

Thrilltone Drive Recovery Overdrive Pedal

French design flair brought to guitar effects? **Tom Quayle** checks out a newcomer from Thrilltone.

Drive pedals have relied on much the same spread of technologies for years now, employing clipping diodes or op-amps for their drive and saturation effects. Thrilltone, a boutique pedal manufacturer from France, believes that it's time for a change and that there are inherent limitations and tonal issues with clipping diodes that it has the solution for. Essentially the argument goes that the overdrive created by tube amps is of a natural, subtle and dynamic nature, whereas the overdrive created by a diode is sudden and abrupt, thereby not achieving a true amp-like dynamic and expressive response. Thrilltone's solution for this

is called 'Cellular Clipping' and relies on a network of 'clipping cells' that saturate and clip the signal one by one depending on how hard the string is attacked. Hit more softly and less clipping cells will act, play more aggressively and you enable more of the clipping cells for more saturation and gain. Thrilltone believe this gives a more amp like, expressive and accurate overdrive sound and employ the technology in all of their drive pedals. You can read more about it on the company's website.

Thilltone's Drive Recovery pedal employs this Cellular Clipping process with a dual, stackable overdrive with a wide range of overdrive levels and a unique 'Character'

control that allows you to dial in the feel and response of the Cellular Clipping circuit. The Drive Recovery features a standard sized black chassis with high quality flame graphics and a solid feel. This is definitely boutique build quality and doesn't take up too much pedal board room considering it's a dual drive pedal.

The top panel has controls for Tone, Volume, Drive and Over-Drive (the latter providing gain control over the secondary drive circuit) plus the Character control mentioned previously. There is a Bypass switch and an Extra Gain switch for stacking the second drive on top. The secondary Drive acts purely as a stackable option

STAR RATING



PROS

- » Excellent Drive tones
- » Dual drives for more versatility
- » Well made
- » Sensible price

CONS

- » Could be a hard sell to guitar players steeped in tradition

and cannot be engaged by itself. Two small, red LEDs indicate bypassed or active state for each circuit and the pedal is finished with a single in and out and a standard centre negative 9v input.

Plugging into one of our studio amps set to just break up, the most noticeable thing is just how quiet the Drive Recovery is, even with both drive circuits engaged. Despite both circuits being mid-gain variants there is an impressive amount of drive on tap with both engaged, allowing for saturated lead tones and heavy rhythm sounds.

The Character control allows the user to shape both the compression and high end characteristics of the pedal with higher setting producing a more compressed and darker tone and lower setting giving a more dynamic and open sound with a brighter high end. Being able to shape the feel of the pedal is a very cool addition allowing you to get highly amp-like feel in the lower settings with tons of dynamics or a more traditional, 'Tube-Screamer' like compressed feel in the upper settings.

The tone control remains musical throughout its range and works well in conjunction with the Character control to

shape a wide variety of drive sounds from dark and warm to spiky and aggressive. With the drive set low and the volume high the pedal can function as a very transparent clean boost, doing a great job of pushing an 'edge of breakup' amp into full crunch territory or an overdriven amp into saturation. Increasing the Drive gives a range of sounds from light Blues tones to a more modern lead tone that works well for Fusion or modern Jazz playing. Here you really get a good feel for the 'Cellular Clipping' technology with impressive dynamic response and clarity whilst playing chords. The pedal definitely reacts very much like a real amp with highly



versatility » Cellular Clipping seems to work well for dynamic response

in tradition »

[...>]

accurate pick attack tracking and clarity from note to note in a chord. Engaging the second drive circuit yields a lot more gain but doesn't sacrifice on clarity so it seems that Thrilltone might be onto something with its new technology.

Guitar players are notorious for sticking to tradition - after all, we all seem obsessed with the words vintage and classic. This makes it hard to engage guitarists with new technological achievements when it's often assumed that vintage and classic tones are always the best. This means that Thrilltone possibly has a fight on its hands, convincing

players that its new technology does a better job than someone's vintage Tube Screamer or other classic style drive pedal. But the Drive Recovery is certainly impressive in its own right, with a range of great sounds and impressive, customisable dynamic response. It's unlikely that 'Cellular Clipping' will change the world of drive pedals, but there is a lot to be impressed with here and Thrilltone deserve to be checked out if you get the chance. **END>**



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VIEW