



STRYMON SUNSET DUAL OVERDRIVE £299

Strymon works its digital magic on a dual drive pedal, with six classic overdrives and boosts to be used singly or combined

Words Trevor Curwen **Photography** Joby Sessions

It's not long since Strymon released its first dirt pedal in the form of the Riverside multistage drive. Now, hard on its heels is the second: the Sunset. Strymon's intention here is to provide "the best of the best classic overdrive circuits" and the company tells us that it's studied six distinctive circuit types found in many overdrive and boost pedals and put its own versions of all six of them into the Sunset.

This is a two-channel pedal with independent footswitches for each channel (A and B). The channels can be used separately or simultaneously and there are three options, selected by a rear panel switch, if you want to use them together: you can have channel A feeding into channel B, channel B feeding into channel A, or both channels in a parallel signal configuration.

The Sunset's signal starts with an analogue JFET gain stage then passes into DSP where the circuit topologies are recreated. A pair of top-surface toggle switches select one of three circuit types each for channel A and channel B. Separate Level, Drive and Tone knobs

are available for each channel and there's a rear-panel three-way Bright switch to best match the top-end to suit your amp. There is a facility to store settings as a single preset in the pedal, but you need to connect an external switch to the Sunset's Favorite socket to switch between that and the current knob settings. A second socket allows connection of an expression pedal, which by default controls output volume, but can be configured to control any combination of knobs.

Sounds

Running through the individual circuits, all are sufficiently different to warrant inclusion, eminently playable in terms of dynamics and guitar volume clean up, and with excellent sonic character. The Ge setting – a germanium diode circuit with a dry parallel path – offers nicely transparent overdrive in the vein of The Klon and its clones. Texas is Strymon's take on the Tube Screamer and other single-stage soft clipping pedals, with clarity and that upper-mid boost that

ABOVE The Strymon Sunset opens up a realm of drive flexibility previously unseen in the pedalboard market

hits your amp just right. The Treble setting offers a clean boost that's full range with its tone knob at one extreme, but allows you to roll off bottom-end. Used by itself, it has plenty to tickle the front-end of your amp, but may find most use in combination with a channel B circuit, its reduced bottom-end and extra gain immediately boosting yet tightening up.

On channel B, the 2stage circuit offers a soft clipping stage followed by a hard clipping stage and way more in gain than anything from channel A. It has a full low-end and the two gain stages combine for a complex sound with loads of harmonics that encourage you to dig in and play. The Hard circuit, which offers the type of harder clipping sounds found in, say, a RAT or a Boss DS-1, is great for dialling in hard rock or metal sounds, and at higher gain settings can attain a fuzzy edge. The JFET setting offers the sort of tone conditioning role provided by pedals such as the Xotic EP booster, which recreates the characteristics of an Echoplex tape echo's preamp. If you wish to warm up your signal and add some grit, this is the place to be.

Using channels A and B together in parallel serves up some tasty blends: adding just a touch of one of the cleaner sounds to an overdriven sound to juxtapose clarity and saturation yields a great range of practical tones. But if you're looking for higher gain and more saturated sounds, the mix 'n' match stacking combinations provide a multitude of possibilities as one channel drives the other further.

Verdict

A dual overdrive is always a practical pedaboard asset, delivering three levels of dirt while using just one power supply, but (with the possible exception of the Chase Bliss Brothers) there are none that offer the game-changing range of tonal flexibility of the Sunset. Strymon certainly seems to have accurately

captured the characteristics of the most popular drive and boost circuits here, plus it's delivered easy access to combining them in creative ways – besides the six single effects, you get nine parallel and 18 stacked configurations. With so many options, a case could be made for multiple presets accessed via MIDI, but that would have made for a larger/more expensive pedal.

As it stands, though, you'll have great fun finding your favourite settings, ready to be dialled in to get through any gig – the vast tonal possibilities combine with outstanding performance. **G**

PROS Accurate, responsive renditions of classic overdrives and boosts; wide spectrum of tones; Favorite switch adds instant access to two sounds; expression pedal parameter adjustment

CONS It needs 250mA of current (more than your average dirt pedal); presets with MIDI recall could have added appeal



TOP The Favorite and expression pedal outputs give you further options in switching presets and configuring knob control

BOTTOM The tonal possibilities here are immense – using channels A and B together in parallel opens up an array of combinations with which to experiment

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Overdrive/boost pedal

FEATURES: True or buffered bypass, variable-threshold noise reduction feature, 6x drive types (Ge, Texas, Treble, 2stage, Hard, JFET)

CONTROLS: Drive (A and B), Level (A and B), Tone (A and B), selector switch A (Ge/Texas/Treble), selector switch B (2 stage/Hard/JFET), bypass footswitches (A and B), Bright switch, A/B configuration switch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard output, Favorite switch input, Expression pedal input

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (supplied) 250 mA

DIMENSIONS: 102 (w) x 114 (d) x 44mm (h)

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