for the 10th Anniversary Full-Drive 2 is the all-new mosfet mode

MODES FOR MOODS

Like the Dytone Boombastic reviewed on page 38, the Full-Drive 2 has switchable 'overdrive' and 'boost' modes, meaning two sounds at your feet. The volume and tone controls are global, while the boost mode has a dedicated pot for extra level and distortion when you step on the corresponding switch.

With the central mini-switch set at either 'vintage' (slightly peaked in the mid frequencies) or 'fm' (flat mids), the overdrive control provides the gamut of textures, from just a hint of break up to a healthy amount of gain. In that respect, the Full-Drive 2 has a wider range of usable gain than many pedals; likewise with its overall frequency response, where some overdrive devices – notably standard TS808 and TS9 Ibanez Tubescreamers – can tend towards a very middly tone, with not much in the way of subtlety in the high end, nor weight in the lows. Here, the overall envelope is wider and far more natural sounding, with a 'tone' pot that's more of a presence control, according to Fuller, which affects the high-end harmonics.

Flicking the second mini switch from 'standard' to 'mosfet' adds punch and clarity to the whole shebang, a difference which is more pronounced at higher gain levels. This is the major change from the standard FD2 model, and although relatively subtle – it doesn't totally transform the pedal – those of you who are decidedly more

tweaky about fine adjustments will appreciate the mosfet mode's increased muscle and definition in the mid frequencies: Robben Ford fans take note. According to Fuller, the mosfets make the pedal clip in a slightly more symmetrical manner, whereas the big deal with the original Fulltone is its asymmetrical clipping. What that means in practice is that in 'mosfet' mode, the Full-Drive 2 trades some of its extra harmonics and elasticity for a more direct, smoother distortion.

The 'comp-cut' setting provides a non-compressed version of the tone, which can be useful for an effective clean boost (regulated with the overdrive knob again). It's fantastic for country or clean blues sounds, for example; a somewhat more direct tone and response. In that respect, you get

TRULY COMMITTED?

LEAD THE WAY

■ If you really want to treat your guitar, you could go the whole way and splash out on a Fulltone 15-foot jack-to-jack lead. Undoubtedly of faultless quality, if this thing EVER does go wrong as a result of normal use just post it to the factory, and they will send you a new one. The slight downside is that on this side of the Atlantic they will cost you £49.99 each.

the biggest, boldest, most open and precise drives using the 'comp-cut' and 'mosfet' mode; good for rockier sounds that need optimum note definition. Conversely, the springiest, most transparent, chewy, vintage-style drives and dynamics are available with 'flat mids' and 'standard' mode.

Where the Full-Drive 2 Mosfet really excels is that however you set it, the intrinsic sound of the guitar is never lost, and at lower gain levels especially, picking dynamics really shine through. Humbuckers or single coils sound equally impressive, each displaying their own character: this pedal just oozes class. It's definitely at its best through a valve amp at gig volume, and it's also worth mentioning that you can run the Full-Drive 2 at 18 volts (just make sure the adapter is centre-negative) which increases its dynamics, adding headroom to give an even more open, amp-like feel. If you've struggled with how 'regular' pedals somehow 'squash' your amplifier's dynamic range, this is a feature you'll want to try for sure.

CONCLUSION

If you're after scooped, ultra-high gain guitar sounds, or harsh, square-wave fuzz, then the Full-Drive 2 Mosfet is not the pedal for you. However, for just about everything else, it delivers tone aplenty, made even more versatile by the new 'mosfet' mode. Country, blues and all but the heaviest rock players will find a lot to love here, assuming of course you also love the fundamental tone of your rig. The FD2 bolsters your existing partnership with the most wonderfully transparent and dynamic overdrive textures, or fat clean tones, plus you have additional footswitchable boost always on tap. If you already own a decent valve amp and are into anything from Albert Lee to Led Zep, try one out tomorrow.

The Full-Drive 2 Mosfet is among the greatest overdrives ever made – no true tone hound should be without one. **GB**

WHAT IS A MOSFET?

YOUR QUICK TRANSISTOR 101

■ As the name suggests, Fulltone's Full-Drive 2 Mosfet contains a new 'mosfet' mode to offer an extra range of tones, in addition to the standard pedal's complement.

A MOSFET (metal-oxide semiconductor field effect transistor) is a type of transistor that clips (distorts) softly when overdriven, somewhat similar to the way a valve reacts, in very general terms. Assuming they're used right in the circuit (bear in mind

that no single component can be judged individually in any amp or pedal), mosfets can contribute to a very musical overdrive for guitar tones, hence their inclusion here. More practically, the 'mosfet' mode has a more symmetrical clipping pattern for a more focused, smooth distortion character than when in standard mode. Neither is 'better', but you'll soon discover more appropriate applications for each mode.